This special issue origins in the research project EXPECT_Art, i.e. EXPloring and Educating Cultural literacy Through ART[1], which has decoloniality as its methodical foundation. The aim of the project "is to identify current barriers and potentials for promoting critical cultural literacy by means of arts education, education through arts and uses of arts in education within and across different educational contexts in Europe, and to generate and activate knowledge on how to enhance critical cultural literacy and understanding among European citizens" (Project Management, 6).

The project is informed by decolonial theory – along with also critical pedagogy – to answer its focus on critical cultural literacy, i.e. a shift in attention, in relation to education, from cultural literacy understood as an individual competence enabling one's participation in the dominant cultural form one lives in, to instead acknowledge the multiple ways people express their perceptions and views on their lives. Critical cultural literacy deviates from the view that to be culturally literate depends on the acquisition of knowledge of one' dominant cultural environment (Hirsch 1983) which implies giving priority to one cultural form over others that are viewed and evaluated in relation to it. Critical cultural literacy asks for making the effort of acknowledging cultural plurality and the multiple ways in which people express their views on their lives, i.e. how these views are made explicit in linguistically as well as in non-linguistic forms whether in different art forms, cultural artefacts, the organisation of the physical and social environment, and bodily expressions and movement. Everyone, is the assumption, is culturally literate and with this assumption comes the challenge of understanding the multiple expressions without imposing one's own expectations and interpretations upon them. Social interaction is always shaped by power dynamics and structures that cultural expressions are formed by and navigate in, including the one performing the critical approach itself which requires a high demand of self-reflectivity and willingness to be challenged.

It is the shift in attention that calls for a decolonial perspective.

Decoloniality – along with postcolonial discourses – has in recent decades gained a wider popularity as a critical approach to forms of cultural marginalization beyond a strict colonial context. We believe we are justified in using it as we find colonial patterns in contemporary culture of global exchanges – in trade, communication, migration, cultural exchanges etc. However, it is a belief that can be challenged by asking whether we remain true to decolonial intentions or if we, European-based researchers, are appropriating a critical perspective for our own interests. The use of decoloniality must happen with special attention to its particular focus to avoid reducing it to an academic commodity which,

despite good intentions, may “erase and shroud decoloniality’s terrain of political project, praxis, and struggle” as Catherine Walsh notes (Mignolo & Walsh 2018, 82).

It is not up to us to judge our work, we can only explain what we have done, aware that good intentions are not always good enough.

For this thematic issue we made an open call to invite others who likewise work with decoloniality to learn of its potentials and be inspired from different perspectives and approaches.

But why decoloniality?

When the intention is a critical approach to cultural phenomena, other critical traditions offer themselves, for example, critical theory, feminism, queer theory, and critical race theory. It is important to establish what specifically characterises decoloniality to justify the use otherwise the critical intention is blurred and it loses its potential for conducting a concise critical investigation.

The following is a suggestion of one answer to the use of decoloniality; hence, it is no general introduction and no attempt of determining decolonial work beyond experiences made through a concrete research project. The suggestion is that decoloniality draws attention to logics of marginalization, of rendering invisible. This act of rendering invisible through dominant discourses is often maintained by the invisibilized themselves who actively reproduce the same discourses and many who perceive themselves as critically minded are likewise blind to how they participate herein.

By coloniality we talk about “long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations” (Maldonado-Torres 2007, 243). The patterns are embedded in structures of powers that continue to form social relations through, for example, forming racial, ethnic, anthropological, or national discourses to exclude and devaluate communities and peoples (Quijano 2007, 168).

It is the excluding mechanism that is of interest, and a standard decolonial narrative is to understand it in relation to the conquest of the Americas as the pivotal historical event because of its significance for the European understanding of who is human.

