

Chapter 5: Decolonisation and Participatory Design

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Abstract

Decolonising design is increasingly a matter of concern in global design and technology research and practice. Decolonising discourses address the ongoing societal challenges of political, economic and racial justice rooted in coloniality and perpetuated within global eurocentric structures and worldviews. In attempts to counter systemic biases, design and research communities call for diversity, equity and inclusion of the marginalised in collaborative design processes.

In this chapter, we present contributions from Participatory Design and decolonising movements and how they engage across four core strands: the anticolonial, postcolonial, decolonial and the pluriversal. Each of the strands address attempts to reconcile different worlds, knowledges and epistemologies that can contribute towards new framings and directions for (de)colonialities in Participatory Design. Based on our survey of literature and research cases on Participatory Design and decoloniality, we demonstrate how researchers, designers and users in diverse contexts across the globe are working with and adapting modes, concepts, and methodologies. They provide significant contributions at different levels of theory or practice, and generate new trajectories for diverse and inclusive forms of knowledge production. In the final section, we discuss the challenges and potentials raised by and across the strands and appeal for a relational agenda in Participatory Design.

Contemporary debates on decolonisation in Participatory Design need to be understood within their past interrelations grounded in anti-colonial movements, and how historical and geopolitical issues continue to shape the conditions for design and knowledge creation. The chapter provides a lens that enables Participatory Design researchers to position themselves and engage with the possible pasts-presents-futures of these concerns, in support of sovereignty and self-determination of future making. It provides a starting point for participatory researchers to engage with a relational agenda in which introspection, challenging epistemological

hegemonies and responsibilities in situated actions are central to the wider decolonisation movements.

1. Introduction

Contemporary socio-economic challenges rooted in coloniality, such as digital exclusion, land dispossessions, resource exploitation, and racial discrimination are continuously perpetuated within an imminent unjust system. Recognising the responsibility of designers, academics and technology developers in propagating eurocentric worldviews, and fostering systemic bias and injustices across all spheres of life, the urgency to decolonise design and education has been put forward by a rising number of concerned and marginalised.

Although Participatory Design has a long history of addressing concerns of power relations through democratic deliberation and mutual learning (Bødker et al. 2022; Bannon et al. 2018a), its theories, concepts, empirical methods and approaches, have not directly addressed the implications of colonial legacies and several forms of coloniality that are implicated in their histories (Smith et al. 2020, 2021). Bødker and Kyng (2018) have strongly advocated for Participatory Design to reinvigorate its political and democratic ideals, in ways that the field becomes relevant to contexts outside of Scandinavia and Western societies, and to tackle global matters of concern, such as systemic injustices rooted in coloniality.

Participatory Design has been historically circumscribed to the Scandinavian worker self-determination movement in the 1970s (Bødker et al., 2022; Nygaard & Terje Berge, 1975), occupied with unsettling power relations. Attempts to affiliate with discourses of anti-, post-, and de-coloniality in Participatory Design in recent years have unravelled a number of issues, contradictions and confusions within its research and practices (Clarke et al., 2022), leading to questioning its underlying values and biases, ways of creating and sharing knowledge, and situated actions, accountabilities and responsibilities, in reinforcing power relations through entanglements in the spread of eurocentric research, technology, and design practices. Concerns about a lack of engagement with alternative ways of knowledge production (Winschiers-Theophilus and Bidwell, 2013), misrepresentation of indigenous societies (Stichel et al., 2019), appropriation and commercialization of Indigenous Knowledge, and unfitting research design have been calling for serious methodological revisions to be made (Bossavit & Parsons, 2016). However, only in recent years, as decolonisation movements have emerged in academic spheres, as calls for decolonising design (Escobar 2018, Mignolo & Walsh 2018) and ongoing student and staff strikes for decolonising (higher) education in South Africa (Rhodes must fall, 2015), did concerns of (de)coloniality per se have received attention among Participatory Design researchers.

Within the context of current debates over the role and position of Participatory Design in relation to decolonisation discourses and movements, this chapter recovers colonial histories that have been downplayed, or even systematically erased, with the implication that important connections have been lost or overlooked in Participatory Design and nearby fields. As the field

continues to expand, increasing research projects are developing participatory approaches in support of sovereignty and self-determination of future making around the globe. Anchored in their own localities, researchers provide significant theoretical and practical contributions, thereby generating new trajectories for diverse and inclusive forms of knowledge production in addressing contemporary global challenges. In this chapter, we present a survey of contributions from Participatory Design categorised in four strands. We distinguish between anticolonial, postcolonial, and decolonial approaches, as identified by Davis and Walsh (2020), and add a fourth strand of pluriversality, as represented in more recent attempts to reconcile different worlds. With that, we believe to accommodate the multiple ways researchers and practitioners are finding their critical position within Participatory Design to represent their geographical regions, local and indigenous communities, and collaborations in a globalised world.

When debating decoloniality, it is clear that historicity becomes key to understanding contemporary discourses. Thus, each strand presented in the chapter is situated within the wider historical contexts of (de)coloniality, followed by Participatory Design's engagement with these movements. The aim of contextualising each strand is, not to separate concerns but, to provide some clarity to how discourses of research and knowledge production have been used and shaped within and across wider historical and geopolitical processes. As such, the chapter provides a unique overview and contribution to untangling and (re)connecting the decolonial movements and their connections to Participatory Design research within such wider frames, that are often forgotten in design-oriented discourses on decolonising design. Before moving deeper into each strand, we provide a brief overview of the four strands and how they are situated within early and contemporary Participatory Design.

*"Lo "decolonial" es una moda
lo poscolonial es un deseo
y lo anticolonial es una lucha."*

Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui,
as quoted in Makaran and Gaussens (2020).

The first strand is related to the influence of **anticolonial** work in the foundational years of Participatory Design in Scandinavia and beyond. Anticolonial movements originated during colonial times, when indigenous populations actively went against the colonial regime and any of its remaining legacies (Choudry et al., 2013). Later, intellectuals, from former colonies, developed a rich economic, political, and cultural criticism of colonialism (Fanon, 2004; Nkrumah, 1971; Freire 1985), laying foundations for empirical and theoretical work in human sciences. The literature found here spans many venues and little has been done so far to consolidate the contributions, or the concepts and practices originated in the Global South²

¹ "The "decolonial" is a trend, the postcolonial is a desire, and the anticolonial is a struggle."

² We prefer to use the non-geographical distinction between Global North and Global South to capture the manifestation of the colonial difference across the globe (W. D. Mignolo, 1999), in alignment with contemporary social movements and the decolonial and postcolonial strands that are introduced later in the chapter. Anticolonial strands typically used metropolis/colonies, developed/underdeveloped nations,

(Cusicanqui, 2012). This fragmentation has resulted in historical erasure, and the relations and connections of anticolonial discourses and Participatory Design have escaped the attention of the more recent research.

The second strand, identified from 2010 onwards, brings forth **postcolonial** issues like critical positionality, voice suppression, geopolitical power, and cultural differences. The postcolonial strand emphasises the unsettling or rupture with new forms of colonialism, such as long standing theoretical discourses of postcoloniality and challenges of ‘modernity’, and development aid coming from former metropolises, in favour of local initiatives based on situated knowledge(s). Particular examples from the Participatory Design Conference (PDC 2014) in Windhoek, Namibia, brought into discussions knowledge and epistemologies from the Global South, mainly from the African continent. The conference played a large role in extending Participatory Design practices and approaches into non-Western contexts and communities based on local Namibian and indigenous values and perspectives.