With the encounter of new civilizations in the Americas, debates about the legal rights of their people and the legitimacy of the conquests arose in 16th century Spain. Francisco de Vitoria, Bartolomé de las Casas, and Juan Ginés de Sepulveda reflected different views concerning the nature of these people, and different statements appeared. The meeting in Burgos in 1512 established they were free, and pope Paul III declared in *Sublimis Deus* from

1537 that they were rational beings and thus not liable to enslavement – as well as other people later to be discovered. However, we must step very carefully here to avoid anachronistic misunderstandings of discussions originating in a medieval context and belonging to a political situation of how the Spanish kingdoms were to rule many non-Christians after the conquest of Grenada in 1492. Ideas of legal rights today have passed through political thinking in the 17th and 18th centuries and discussions about human rights in the 19th and 20th centuries and cannot be understood "as though there were only one conception, even though this might be convenient for some people" (Jacobsen 2011, 15). Moreover, a notion of human rights is largely a product of the European enlightenment and thus of the mindset of modernity which is the target of decolonial criticism.

Modernity appears frequently as the name of what is identified as a problematic mindset to oppose. And modernity is just as often linked to the West; a common phrase is also Western rationality. However, we encounter a problem as to what to understand by modernity as different disciplines and national traditions display different understandings – there is not even agreement as to when it starts as it varies between 1400 and 1750. Modernity can also be said in plural; for example, Enrique Dussel (2002) distinguishes between two modernities, an Iberian period starting around 1500 followed by a second in the 17th century originating in North-Western Europe becoming global economic dominance exercised also through forms of soft power (see also Mignolo 2007, 482). Catherine E. Walsh establishes that critical endeavour of decoloniality must be of "the hierarchical structures of race, gender, heteropatriarchy, and class that continue to control life, knowledge, spirituality, and thought, structures that are clearly intertwined with and constitutive of global capitalism and Western modernity" (Mignolo & Walsh 2018, 17; see Mignolo 2007, 477; Quijano 2007, 171). The importance of global capitalism is to emphasise with new media and platforms, where it is the case that "[w]e cannot clearly see the scale of capitalism's current appropriation of human life without a colonial lens, and we cannot understand the force of this new colonial appropriation without understanding how capitalism operates through processes of social ordering" (Couldry & Mejias. 2019, 17).

However, one must also be careful about the use of capitalism as it may not always be compatible with Western modernity as Slavoj Žižek (2016) draws attention to: "the cruel irony of anti-Eurocentrism is that, on behalf of anti-colonialism, one criticizes the West at the very historical moment when global capitalism no longer needs Western cultural values in order to function smoothly, and is doing quite well with the 'alternative modernity' — the non-democratic form of capitalist modernization — to be found in Asian capitalism. In short,

critics of Eurocentrism are rejecting Western cultural values at the very moment when, critically reinterpreted, many of them – egalitarianism, fundamental human rights, the welfare state, to name a few — can serve as a weapon against capitalist globalization" (19). Perhaps a task is to distinguish between capitalism forming one structure of marginalization and then racial and ethnic marginalizations (cf. Grosfoguel 2006, 174). They then merge in forms of dominance and oppression present in global chains of production where consumers benefit from exploitation in what Cedric Robinson (1983/2000) has called racial capitalism.

An example of this is what we can encounter, or rather do not encounter, in contemporary cities namely the many service workers consisting of racialized and exploited women who are rendered invisible as "the *invisibility* of the cleaning jobs of women of color creates the *visibility* of clean homes and public spaces" (Vergès 2019, 10, italics in original). They can, of course, be seen when they are on the way home from cleaning the workplaces of the privileged people, but they do not appear in the dominant narratives of what one achieves and pursues. Cleaning and housework have been battlegrounds in the gender struggle, and the recruitment of racialized women to take over has been ignored as they represent abandoned "tasks that were associated with a backwards femininity" (Vergès. 2019, 7), what one no longer is and has left out of sight. It is not that one cannot see but that one does not want to see. Most consumers see what they can achieve for consumption and not the costs of it, i.e. the human costs conveniently out of sight in complex chains of production. But, as Françoise Vergès draws attention to, it also happens directly in front of us, embedded in social interaction where narratives help us to distinguish and uphold practices, although the narratives may be incoherent if subject to questions. Rendering invisible is exactly to maintain a certain blindness.

This relates to a temptation of reducing complexities. For a decolonial approach it is important to pay attention to changing views on humanity included in marginalizing patterns while acknowledging a complicated relation between changing practices and corresponding reflections on them.