The third **decolonial** strand is based on calls for Participatory Design and Human-Computer Interaction research to engage more deeply in onto-epistemologies and knowledge constructions in local sites and regions, and across the Global South-North divide and South-South cooperation, to develop more inclusive, diverse, equitable practices and research approaches. The decolonial strand emphasises the ongoing subtle forms of colonialities that cannot be easily displaced or unsettled. Based on prevailing struggles between natives and settlers, of identities, power and cultural practices, contributions to decoloniality engage with the challenges of conviviality and hybridisms in contemporary research. The virtual edition of PDC2020 hosted in Manizales, Colombia, spurred such perspectives and debates further by connecting and integrating Latin American research communities, politics and concerns of designing otherwise, within the larger international Participatory Design community.

Though partially overlapping with the decolonial strand, the fourth **pluriversal** strand, pursues divergent interests and utopias, which are highly relevant for and within Participatory Design for reinvigorating some of the more loosely coupled (geo)political agendas and social movement values of the anticolonial strand. Under this extensive umbrella, Participatory Design researchers are trying to address issues such as environmental crisis, indigenous peoples’ existential conditions, and rights of the land, global power struggles, oppressions and wars. The hybrid PDC2022 conference in Newcastle, UK, advanced these themes a step further through a focus on more-than-human participations and onto-epistemic- cosmologies. A number of contributions directly addressed aspects of pluriversal design, connecting to participatory approaches increasingly endorsed by conferences in areas beyond computing, such as the Design Research Society Pluriversal Special Interest Group (DRS Pluriversal SIG) and its online conference PIVOT 2020 and 2021 (Leitão & Noel, 2022).

Addressing issues of coloniality across the four strands, the chapter invigorates the debates and practices in Participatory Design. Based on our survey of literature and research cases on

and First/Third Worlds to outline a *different difference*. Postcolonial strands have not emphasised these dialectics and, instead, try to emphasise their synthesis in hybrids and other forms (Bhabha, 1994).

Participatory Design and decoloniality, we demonstrate how researchers, designers and users in diverse contexts across the globe are working with and adapting new modes, concepts, methodologies and advancing theoretical contributions to the field. We conclude the chapter with an appeal to the Participatory Design community to follow a relational agenda in which introspection, challenging epistemological hegemonies and responsibilities in situated actions become part of wider decolonisation movements.

2. Anticolonial - Fighting for national liberation

Participatory Design is historically circumscribed to the Scandinavian worker self-determination movement, which was linked to larger international movements on workers' resistance to automation. Participatory Design's initiation in the 1970s was motivated by the accelerated introduction of information technology in the workplace, and sought to empower workers and managers at the risk of being replaced by automated processes (Nygaard and Terje Bergo 1975, Bødker et al. 2022). This wave of automation was pushed in part also by the rearrangement of production forces provoked by liberation wars in former colonies in Africa, Asia, Latin-America, and Oceania (Vieira Pinto, 2005). As capital could no longer be easily transferred from colonies to metropolises, the Global North had to extract more surplus value from their own workers, through new management styles and computer-based automation (Harvey, 2011).

The historical links between the Global North worker self-determination movement and Global South decolonisation movements, extend into contemporary Participatory Design, manifested through influential work of anticolonial intellectuals from former colonies, such as Paulo Freire. The anticolonial criticism revealed the exclusionary characteristic of Western humanism, whereby people in new worlds were considered less-than-humans or even non-humans due to their body features and/or culture and, therefore, in need of support, guidance, and subjugation (Freire, 1985). Instead of rejecting Western humanism and its modern ways of humanising, anticolonial intellectuals fought for revising the program and including the historically excluded through popular democratic governance, such as the Andean *mingas* (Testori & D'Auria, 2018). Within this context, critical pedagogy (Freire, 1985) and participatory action research (Fals-Borda, 2013) emerged. Drawing on Paulo Freire's anticolonial critical pedagogy (and other authors from the Global North), Participatory Design researchers (Carlsson et al., 1978; Ehn, 2017) linked participation to learning, and research, thus bypassing the anti-dialogical divide between theory and practice that characterises the colonial situation. The emphasis on developing new theories of Human-Computer Interaction alongside new technological systems enabled Scandinavian software developers to resist the US information technology development model (Asaro, 2000), which a few decades later grew to become what is now known as digital colonialism: the global concentration of essential digital infrastructures in the hands of a few data-extractivist companies (Faustino & Lippold, 2023; Kwet, 2019).

Despite providing a key contribution to the field in its infancy, the contributions of Paulo Freire and other anti-colonial thinkers and ideas remain to be properly recognised in Participatory Design. In PDC 2020, Serpa and colleagues (2020) presented a first step into that direction by summarising Freire's basic tenets to Participatory Design, whereas Lucia Garcés (2020) presented a stunning case of Freirean popular education and game design with X Yatil's Maya people. Another foundational contribution worthy of mention is the contribution of Homi Bhabha (1994) and his concept of *third space* used to grasp cultural hybridisms between colonisers and colonised. This concept has been applied to enable dialogue between the critics of the predominant software development model in the US and Scandinavian researchers who presented an alternative that could not be directly applied in the US (Muller, 2009). While the concept has been widely used and developed (see the postcolonial strands below), the wider geopolitical narratives of the anticolonial strands were not made explicit in the history of Participatory Design, nor were similar developments of participatory approaches from outside of Scandinavia mentioned. As the first era of Scandinavian projects in the 1970's involved cooperation with trade unions, in well known projects (e.g. Demos, DUE, UTOPIA) (Bødker et al. 2022), similar revolutionary projects endorsed participatory approaches in Latin America. A project that deserves mentioning is Cybersyn, a national information system developed by the Chilean government between 1971 and 1973 to resist US anti-communism international sanctions (Medina, 2006). Aiming at supporting a different kind of socialism, less planned and more emergent, the system was designed to connect worker-controlled factories (many of them just nationalised) to organise production, distribution, and consumption of goods in realtime. The project was one of a series of Chilean revolutionary projects developed with the participation of worker representatives, similar to the early Scandinavian projects, and an early example of a design for autonomy (Calderón Salazar et al., 2018) or what Arturo Escobar (2018) calls autonomous design. Although there is no documented direct connection between the Chilean and the Scandinavian experiences, three Cybersyn participants had indirect connections: Stafford Beer, Fernando Flores, and Gui Bonsiepe. Beer, the cybernetic theoretician who devised the system architecture, returned to the UK and consolidated his Viable System Model, an approach often used in combination with soft-systems methodologies (Checkland, 1984), a similar approach to organisation problem solving that laid the foundations of early Scandinavian Participatory Design. As for Fernando Flores, who after the Chilean coup fled to the US, he later collaborated with Terry Winograd to develop a new foundation to design (Winograd & Flores, 1986), a phenomenological theory that supported the communicative and collaborative interests of Scandinavians. Gui Bonsiepe is perhaps the least known of the three, possibly because he remained in other Latin American countries for a while after the coup. Bonsiepe developed an explicit anticolonial criticism of Industrial Design founded in Marxist dependence theory, with touches of phenomenology and cybernetics (Bonsiepe, 2022). His theoretical work followed his practice as an industrial designer and design educator. He was one of the first to raise the anticolonial flag against the colonialist dependence bias of early humanitarian social design (Bonsiepe, 1983). He demonstrated, by example, that it was more ethical to send people (and not just products) to the periphery and to design with the locals. Design in partnership, an approach that grew out of the Brazilian readings of social design, might be considered as a response to Bonsiepe's call. This approach was presented by some of their proponents at PDC 2022, in the Portuguese track (Araujo et al., 2020).

Anticolonial praxis, and its corollary national emancipation, is behind early attempts to combine Free Software and Participatory Design in Brazil. Luiz Inácio Lula, in his first presidential term (2003-2007), took the bold action of nationalising public software by terminating contracts with multinational companies and signing new contracts with local companies and cooperatives that offered similar solutions based on open source software. Influenced by the Brazilian Free Software movement — which deliberately did not adopt the open source terminology due to its depoliticising content — and the early Scandinavian Participatory Design experience, Faber-Ludens Interaction Design Institute developed the Design Livre ideology to stimulate design students and young designers to take a political stance in their profession (Instituto Faber-Ludens, 2012). Different from the Open Design approach that emerged about the same time in Europe (Van Abel, 2011), Design Livre emphasised sharing the design process in addition to the source code (Van Amstel & Gonzatto, 2016). To support the realisation of this ideology, Faber-Ludens developed Corais Platform in 2011, a digital infrastructure built on free software that hosted collaborative projects of any kind. The initial aim was to offer an alternative to Google Drive and other imperialist cloud services to participatory designers, yet the Brazilian design community did not make wide use of it. Instead, cultural producers, popular educators, indigenous people, and activists populated the platform with collaborative projects such as hackerspaces, traditional culture preservation projects, online courses, and so on (Van Amstel & Gonzatto, 2016). The platform pioneered the use of digital money to mitigate the budget cuts in government funding which severely affected the Digital Culture movement in Brazil (Gonzatto et al., 2021), in a move that can be related to a popular form of service design (De Siqueira & Van Amstel, 2023). The platform is designed and maintained by its users through its metadesign project. A couple of studies analysing design participation in Corais metadesign project have been presented in the Brazilian information design and CSCW conferences (F. L. Pelanda & Van Amstel, 2019; Pelanda & Van Amstel, 2019).

Long after Faber-Ludens closed its doors and Corais drowned into inactivity, the Design Livre ideology continued to remain current. This ideology motivated developing a critical pedagogy for interaction design (Van Amstel & Gonzatto, 2020), a monster aesthetics for collective design bodies (Angelon & van Amstel, 2021), a historical account of the user oppression in human-computer interaction (Gonzatto & van Amstel, 2022), and two special issues of *Diseña* (a Chilean journal) on the role of design in the liberation from oppression (Van Amstel et al., 2022, 2023). The insurge of the Design & Oppression Network at the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 reinvigorated the anticolonial strand by promoting several public debates on what constitutes an oppressive and a liberating design (Van Amstel et al., 2021). While looking at its Critical Design Education activity, the network found itself crafting six relational qualities: freedom, criticality, solidarity, autonomy, dialogicity, and monstrosity (Mazzarotto et al., 2023). These qualities may work as an provisional agenda for anticolonial strands in Participatory Design.

As we have seen so far, the anticolonial strand is characterised by strong past and present engagements with social movements fighting for emancipation, national liberation, information technology sovereignty, workplace rights, and peer-to-peer commoning. Connecting these disparate narratives, which has not been done in the literature on decoloniality and Participatory Design, makes clear how early movements in Participatory Design are interconnected with

discourses on (de)coloniality and technology design across different continents. Future research that prioritises this agenda may prefer to adopt the anticolonial label over labels from other strands.

3. Postcolonial - Unsettling colonial legacies

As post-war liberation processes spread through Asia, Africa, and Oceania, the anticolonial literature was read and reconsidered in different contexts. In South Asia, for instance, a group of scholars founded the subaltern studies by the end of the 1970s (Guha, 1982), later expanded by researchers in the Middle East (Said, 1978) to what is now known as postcolonial studies (Schwarz & Ray, 2000). This is a variegated group of scholars who raised their voices against prevailing colonial relationships in academia and in societies that had gone through recent independence processes. The term postcolonial tried to capture this condition of being politically independent while culturally and/or economically dependent. Postcolonial intellectuals were sceptical that the assisted development proposed or imposed by former metropolises could lead to authentic independence, in part, because it did not address the cultural issue (Said, 1978).

Postcolonial intellectuals were located or had strong ties to universities located at the centre of the largest former colonial empire, the UK, and the current top military and cultural power, the US. To speak and be heard there (Spivak, 1988), they had to develop an intellectual profile that focused on theory and somehow detached them from the practice of decolonisation in the former colonies. Looking critically at the not-always-successful outcomes of the liberation wars in African nations, they criticised anticolonial scholars for being too simplistic, idealistic, and dichotomic. In their attempt to engage with post-structuralist debates in Europe, they focused much on analysing language, meaning, power, and semiotic issues (Mbembe, 2001). This engagement resulted in a fruitful analysis of hybrid languages, spaces, and modes of being human, where the colonisers and the colonised could be kept apart from each other (Bhabha, 1994). Multiculturalism theories could no longer rely on the traditional dichotomies between universalism and relativism.

Anthropology was one of the first fields to welcome the uneasy discussion proposed by postcolonial thinkers. Disciplines of cultural anthropology that were born out of the colonial era, have continuously struggled to overcome the relational aspects of time and 'othering', between 'us' and 'them', through which anthropology has made its object and continued its Western domination (Fabian, 1991; Said, 1978). Fabian's (1991) criticism of 'allochronism', which places the 'other' culture in another time, is a constitutive element of othering and the structural denial of 'coevalness'. It became a cornerstone in debates over representations and knowledge production in the field (Clifford & Marcus., 1986). Fabian's theories supported the development of a more performative engagement with the aim of creating coeval relations between researchers and their interlocutors through dialogues in the present - or speaking subjects in dialogue with each other - based on their diverse (inter)subjectivities, imaginations, and experiences, which are still highly relevant in the decolonial discourses. An example of that is the ongoing dialogue between designers and anthropologists in the hybrid field of Design Anthropology, which Dori Tunstall (2013, p. 239) defines as such: "design anthropology draws

from core sets of theoretical perspectives—the critical anthropology of Third World peoples and their allies, indigenous and Scandinavian traditions of cooperative/participatory design, and indigenous, critical, feminist, ontological, and phenomenological knowledge traditions." Building on that definition, she offers seven principles for approaching value systems, social, ethical and cultural issues, towards self-determination and constructive change (Tunstall, 2013), as well as recentring of design theory and practice from within indigenous cultures and histories towards larger cultural justice in design and technology development (Tunstall, 2023). As an example of that, Noronha and colleagues (2020) developed anthropological knowledge on *thinging* and correspondence by designing with craftswomen in Northern Brazil.

In parallel to Design Anthropology, researchers in Human-Computer Interaction also engaged with postcolonial authors to add cross-cultural sensitivities and problematising power relations with users from colonised backgrounds. Irani and colleagues (2010) introduced the concept of postcolonial computing, focusing on a generative view of culture, enacted in everyday life (Philip et al., 2012). The concept was crafted on the general postcolonial literature, yet without much acknowledgement to the nuances and tensions that postcolonial authors found in their condition. As such, these tensions continue to be re-enacted in technology adoption and deployment initiatives, such as Human-Computer Interaction for Development (HCI4D). Participatory Design has been defined as the key approach for postcolonial computing, even if some scholars in this field were critical of this way of "doing good" through computing (Bødker et al. 2022). People from the former colonies' participation in the design of information technology for development was seen as a way of realising that discourse. Scandinavian Participatory Design was summoned as an allied approach, although interpreted mostly through the US understanding of participation as the third space of HCI (Muller, 2009). The concept of third space was drawn from Homi Bhabha's (1994) assertion that cultural identity is formed in the ambivalent cultures and in-between spaces of the colonisers and the colonised. Based on such theories, Muller and Druin (2012) defined the third space as the space where constructive discussions, dialogue, negotiations and mutual learning between the designers and the users can take place. Cultural hybridity becomes a challenge for the colonial opposition between self and other, Western and non-Western, or designer and user (Merritt & Stolterman, 2012). Outside of the US but still in America (the continent that is often reduced to a single-nation territory in imperialist discourses), De los Reyes and Botero (2012) found that hybridism can be explored by designers to identify with the community they are working with.