The complexity concerns that ever changing practices lead to ever changing challenges and questions that require changes in discourses. For example, the emergence of early capitalism with changed view on and need for labour. This included the use of slavery that, since the colonisation of the east Atlantic islands, especially Madeira, in the 15th century had increased the existing slave trade across the Mediterranean and North African area thus establishing realities unaffected by legal discourses on the justification for slavery –slave traders do not need sufficient moral justification, just sufficient payment. Another

example is that new resources from America enabled a, in the global trade, marginalized Europe entering the centre of gravity in Asia and, with new naval and military technologies, tip balances. New technologies and related new sciences are transformative and call for new philosophies to explain and legitimize as new scholarly discussions usually emerge when new practices have already had their impact and questions arise. The view on nature had changed through the Renaissance to gradually become a cheap resource to exploit. This offers the opportunity to question whether the inhabitants on different continents are human or should be considered nature thus another natural resource to exploit. As such they can be viewed as inferior, uncivilized, without culture, without rights and finally deprived of having a voice. A changed view on nature and cosmology in the 17th century with the discussion about whether the sun revolves around the Earth, or the Earth around the sun is often seen as defining for modernity. However, it is reasonable to point at another symbolic event: the conclusion of Magellan's expedition in 1522 and thus say that determining is not that the Earth circulates around the sun, but that money circulates around the globe (Sloterdijk 1999, 856).

New practices, new realities, new sciences, they all lead to new ideas and new philosophies, and it is common to talk about changes in European thinking, about new ideals of rationality. The philosophical tradition that originated in ancient Greece is exactly about reflecting on existing practices to learn about their implicit rationality, i.e. what in these practices is considered good practice, and to critically explore their extension and legitimacy. There are two outcomes to this. One is to form theories that help explain what is done and what can be done; another is the philosophical reflection revealing the logics embedded in the practices. Or, phrased differently: one approach is to find answers to new practices, another is to ask why this practice at all. We can encounter the former in research applying decolonial theory to help becoming aware of structural discrimination of a certain kind and, for example, outline strategies "that articulates, uncovers, and challenges linkages between academic knowledge production, dominant knowledge systems, and coloniality" (Zwiener-Collins et al. 2023, 124) which can contribute "to promote the interests of Indigenous groups by producing statistics based on premises that truly reflect the needs and world views of the groups in question" (Denscombe 2025, 235). Such instrumental understanding of theory is for answering questions posed by different interests like when it here is to learn what has previously been ignored. The philosophical tradition, on the other hand, is asking critically about the world-interpretation wherein the interests originate. What legitimates answers within such interpretations and makes them make

sense? What does it imply when theory is considered a means for something, for optimizing an intended approach? Consequently, the philosophical reflections are not prescriptions for action, although some may take inspiration from them. The complaints about philosophy's uselessness and lack of operationality may come from the fact, it was not meant to be of use. This is said to emphasize that the different practices, theories and philosophical interpretations cannot be merged into one idea of Western modernity. A decolonial virtue is attentiveness to differences, especially to the voices that are ignored, marginalized and silenced; it is to avoid assumptions on behalf of others and to avoid generalizations that reduce complexities to the narrator's perspective like when one's experience of research becomes a general statement such as stating that: "In Western philosophy and sciences the subject that speaks is always hidden, concealed, erased from the analysis" (Grosfoguel 2006, 168). Although this view can be found in more research traditions, multiple other views are then erased from the Western philosophy and science.

Generalizations are tools of power and have throughout the philosophical tradition been met with suspicion. Thus, there is a point in targeting epistemologies with totalitarian pretentions and suggest a critical strategy of delinking as Mignolo does; delinking "[f]rom the Totality of Western epistemology, grounded in Latin and Greek and expanded around the globe by means of the six imperial and vernacular European languages of modernity" (Mignolo 2007, 493). It is important here to identify the totalitarian forms to distinguish them from others – the sceptic and suspicious about general claims of representing rationality. Although tempting, the targeting of totalitarian views of certain epistemic traditions cannot become a claim that all epistemic traditions emerging from Western thinking are of the same kind with the consequence that: "You cannot decolonize knowledge if your do not question the very foundation of Western epistemology. And you cannot decolonize being if you do not question the very foundation of Western ontology" (Mignolo & Walsh 2018, 136). The phrase Western epistemology expresses a local research tradition applied as a general description of all traditions despite differences. The locality is revealed in the use of categories such as epistemology and ontology as they belong to an academic tradition that puts emphasis on categorizing and on their specific definitions thereof. They are expressions of a specific style in thinking. This is a reductive construction assuming all scientific disciplines within the Western academic sphere use the same categories and definitions, silencing those who do not. The totalitarian attitude in this assumption becomes apparent when one moves across disciplines and languages and sees how experiences and perspectives debated in, for example, the minor languages can be absent from discourses in