Cultural differences between designers and users have been the focus of attention of much Participatory Design research, yet only those that have engaged with postcolonial literature have acknowledged the colonial basis of such differences. Nevertheless, this colonial basis is interpreted as a metaphor, analogy, or a weak association to other challenges faced in Participatory Design. A case in point is the postcolonial reformulation of design/use time: "knowledge and categories fixed in a design and circulated through scripts can act as colonising forces that, by affording certain behaviour, actually limit the possibility to appreciate what was not known at the time of design but became relevant at the time of use" (Storni, 2013, p. 51).

In attempts to contribute to overcome this divide, the Participatory Design research community engaged in the debate cautiously. PDC2014, besides integrating the global research community into the local NGO's, artistic, educational, and political communities, was the first occasion for collective reflections on global (North-South) aspects of participatory design research. Building directly onto postcolonial studies, Mainsah and Morrison (2014) called for a theoretical focus on postcolonial theory and its apparent applicability to Participatory Design practices. In that same occasion, Hakken and Mate (2014, p. 89) warned that: "Participatory Design will never be able to deal satisfactorily with culture if it continues to treat culture as an actual, empirical phenomenon, something with a 'real' ontological status and thus to be apprehended directly, irrespective of the number or fixity of its channels". They suggested that Participatory Design practitioners should therefore first narrow down their focus onto single aspects of culture, deemed relevant, then attend to other aspects and finally merge the foci into a cohesive narrative of the situated cultural context. However, this approach still perpetuates othering through a biased narrative and with fear of essentialising concepts of culture that discourage intercultural dialogue.

A major criticism of postcolonial computing, has been the lack of including marginalised and indigenous perspectives thereby still manifesting a eurocentric perspective (Ali, 2014). While framing their work in postcolonial computing, Taylor and colleagues (2018) have collaborated closely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia. They recognise that technology design is always culturally situated and socially constructed. Expanding on this notion, they "advocate for a vision of digitising culture in which technology supports people to enact culture in the digital age, and people are equipped with both cultural knowledge and the skills to perform it." (Taylor et al., 2018). Thus within their project Digital Community Board, they used a participatory approach to learn about diverse cultural practices, such as storytelling and timing, and how best to translate these into a digital process. They found out that in such a cross-cultural design context, some cultural values can be explicitly or implicitly encoded in the technology designed.

Despite the recent efforts to ensuring the involvement of indigenous communities, the conceptualisations and practices of Participatory Design still struggles with the legacy of Western and Eurocentric perspectives ingrained in the design methods, tools and measurements themselves (Barcham, 2023; Winschiers-Theophilus & Bidwell, 2013). The ongoing appropriation of Participatory Design outside of Scandinavia, in particular to the Global South, has prompted concerns about the applicability of the Scandinavian alternative model to the rest of the world (Bødker & Kyng, 2018), which is now finding points of integration and conflict through cross-engagements (Calderon Salazar & Huybrechts, 2020; Smith et al., 2020).

Hence postcolonial approaches to design research and practice, even though well intended, inherently still often promote a neocolonial design (Smith et al., 2021). Smith and authors (2020) stress that Participatory Design given its political nature and motivation must keep challenging existing power structures through bottom-up engagements, and embrace participation by those historically excluded through colonising processes. This demands more focus on developing

decolonial *practices* of Participatory Design, which is a central challenge of the general decolonising design discourse.

4. Decolonial - Research and design otherwise

In Participatory Design, the term postcolonial is increasingly being replaced by the term decolonial, as if they were interchangeable. A distinction based on its historical origins might clear up this confusion. Since the 1990s, postcolonial studies have been reviewed by a new generation of mostly Latin-American and Caribbean authors: the modernity/coloniality group (Escobar, 2007). This group emerged from the dissidents of the earlier Latin-American branch of subaltern studies who wanted to break free from European academic canons and their modern way of developing knowledge (Grosfoguel, 2011).

The modernity/coloniality group has been responsible for demonstrating the necessary link between the modernity project and the colonial project in producing a culturally-homogenous world (Quijano, 2000, 2007). These projects generated certain relational qualities that got ingrained to political, economic, and cultural practices of both metropolises and colonies. They named these the colonialities (Wynter, 2003), or forms of coloniality, but they also recognised the opposite qualities crafted by anti-modern and anti-colonial projects: decolonialities (W. D. Mignolo, 2020). From that distinction came the adjective decolonial, that emphasises the active stance against colonial qualities through the "de" suffix. With this suffix choice, they also wanted to draw a distinction to the postcolonial approach, which admits the possibility of overcoming colonisation (Walsh, 2010). Decolonial approaches assume that colonialities are historical and structural products of colonial societies that will probably never go away, hence the need to keep a constant production of decolonialities. Instead of favouring a rupture with the colonial ways like earlier anti-colonial intellectuals fought for, decolonial intellectuals are more interested in problematising the uneasy conviviality of indigenous, colonisers, forced immigrants, and settlers in former colonies and metropolises.

At once, a decolonial perspective points out that design practices are based on Western epistemologies and are nevertheless deployed in non-Western context without consideration of local knowledge systems (Escobar, 2015, 2018; Lazem et al., 2022; Tunstall, 2013; Winschiers-Theophilus & Bidwell, 2013). The denial of coevalness was demonstrated in a design research conference, where a generation of PhD students who came from the Global South to study design in Europe, wrote a provocative article on decolonising design initially disregarded from the debate (Schultz et al., 2018) later becoming influential in several fields, including Participatory Design. These authors suggest that we can only break out of one's 'colonised mind' through the inclusion of marginalised perspectives, such as, the previously colonised, indigenous communities, and the socio-economic disenfranchised.

Inspired by this and others contributions, Alvarado Garcia and colleagues (2021) criticise a "fixed view of truth and knowledge" in HCI, which "shapes every aspect of our knowledge production practice, from over-trusting the capabilities of digital technologies, to dismissing diverse perspectives for informing their design". Western ways of knowing are still deeply

embedded in current design thinking and acting (Ambole, 2020), which constrains researchers in future making and methodological reflection. In common with other authors, they argue that the task of decolonising design discourse is ontological in nature, and that the radical transformation of design requires both transdisciplinary and transcultural approaches (Smith et al., 2021). Again the emphasis of ‘delinking’ (W. D. Mignolo, 2007) and finding alternative ways of producing knowledge to move forward is emphasised.

However over time, a criticism of early decolonisation movements has been that it is dominated by appeals to de-link, de-mantle, oppose, and to continue fighting power structures, based on Kantian and utilitarian thinking, which is typically ‘individualist’, as opposed to relational and immaterial notions brought forward for example in African philosophies, such as Ubuntu (Tavernaro-Haidarian, 2019). A fundamental distinction is the focus on the relational and the ‘we’. In this light, Van Stam (2021) emphasises that a decolonial turn, will require a paradigm switch from “an oriental projected self, linked with universalism, to be replaced by a locally-grounded African authentic self, linked with diversity (...) based on value epistemologies like ubuntu or ifa.” Grounding the decolonisation strategies in moral values of Ubuntu as normative mutualism allows to reimagine the way forward as an integrative and participatory process of ‘collective maturation’ (Tavernaro-Haidarian, 2019).