the English literature (e.g. Annus 2012). Or, when they are included and perhaps translated, they are distorted because they are forced into particular forms of dominant Anglophone discourses.

An assumption of only one form of rationality gives an unfortunate conflict with postcolonial studies that are rejected for relying on critical traditions of European origin (Mignolo 2007, 452). Contrary to this radical rejection, postcolonial studies recognize "the intrinsic impossibility for postcolonial theory to dismiss the very categories of thinking that preside over its own emergence" (Colpani et al. 2022, 9) to rather work for provincializing Europe as expressed by Dipesh Chakrabarty (2008). Within the decolonial field, however, there are other views on 21st century research traditions less rejective of critical potential in any European thinking (e.g. Denscombe 2025, 235).

Nevertheless, there is a point in suggesting a fundamental feature permeating what Walter Mignolo calls westernization, i.e. "the course of events and ideas that, around 1500, began to change the preceding global order and establish a new one whose cycle closed around 2000." (Mignolo & Walsh 2018, 128). If we shy away from Western modernity in the singular and acknowledge it is a construction, or "an imaginary entity" (Chakrabarty 2008, 43) it can be established that many of the practices and theories tend to hold universal claims. This is not a problem as such, and it is not specific for the Western mind, many other cultures are holding similar claims (Mignolo 2007, 451); the problem is when practice is to apply these claims, originating in a European context, hence locally, as if they were applicable to any other context, taking "certain knowledges, cultures, languages and language varieties, cisgendered norms, heteronormativities, and other social categories (ways of being and doing) as original and timeless" (Govender 2023, 239). However, the complexity of the matter is that even though narratives about, for example, humanity are "produced in relative, and sometimes absolute, ignorance of the majority of humankind—that is, those living in non-Western cultures" (Chakrabarty 2008, 29) they become embedded within third-world self-perception and "[t]he everyday paradox of third-world social science is that we find these theories, in spite of their inherent ignorance of "us," eminently useful in understanding our societies" (ibid., italics in original).

Important for the critical endeavour of decoloniality is to identify concrete patterns of excluding and marginalizing practices that come from colonial views, i.e. views reflecting an idea of cultural superiority which is exercised, among other things, in dehumanising or at least devaluating the other but not in explicit form but as seductive and often with promises of prospects – they may be about progress and possible access to privileges exercising "a

colonization of the imagination of the dominated" (Quijano 2007, 169). Often, the colonizers' self-perception is not one of oppression but a belief in representing progress, a civilization process through which the other is granted access to a better life. An example from the context of gender violence in localities in Mexico and Brazil is when interventions "starts from a Eurocentric definition of "gender" and the relations it organizes" and have as goal "to promote equality directly and without the mediation of local understandings of gender because gender equality is conceived as "equality of individuals" rather than "equality of gendered groups"" (Segato & Monque 2021, 793). The best intentions of "replacing the hierarchy between men and women for a strictly equal relationship" turns out to be nothing but "to solve modernity's evils with modern solutions" (796).

Nevertheless, it may appear paradoxically as Chakrabarty notes that the one who is subject to marginalizing and dehumanizing narratives participates in and reproduces them. But again, when the colonizer's self-perception is one of liberating and enlightening the colonized, and the means are appealing narratives that affect the imagination, the colonized can come to experience how "an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality" and the positive offer is the colonizer's language elevating the colonized "above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards" (Fanon 1952/1986, 18). Traditions and memories are substituted with new narratives that discredit, discriminate, and transform the colonized who come to desire the colonizer's ideals. Hence, "the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed" (Biko 2014, 192).

How one can adopt narratives that conflict with, even erases one's background, causes little wonder when observing the stunning willingness with which many participate in dominating practices and narratives, for example, of popular culture including a popular culture of a different cultural origin. Like the slave trader does not need sufficient legal legitimacy but only sufficient payment, modern consumers do not need sufficient labour's rights implemented globally but only need sufficiently cheap consumer goods. And many submit to tools and goals of technical means. New technology gives new opportunities, and in a short matter of time many surrender to the opportunities that become instead necessities – what one is enabled to do with new means becomes taken for granted and obstacles seen as abusive limitations. Technologies are no mere means for achieving tasks, but they are in a decisive manner defining tasks and motivations for them – that the medium is the message is crucial to keep in mind "because it is the medium that shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and action" (McLuhan 1964/2002, 9). Mobile phones and internet

are not merely means for communication and information but become integrated into practices and define them paving the way for related services facilitation uses and options of the infrastructure between people. Using the services implies allowing the providers access to one's life through extracting data from experiences with a surprisingly willingness of giving consent to what that is – how many read and reflect on the users' terms and conditions before giving their consent (Couldry & Mejias 2019, 93 ff.)? This establishes "an emerging order for the appropriation of human life so that data can be continuously extracted from it for profit" allowing that "human life is not only annexed to capitalism but also becomes subject to continuous monitoring and surveillance" (ibid., xiii) – what can be considered data colonialism.

Human experiences are appropriated for interests in profit that create narratives, and they return as seductive means for profitable cultural forms that can present themselves as the dominant narrative one comes to desire to be part of and consequently adopt to even though it can distort and even erase what one came with originally. Such willingness to surrender makes it understandable how even narratives discriminating against one's background can become dominant. There is a parallel found in how James Baldwin (1954/1986), in speaking of minority rights, asks first about the majority who defines the common will. While this is not a matter of numbers or of power, his examples are the blacks in South Africa and the French with de Gaulle in Algeria, he suggests it is about influence – about narratives used to uphold one's position against others. He discusses the context of the United States where the blacks come to form the social bottom line and represent the fear of losing status in a society whose grand narrative is one of progressing up the social ladder. The blacks represent a myth beneath which lurks a "sleeping terror of some condition which we refuse to imagine" (111), of what one fears in oneself and can project on to others. As a narrative it is to handle; the Other can be kept at distance. Narratives can make the unknown or dangerous manageable through forming and modelling the world into satisfactory views that must be upheld and maintained in the cultural setting, thus "what is honored in a country is cultivated there" (109) – which is what cultural literacy is about. Narratives become influential and many will seek to conform to them to avoid being considered the backward and uncultivated who is not catching up with development and progress.

Likewise, using Artificial Intelligence implies a willingness to accept a reduction in complexities – in language and information – for receiving answers conveniently arranged but culturally biased to uphold dominant narratives. Machine learning is about extracting and compressing data through reduction of complexity that serves for standardising and

optimising, i.e. also to reinforce existing biases, to give the most probable answer within the context of a defined problem. This gives a chain of biases: the selectiveness of the material data is extracted from, the parameters for compressing and the generation of probability. AI is a tool for solving problems defined by contexts determining satisfactory answers. “The design of AI is not a mere reflection of societal concerns, but rather an enacted process that embodies the values and biases of a given sociocultural context” (Hipólito 2024, 300; cf. Buyl et al. 2026; Johnson et al. 2022). Again, it points to a willingness to use tools that frame the use with narratives that are of a specific cultural origin but taken over by users despite cultural differences, and with the user’s acceptance of compression that filters out and eliminates the user’s own culture for different standards. Notable, while writing this in 2026, one can, for example, notice the significant imbalance in language coverage by language models that leaves 98% of African languages unsupported (Hussen et al. 2025).