In this sense, Kambunga and coauthors (2020) report from a case study in Namibia, a collaboration with Danish and Namibian researchers, in which the topic of postcoloniality and decoloniality was explored with local Namibian youth, students and stakeholders and also brought forward new aspects advancing Participatory Design. The Memory Making with Namibian Born Free project (2018-2022)³ addressed the everyday experiences of postcolonialism of youth, the Born Free, in contemporary Namibia, and the dilemmas they face being born after independence in 1990, while struggling to envision and take control of futures that radically differ from their predecessors (Oyedemi, 2021b). The case demonstrated how Participatory Design research addressed the topic of decolonisation in a highly political and fraught postcolonial context, integrating local youth communities to explore memories and possible futures in which their voices and ambitions were integrated into the mainstream historical narrative of the liberation struggle. Digital technologies were used to co-create and probe new decolonising dialogues through curatorial processes and physical and virtual exhibitions for pluriversity. The research integrated approaches from community based Participatory Design, and Design Anthropology, through design interventions, dialogic curation, prototyping and co-design, using the various positionings of the researchers within, between, and beyond, to create reflective practices of what and how historical and socio-political issues and memories where entangled in contemporary everyday life, and opportunities for alternative collective future-making.

A central outcome of the research was the development of the concept of the ‘safe space’ in design interventions: a socially developed environment for thoughts, actions, and mutual learning in political and contested contexts (Kambunga et al., 2023). The ‘safe space’ was introduced as decolonial design practice that enables researchers and participants to engage

³ <https://www.poem-horizon.eu/research/>

more freely in collaborative research and design activities relating to decoloniality. Based on ideas of social constructions of spaces (Lefebvre, 1991) and discourses of decoloniality, the authors define the safe space as a consciously developed social environment for thoughts, situated actions, and mutual learning that allows participants both to engage in dialogues about their everyday experiences, tensions, and contested pasts, and consequently to imagine and co-create alternative and plural futures. Through processes of critically exploring contemporary experiences of past-present-future (de)colonisation, such participatory practice can allow researchers to develop new ways of knowing, being, and doing (W. D. Mignolo & Walsh, 2018) that reduce possible fears of repercussions or judgement by other community members in the society or the decision-making authorities. The safe space also prompts researchers engaged in such projects to be critical of their own positionalities within the socio-cultural and historical research context, as well as on their own particular adaptations of dominant design methods and approaches. Based on the work, the authors contribute with a framework for designing and using safe spaces as a decolonial approach to design, working with multiple temporalities and epistemologies - especially in contested hybrid cultural contexts where modern coloniality (Quijano, 2007) and postcolonial struggles (Mbembe, 2001) continue to shape people's everyday realities and futures.

This temporal extension of Participatory Design, to include the past as a flexible resource and material that is highly relevant to balance the, often, over-emphasised future-orientation in Participatory Design research practice. According to decolonial research in this regard, the past is 'far from static, monolithic, immutable, and is rather subjective, fluid, and constantly renegotiated' (Soro et al., 2019). Huybrechts and Hendriks (2016) have contributed with different approaches to include the past as a resource in imaginative future scenarios. Such perceptions of the past emphasise the continuous entanglements of different pasts, presents, and futures. Because the past is continuously shaped as a part of the emergent present and future (Smith & Otto, 2016), it can also be used to open up space for legacies and memories of colonialism, contemporary everyday experiences of the decolonial, as well as to refer to plural future imaginations.

Such approaches can support the situated adaptations of participatory research in diverse contexts, to enhance agencies and coevalness in our dialogues between researchers and communities. "It can also be regarded as a generative means of understanding and reporting of ourselves and others, either through the decolonisation of well-known methods or through unfamiliar one's that can be generated in our embodied actions and activities as creators and organisers of our social world" (Adamu, 2020). For instance, local research communities in Namibia have demanded researchers "being participated" before they actually participate (Winschiers-Theophilus et al., 2010). Participatory drawing, for instance, has enabled designers to understand how they can meaningfully become a participant in an Afro-Brazilian decolonial rituals (Paterman Brasil, 2020). Instead of inviting people to participate in a outsider design project, Participatory Design can respond to an insider's invitation like the *mega-mingas* public meetings of the Andinan people (Testori and d'Auria, 2018) or the *musyawarah-mufakat* gatherings of the Pacific Island nations (Rosenqvist, 2020). By participating in community

initiated projects rather than imposing their own projects, participatory designers may contribute to decolonise their own field.

Many contemporary Participatory Design practitioners have been searching for new tools to help them navigate the complexities of the decolonial agenda, keeping the “constant production of decolonialities” alive in their work. In her analysis of the collective participatory work of a group of neighbours in Rio de Janeiro devising ways to confront the violence of their neighbourhood, Ibarra (2020) uses the Latin American notion of *sentipensar* - feeling/thinking (Fals-Borda, 2013) to illustrate a set of participatory design commitments that can speak to alternative set of values connecting feeling and thought. These values recognise the inevitability of working with everyday struggles and concerns and the necessity of being attentive and embrace the emotional aspects of even the more rational forms of action. Especially for projects where the participatory designer is part of the collective that designs (Bittencourt & Freire, 2022). Thinking about these kinds of projects, Albarran González (2022) develops the concept of *corazonar*, taken from Mayan views of the heart. Using onto-epistemologies from the Global South she discusses the relevance of a holistic integration of the body, mind, heart, and life-force (spirit) where, *corazonar*, or the act of reasoning with the heart in collectivity, allows going beyond analytic reasoning towards decolonial actions. She calls for Participatory Design practitioners and researchers to interweave culture, creativity, cycles, connection, community, care, and courage as guiding principles, at the heart of Participatory Design research in collaboration with communities. *Corazonar* has also been an illuminating concept to enable designers to design games and books that shares and document the Kichwas indigenous knowledge in Amazonia (Garcés, 2021).

Drawing on other indigenous concepts, Sosa (2020) explores Purepecha myths of creation to contest and expand Western notions of creativity and world making that inform (explicitly and implicitly) much of the work on Participatory Design methods and approaches so far. In Mesoamerican worldviews, Sosa explains, creation has never been a matter of well-defined and orderly sequence of incremental steps or stages (like in the biblical genesis or indeed design thinking methods); it is instead an opportunistic, situational and cyclical process. One that is more accurately viewed as re-creation, where even deities need each other and often work with e.g. the help of animals. The author invites participatory designers to practise more inclusive and richer versions of creativity that embrace - and problematise - some its basic tenets. Besides creativity, other central tenets of design craft have also been scrutinised with a decolonial attitude. For example, seemingly bureaucratic practices like that of ensuring consent have been turned towards a more radically co-constitution, drawing from experiences of a Participatory Design education program on Western Arrarnta Country in Australia (St John, 2022). Informed and respectful of *ilkwatharra*, or a ‘good feeling’ indigenous conceptions, consent is understood here as an ethical practice which unsettles dominant consent requirements while presenting a respectful way of entering in collaborative work.

Talhok and Armouch (2022) likewise use decolonising approaches to address their own research practices, based on the Lebanese national-wide protests in the fall of the 17th October 2019, which ignited a revolution condemning the political elite and the dire socioeconomic

conditions that people engendered. The events prompted not only local people to (re)imagine their lifeworlds, but also the authors, as Lebanese design researchers to (re)imagine Participatory Design within a decolonial and decolonising narrative. The authors' approach to (re)imagining through this revolutionary perspective, includes dialogues held among themselves, with Lebanese public health practitioners/activists and with decolonial literature. An example of this (self-)reflexive representation and dialogue is presented here (ibid: 54):

Nonetheless, this brings us to another issue that made us pause. In our efforts to design with the revolution, *are we potentially excluding or disregarding those resisting from within the system to create decolonial cracks?* Walsh (Mignolo & Walsh 2018) posited that rather than viewing decolonial efforts as existing outside the matrix of modern/colonial power (Quijano 2000) we should acknowledge and work within decolonial cracks. Through our dialogue, we acknowledge that practitioners and public health workers within the Lebanese healthcare system are themselves positioned to be the upholders of political sectarianism and its corruption by the design of the system and their own experiences of oppression. However, this does not necessitate that they do not practise resistance by creating and working within decolonial cracks. Therefore, rather than viewing them as accomplices, *should we not explore the less visible decolonial cracks that they may be working within and consider how we may think/do with them? Is it possible that those that work within such cracks are forming a communal that resists sectarian divides maintained by the political elite?* (Talhok & Armouch 2022: 54, emphasis in original).

Following the broad literature influenced by the modernity/coloniality group, Participatory Design is going beyond the opposition between coloniality and decoloniality, towards the possibility of uneasy conviviality of modern and anti-modern ways of being and living together. Among the many forms of colonialities, the coloniality of knowledge (Quijano, 2007) have been prioritised in this field so far, in part due to Participatory Design's tradition of democratic knowledge formalisation. Sousa Santos (B. de S. Santos, 2018) denounced the epistemic injustice of disregarding knowledge produced in the peripheries of the world and proposed, instead, to put into the spotlight the epistemologies of the South developed by social movements in the Global South. Following this proposal, authors in the Global North incorporated indigenous knowledge, many at times without providing due credit or proper attention to what indigenous people wanted to do with their words (Makaran & Gaussens, 2020; Cusicanqui, 2012). Despite connecting Latin-American with European in some way, Sousa Santos did not pay the same level of attention to the coloniality of power and the coloniality of being⁴ equally emphasised by other modernity/coloniality authors (Quijano, 2000; Wynter, 2003).

The concept of decoloniality and its derived adjective decolonial have been overused in many research fields, in shallow attempts to engage with decolonisation movements but without paying respect to its history and agenda (Makaran and Gaussens, 2020). While observing opportunistic situations like these, many authors in Participatory Design and nearby fields have

⁴ As a result of this partial engagement, other forms of oppression were sustained within the decolonial strands — a case in point is his allegedly sexist behaviour towards Latin-American women students (Viaene et al., 2023).

started to adopt the pluriversal instead, in search for alternative paths for designing otherwise. A better understanding of its historical context might clear up further confusions and show how notions of pluriversality might open up (or not) constructive ways ahead.

5. Pluriversal - A universe of many universes

Colonialism has often been framed as political and economic dependence justified on cultural or bodily differences (Fanon, 2004). However, both anticolonial, postcolonial and decolonial literature denounced the ontological differences manufactured by colonialism, which produced the colonality of being (Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Wynter, 2003), White supremacy, and the hierarchisation of worlds, for instance, into first, second, and third world (M. Santos, 2017). Indigenous, communalist, socialist, and quilombola social movements in Latin America targeted this ontological inequality for the last 40 years. They have claimed to exist in a different world from that one of the former colonisers and demand they should be allowed to keep that difference while joining globalisation dynamics. The World Social Forum, which started to gather social movements first in Latin America and later from other geographical areas, probably best represents the alternative globalisation project pushed by the decolonisation movement (Fisher and Ponniah, 2003). The presentation of research stemming from the Global South in Global North venues, be that from Latin American living in the diaspora (Pinto et al., 2022; Reynolds-Cuellar et al., 2023) or from those who publish in English not to perish in their countries of origin for the lack of citational justice (Ogan et al., 2023), is a strong evidence of this alternative globalisation project.

When making sense of this insurgence to create commonality in global differences, decolonial scholars began using the concept of pluriverse, originally coined in the context of the pluralistic democracy program envisioned by early 20th century US pragmatism (James & Callaway, 2008). However, instead of pointing towards the melting pot of US pluralistic democracy, for decolonial scholars the concept was initially used to mean the opposite of universe (W. Mignolo, 2011). They rejected the colonialist imposition of a single universe because their worlds would be included in a universe that does not welcome their differences. World differences in the Eurocentric universe are measured by criteria that always favours the colonial powers like, for example, the Human Development Index (HDI). Joining the universe, for Latin American and Caribbean worlds, means becoming less developed, subaltern, or not even worlds in themselves in relation to European worlds. Instead, joining the pluriverse, as implied by the often quoted Zapatista motto "a world that can fit many worlds" (Subcomandante Marcos & Ponce De Leon, 2001), means recognising that world differences could be generative, even if not so easily comparable (Escobar, 2018).

Questions such as land ownership, border politics, official idioms, resource management, military sovereignty, and democratic governance come to the fore and present strong contradictions that the pluriverse needs to harbour (Escobar, 2020b). World differences go way beyond cultural differences and require more than multiculturalism (García Canclini, 2001). Pluriversality is increasingly becoming a new paradigm for inter-world and inter-being relations, condensing (and eventually, homogenising) all of the decoloniality qualities. In this light, Escobar

(2018) advocates to strive for a design which embraces “a world where many worlds fit”, allowing for a pluriversity of voices, knowledges and epistemologies to be incorporated into creating social transformation. Pluriversity is used here and in relation to ontological and religious plurality, as an undeniable phenomena of the human condition, that we take active or passive parts in — a condition however, that humans often fail to recognise and lead to conflict, oppression and war (Rahman & Setia, 2021). The pluriverse concept insists on the democratic coexistence of ontological differences even at the cost of eventual friction and conflicts (Van Amstel, 2023).

Such calls have shown themselves in participatory research and cases that advance transdisciplinary and transcultural approaches to engaging with communities and stakeholders in diverse cultural contexts. Based on more than a decade of collaborative technology design projects with indigenous communities in Namibia, Winschiers-Theophilus et al. (2019) have established a community-based co-design approach, rooted in practices of Participatory Design yet anchored in principles of Ubuntu and Afrocentricity. This approach has provided a foundation to indigenisation of participatory design methods and has offered new perspectives on Participatory Design principles and values. Along these lines, Winschiers-Theophilus et al. (2019) have proposed a transcultural approach to technology design. Community engagement through a transcultural approach, looks beyond traditional individual cultures and focuses on transcultural technology design methods that adopt, support and continuously create new meanings from diverse settings. A transcultural approach focuses on being culturally aware when designing with culturally diverse communities and groups, embracing pluralistic social practices and increased awareness (ibid).

In an attempt to go beyond localised engagements, and with the global pandemic preventing research on the ground in many places, a virtual collaboration explored potentials for extending the safe space, and various exhibition spaces, into pluriversity across global contexts (Kambunga et al., 2021). The result was a virtual Pluriversal Design Exhibition, engaging audiences in virtual environments as alternative spaces to decolonise design practice and shared knowledge production. The collaborative exhibition brought together design research and exhibition projects from Australia, Denmark, Ecuador, Finland, Ghana, Greenland, Italy, Malaysia and Namibia. For each exhibition space, the question was: *How can we create virtual spaces for pluriversal dialogue and engagement? What can a virtual exhibition on decoloniality teach us about designing for the pluriverse?* They answered these questions by appropriating Mozilla Hubs platform, which of course presented new challenges of access and virtual engagement. They successfully demonstrated a rich number of very diverse projects addressing the same themes, and established through an intense process of dialogic curation for the sake of promoting voices of otherwise unheard communities.