Once again, it is important to keep in mind that the self-perception of the colonizer is for the most part not to exercise deliberate dominance but to share what is considered progress – like what through new possibilities should be introduced as new practices. The problem is the lack of attention to the other’s needs and desires. They are, if not ridiculed for their backwardness, rejected for being without legitimate value or even dangerous to progress that, the totalitarian element, all cannot but want. In that light, the other is deprived of visibility and agency. This can be named epistemic imperialism, “the hubris of believing that what one knows or studies from a privileged perspective, as within the Anglophone academy, can be exported wholesale to contexts about which one knows little or nothing” (Sonevytsky 2022, 22). If asking again why one who is subject to marginalizing narratives themselves reproduces them, some of the answer may be the willingness to repeat narratives one is embedded in without fully being aware of the elements going behind one’s back. For example, the knowledge traditions one is educated in which forms practices of what one does, to whom one looks for qualified analysis, and what language one uses. Education creates habits, and a decolonial task is to identify the structures of racial and ethnic formed marginalization in embedded these habits, like when empirical research is done on only a very specific group of subjects all coming from Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, Democratic, i.e. WEIRD, societies (Henrich et al. 2010) but extrapolated to characterize any human being. Or when knowledge of East Europe and Central Asia is built on scholars coming from research traditions dominated by “imperial Western and Russian perspectives” (Hendl et al. 2024, 195) leading to an “unending stream of Western scholars and pundits condescend to explain the situation in Ukraine and

Europe's East, in ways that commonly disregard voices from the region and claim to perfectly understand Russian logic and motives" (ibid., 176; cf. Sonevytsky 2022). A complaint about dominant discourses in IR (International Relations) is that they tend to perform 'Westsplaining' where "Ukraine is framed as a clueless Western pawn without subjectivity or agency and seen through a Russo-centric lens, denying a right to self-determination and national liberation" (Hendl et al. 2024, 177). It would be like if researchers globally only turned to Danish scholars to learn about Greenland.

The decolonial task of recognizing the other for what the other is and to avoid making assumptions on behalf of the other is a challenging assignment. The researcher is necessarily embedded in a language and a logic that often bear the colonial marks, not least by reducing diversity and complexities to views framed by existing language and categorization emerging from the research tradition one is educated in. A language is anchored in cultural and social practices which has its distinctive features and to participate in Anglophone discourses as non-English speakers is to experience a transformation of one's experiences into a different cultural mindset – the one of WEIRD-societies where Joseph Henrich et al.'s large survey demonstrates that in behavioural sciences around 70% of the subjects of research and the authors of articles are from the US, and "70% of all psychology citations come from the United States" (Henrich et al. 2010, 63). This is the case with the Anglophone research language which not only has as consequence that research conducted in especially smaller languages is made invisible in the dominant context, but also that specific research traditions' mindsets come to dominate labelled the Western rationality subsequently applied to any tradition, erasing all differences.

The strength of decoloniality is the awareness of specific structures of discrimination originating from colonial practices, i.e. from racial, ethnic, anthropological, and national, used to form a superior-inferior asymmetry. It is to recognize the other as other, which includes becoming aware of questions one does not ask because it never occurred as something to ask for, or they have been considered insignificant. It requires an awareness of not only what the other says but of how it is said and what is not said (cf. Govender 2023), to challenge oneself and acknowledge how one is always embedded in the practices one tries to challenge.

The contributions in this issue reveal different approaches to and ways of dealing with decoloniality. These are not only related to discussions about global north and south but also to the European north-south as well as west-east. They address narratives and their

embedded concepts, educational practices in schools and in the production of cultural artefacts, the curating and exhibiting of them, and to learn to not only be in a relation *to* but being *in* a relation. They reflect on what it is to shift focus within practices to challenge dominant structures without reintroducing a new epistemic authority within educational settings such as schools and museums as well as cultural artefacts like cinema and fashion that, emerging from the objects of colonial representation, can change perception and reinstate different narratives. Narratives require an awareness of the conceptual heritage embedded in practices which as well reveal embedded epistemic structures and their *Wirkungsgeschichte* enacted in concepts and in relations to others including other people and other sentient beings. Across the six contributions are found several reflections on, to emphasise three topics, a decolonial shortcoming, agency and narratives.

The decolonial shortcoming is related to the challenges of working properly decolonial. Decoloniality puts high demand on its practitioners. This relates also to the question raised above about the use of decoloniality as European researchers working on marginalization within European communities.