The large push for practice, and new practices of Participatory Design, has forged contributions around methods and techniques for decolonisation and towards the pluriversity (see also Chapter 8 this volume). These are also largely integrated above with approaches to sentipensar and other concepts, as well as the safe spaces, yet we highlight a few contributions here that speak very directly to such methods. Lujan Escalante & Mortimer (2022) present research notes

used to devise the participatory design method they propose as 'Pluriversal Transition Value Mapping' (PTVM). This is a reflection on three exercises carried out in three countries of the 'Pacific Ring of Fire', a label that describes the Southeast Asian regional disposition to intensifying disasters of epic proportions. They maintain that Traditional Ecological Knowledges (TEK) are of utmost significance in risk management and describe the ethics and facilitation of a transdisciplinary approach. Similarly Muashekele et al. (2023) infused futuring techniques in established community-based co-design with indigenous communities in Namibia, thereby deviating from a linear need-based approach towards exposing alternative futures merging modernity with futures of the past, which were lost due to colonisation. Following this approach community members reflected on the lost futures of the past and evaluated their validity and desirability alongside other futures.

Aiming to foster epistemological pluriversality in HCI, Alvarado Garcia et al. (2021) present an actionable decolonial pathway based on a co-constructed shared positionality of diverse authors, encouraging others to reflect on their own positionality within their diverse contexts. The manifesto questions the why, the what, the how, the with whom, and the what for when practising decoloniality. Alvarado Garcia et al. (2021) suggest that the colonial legacies ingrained in institutional, cultural and disciplinary engagements, which directly affects established and accepted tools, methods and approaches in HCI, should be acknowledged and publicised, as also proposed by Barcham (2023) and Smith et al. (2021). They appeal to explicitly expose tenets and practices constraining diverse and unequal knowledge productions. Furthermore, Alvarado Garcia et al. (2021) suggest shifting the focus from academic to community validation and impact, with a focus on mutual learning throughout community engagements. And lastly, the authors request that the question of power and consequent injustice is addressed head on.

Baroncelli Torreta and colleagues (2023) also found that reflecting critically on positionality is crucial for doing Participatory Design in the pluriverse. Their empirical basis is the River Project, a participatory space for decolonising design created for designers and practitioners to reflect on power, privilege, politics, and access in relation to design. According to their findings, pluriversal participation emerges when participants participate in their own way, stemming from their positionality, rather than from a universal methodological standpoint.

After summarising part of the literature mentioned in this section, Calderón Salazar and Huybrechts (2020) went as far as to state that Participatory Design "otherwise will be pluriversal (or it won't be)". They envision Participatory Design building knowledge and designing otherwise, i.e. based on inclusive epistemologies (B. de S. Santos, 2018), participatory research methodologies (Fals-Borda, 2013), and southern theories (Calderón Salazar & Gutiérrez Borrero, 2017), praxes that converge under the banner of the pluriverse. As much as we recognise the power of this single all-encompassing concept to unite the decolonisation efforts, we have chosen here not to subsume the postcolonial and the decolonial under the pluriversal. After going through all of the literature here mentioned, we think that it is possible to do Participatory Design otherwise in the other strands and through different approaches that may emerge in the future.

6. Appeal for a relational agenda in Participatory Design

Participatory Design initiatives conducted in contentious cultural and geopolitical contexts have shown the need to revisit established paradigms, values and biases, thus we call for both individual and collective introspections. Besides, considering established forms of knowledge production and dissemination, Participatory Designers have an obligation to abolish inherent systemic injustices which directly influence design paradigms and practices responsible for perpetuating coloniality. Failure to do so will lead to dilemmas and contradictions with the very fundamentals of Participatory Design, being mutual learning and the combat against power inequity.

Arturo Escobar, in his PDC 2020's keynote (Escobar, 2020a), called for a relational approach to participatory design based on the radical interdependence of beings of all kinds, not just human beings. Victor Udoewa (2022) suggested that relationality is the next frontier for radical forms of Participatory Design. Responding to these calls, our relational agenda comprises three topics of concern. Firstly, the need for introspection, and understanding inherent biases and values propagated through mainstream Participatory Design, this includes recognising eurocentric frames. Secondly, recognising and eliminating systemic biases reinforced through established and formalised knowledge creation and sharing processes, thereby embracing different epistemologies. And lastly, closing the gap between theory and practice (Smith et al., 2020), as we consider Participatory Design within situated actions, and understanding roles, accountabilities and responsibilities of the involved.

These concerns resonates with Clarke et al. (2022) framework for Participatory Design decolonial action that includes three movements: decolonising *in* design by recognising frames of reference that can remain prevalent in Participatory Design practice; decolonising *by* design where collaboration becomes a catalyst for challenging institutional perspectives that foreground alternative epistemologies and ontologies; and lastly with a movement towards decolonising *through* design, which implies mobilising cracks to effect change, going beyond research to work with autonomous and communal forms of action and sociability. While our appeal to relationality could fit in Clarke et al. (2022) “decolonising through design” concept, our aim here is broader: to position Participatory Design within the larger decolonising processes. These processes surely go through methodological challenges — e.g. how to include people from diverse cultures — and also epistemological questions — e.g. what to learn from them — however, the common ground amongst these movements is ontology (in its original philosophical sense of the word), regarding the quantum of being human that colonisation prevented from being more (Fanon, 2004; Freire, 1985). In the following sections we detail three main trajectories for a relational decolonisation agenda in Participatory Design research and practices.

6.1 Revisiting Participatory Design paradigms, values and biases

In an attempt to move beyond mere theoretical deliberations, we start the section with a very real tension and uneasy conviviality expressed by one of the chapter reviewers, Professor Pelle Ehn, infamous for his contributions to the field of Participatory Design and who — according to

us — was historically engaged with the anticolonial strand. Pelle Ehn agreed that we share an extract from his review to illustrate the positionality and conundrum of Global North researchers dealing with this topic:

"In fact, inspired by reading Hannah Arendt and especially Simone Weil I have been directed towards the prime narratives of western culture and the epic richness of the Iliad and the Odyssey. Hence, being forced to rediscover and rethink taking for granted concepts like war, power, force, violence and love. All central to PD and I guess also to decolonisation and pluriversality. So you see, I do not know how to escape this Eurocentric prison. Not even if I want to. Even if you try to rescue me. Under what conditions could or should someone like me be invited to the "safe space" where the future of PD could be collaboratively explored across modernity and coloniality and different ontologies, as you so promisingly write, "towards the possibility of uneasy conviviality of modern and anti-modern ways of being and living together." Is there in this space also room for and a potential contribution from also rethinking the ancient western heritage and not only the colonial atrocities? For example with Arendt to rethink design as stories of heroic political action linked to plurality and the possibility of forgiveness? Or with Weil to rethink narratives of design as the grace of affirmatively leaving be, of becoming host rather than parasite. And are there, or should there be, similar ways of trying to reimagine narratives from other ontologies and open them up for rethinking design?" (Ehn, P., 2023, written communication)

Meanwhile, numerous authors have recognised that Participatory Design still maintains legacies of Western and Eurocentric perspectives ingrained in the design methods, tools and measurements themselves (Barcham, 2023; Winschiers-Theophilus & Bidwell, 2013). For example, Akama and colleagues (2022) have written: "Reflexively exposing and leaning into our complicities, no matter how awkward, helps to be vigilant of such conciliatory desires, because we cannot step 'outside' of what global histories have implicated us in already". However, a major dilemma persists, namely that the point of reference seems to remain the "Scandinavian Participatory Design" and the suggestion that it simply needs to be adjusted and appropriated in a new and local context does not seem to hold true (Krüger et al., 2019). As long as the point of reference does not shift, all efforts remain anchored in eurocentrism. Van Stam (2021) points out that there must be a decolonial turn, a paradigm shift, from "an oriental projected self, linked with universalism, to be replaced by a locally-grounded African authentic self, linked with diversity". Tavernaro-Haidarian (2019) postulate that grounding decolonisation agendas in Ubuntu philosophy, which values humans in relation to other humans, the environment and the spiritual world, allows to reimagine the way forward as an integrative and participatory process of 'collective maturation'.