The danger is one of appropriating decoloniality in ways that transform it into a mere 'vocal strategy' adopted by institutions to demonstrate good intentions but without a true transformation of mindsets and practices. When only discursive and executed as a mere procedure to demonstrate a decolonial awareness, it does not change the epistemic conditions of practices and thinking and, consequently, is in danger of reproducing colonial structures. Decoloniality takes more than drawing attention to what was previously neglected like, for example, exhibiting indigenous art or asking for marginalized children's experiences. It requires a profound change of views, a "resetting" or transformation of the questioner – a delinking.

One purpose of delinking is to disconnect from narratives that seek to dominate, claiming they hold the universal perspective in light of which others are evaluated and devalued. Decoloniality advocates for a pluriversal rather than a universal worldview, where universal is understood as Western universalism which subordinates other narratives to the Western as the holder of true views. Acknowledging plurality is to acknowledge the agency of different, non-Western, views, and of marginalized positions within one's cultural setting. This entails becoming aware of whether one holds a privileged position oneself like in asymmetric relations such as between researchers and the object of research, or between teachers and school children and their diverse backgrounds. An approach may here be to deviate from the standards to allow differences to emerge without subjecting them to

assumed positions. What proves crucial in such approaches is a contextualization, i.e. to accept and engage epistemic premises of the other to co-create. A challenge lies in the “co” that must not degenerate into merely granting the other participation or to assigning intentions to the other. It is the emergence of meaning from an engaged dialogue that is the task, and this implies recognizing the agency of the participants.

Recognizing agency is no mere substitution of one narrative with another. When those who were objects of colonial representation produce cultural artefacts, their narratives are not merely revealing colonial constructions, but they are themselves transformative for perceptions. It is not only about making those rendered invisible visible, it is about changing the rendering, i.e. reconfiguring mindsets and behaviour in interactive relations.

Decoloniality is concerned with the changed form of rationality that emerged after the Renaissance in Europe, and an important component herein is that nature was transformed into cheap and exploitable resources. This implies asking whether indigenous peoples, often called primitive and even in some languages ‘nature people’, *Naturvolk*, have human agency. Recognizing indigenous knowledge is a priority for decoloniality to install it as equally valid among others in a plurivesal world. Questioning a problematic view on nature that builds on separating humans from the living world as a component in forming the foundation of coloniality can also lead to questioning the relation to other living beings and to recall embodied experiences of connecting and building community beyond human-centred approaches of our contemporary world that has rendered invisible and imperceptible multisensory practices of collective memories. While indigenous knowledge occupies more discourses in decoloniality it is no less important to be aware of how other narratives and practices in a similar fashion deprive others of agency. For example, when researchers seek recognition through rankings, publishing in high profiled journals, and participating in exclusive events that often are exclusionary to others due to costs and travel restrictions. And when narratives about South-Eastern Europe, Baltic, Caucasus and Central Asia are framed by classic Russian perspectives reproduced in East European and Slavic studies at Western universities, depriving the affected people of agency.

It is thus essential to be aware of narratives that determine who is granted agency and who is deprived of it? Who is visible and who is rendered invisible? It requires an awareness of the conceptual heritage embedded in practices of narrating and storytelling that enact epistemic structures in concepts. Decoloniality is thus about investigating aspects of conceptual history which reveal interpretations and intentions that in multiple ways have deviated, twisted, struggled with and otherwise encapsulated possible ways of thinking with

or against dominating narratives. Conceptual history reveals legacies that can help with revisiting historical narratives, give a new understanding of the past, and enable a revising of contemporary narration.

Narratives are not only spoken or written but as much present in images, and like transformations of words and narrative structures entail changed perceptions, a different production of images can do likewise. A change in the production of images and words is not merely about changing what is represented but a change in what representation is. What matters is not that we come see something different, but that we see in a different way like when the one rendered invisible appears as the creator of different narratives.

Europe is as well a narrative. Often, we find in decoloniality an assumption of the European identity representing the Global North versus the Global South. However, there is also a north-south within Europe wherein the modern idea of European civilization is constructed by decontextualizing the Mediterranean south and relocating it in a narrative of idealizing northern ideals in southern cultural artefacts with a claim to authority as representing European modernity. Decoloniality identifies a logic of narration rather than a geographically and culturally fixed worldview and identifying such logics with a view to how they perform inclusion and exclusion formed by colonial history is a suggestion of justifying working with decoloniality also within a Western setting.

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Notes

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