The emphasis on values systems and cultures highlights how these are dynamic, mutually borrowed and exchanged, and co-produced over time, into new forms of cultural production and change, is central for expanding decolonising Participatory Design practices (Gunn et al., 2013). Akama et al. (2019) suggest reciprocal, respectful and relational approaches to collaboration,

which require sensitivity to precarious asymmetries and cultural values among others. Bourgeois et al (2022), grounding decolonisation in humility, uncertainty and plurality, proposes five design principles, namely “transdisciplinarity, cooperative design, contextualised learning for being, locally led initiation of the inquiry together with the empowerment of local actors”. Promoting a practical decolonisation approach working in contested contexts, Kambunga et al. (2023) expands the notion of third space in design to “safe space”, which promotes plurality of voices and knowledges in a socially developed environment for thoughts and actions, free of judgement and repercussion.

6.2 Combating systemic injustice in knowledge production and dissemination

Participatory Design's overreliance on the prevailing knowledge production structures keeps academics and social movement agents apart and keeps Global North institutions as publication gatekeepers. Due to that separation, research and practice develops disjointly, thereby creating cultural, theoretical and methodological gaps (Loi et al., 2018; Schultz et al., 2018; Smith et al., 2020; Tlostanova, 2017). These gaps create practices and structures that do not challenge the *status quo*, such as for universal design methods that are exported from the Global North to the Global South (Ansari, 2016), Eurocentric design education (Angelon and Van Amstel, 2021), assisted development strategies (Escobar, 2012), and global market distributions such as one-size-fits-all tech applications to the "Next Billion Users" that do not yet have access to an internet connection (Oyedemi, 2021a). These solutions create dependencies and inequalities between the periphery and the centre, with incentives for the marginalised to design solutions in the periphery, from one periphery to another (Batista e Silva, 2023; Marques & Maass, n.d.). This status is further manifested through Global North institutes as gatekeepers of knowledge production and dissemination thereby claiming ownership of the only rightful solutions to local and global challenges. An attempt to formulate strategies of inclusion and diversity in prominent HCI communities has yielded in tokenisation at best, without addressing the systemic marginalisation of knowledge production and practices (Dankwa & Draude, 2021).

Bidwell (Bidwell, 2016) points out that a colonised technology design space has been established by an academic community guilty of continuously undermining African and other researchers pushed to the margin. Non-Western researchers' methods and knowledges are questioned and the credibility of their work is judged within biased review systems (Lazem et al., 2022). Reviewers, who lack sufficient understanding of local contexts and other ways of knowing, reject valuable research papers (Smith et al., 2021), and authors from the Global South (Reynolds-Cuéllar et al., 2022). Akama et al. (2022) sees potential in open review processes as blinded reviews allow reviewers not to be held accountable towards their feedback provided to authors, reinforcing power imbalances. Moreover, skewed citation patterns further foster an unequal knowledge dissemination, discriminating against the spread of knowledge created in the Global South. For example, in September 2023, Nordichi 2018 proceedings recorded 640 citations while Africhi 2018 proceedings recorded 224 citations in the ACM Digital library. In Participatory Design, like in any other Western knowledge field, new research findings need to be positioned in relation to previously published research, thereby creating a vicious

circle of enforcing citing the already established rather than the ones at the margin (Akama et al. 2022).

Akama and colleagues (2022) further point out complicities of perpetuating dominant design through venues, such as conferences. The PDC 2022 conference organisers attempted to leverage the organising mechanisms in academic conferences to surface implicit agendas, normalised approaches and confront tensions and paradoxes of decolonising own practices. Questions around labour, privilege and ethics of being present and situated during sharing and coming together on unceded indigenous land, and proposed methodologies and alternative conference engagements came to the fore in organising meetings. The authors argue for sharing endeavours through practice and ontologies of our feeling-thinking (sentipensar), responding to the question posed by an Indigenous Elder to them: ‘why are you here and what is your purpose?’. In response, the PDC 2024 has involved local stakeholders and indigenous community members in the planning of the conference and activities. Generally, concerned with the lack of participation of indigenous communities in conferences and academic dialogues, Winschiers-Theophilus and colleagues (2022) put forward the concept of a knowledge fair as a pluralistic approach of knowledge creation and sharing. Based on years of experiences from a bi-annual indigenous knowledge fair held in Sarawak (Harris, 2017), the concept was further explored in Namibia, having hosted 100 participants with the majority being indigenous community members who were involved in Participatory Design of conservation technologies. The programme consisted of diverse sessions ranging from ethnobotanical tech demo walks, to intestine reading and reflections, and community focus group meetings, accounting for the different knowledge sharing paradigms. A similar request for alternative ways of sharing research beyond written articles, was put forward by Bossavit and Parsons (2016). The authors suggest “incorporating traditional practices into meetings and workshops, conducting face-to-face meetings in sites that hold meaning or significance to indigenous partners, active listening as oral histories are shared”.

6.3 Staying in the path of praxis

Participatory Design has not yet fully engaged with the large-scale design of everyday life performed through radical (and) emerging technologies (Greenfield, 2017). Global platforms, artificial intelligence, machine learning, data-driven societies, and extended realities have not been properly addressed by Participatory Design and are often at odds with the smaller-scale democratic praxis and methods of participation (Murphy & Largacha-Martínez, 2022, see also chapter 6 for a comprehensive outline). Nevertheless, governments all over the world struggle to regulate digital work platforms, social media, and blockchain applications that reproduce the old divide between a powerful centre that extracts resources in the periphery — in this case data — and sell it back to the periphery as business intelligence services or the likes (Couldry & Mejias, 2019). More often than expected, these platforms are also under scrutiny for political actions, hijacked by spies and hackers, in geopolitical moves, similarly to how former colonial trade routes were used for cultural impositions and war (O’Neil, 2016). Researchers in other fields have already suggested that participation in design can indeed localised such collective resources, thus contributing to counter the digital form of colonialism (Faustino & Lippold, 2023; Kwet, 2019; Oyedemi, 2021a), but Participatory Design has not fully embraced the challenge

yet. Design Beku is one of the first documented efforts into that: a Participatory Design studio that trains critical technological citizens in India (Ray Murray et al., 2021). Its decolonising motivation is similar to the anthropophagic studio (Van Amstel & Gonzatto, 2020), yet more focused on training communities rather than training students.

The decolonising movement has brought attention to new issues in Participatory Design — like epistemological plurality, citational justice, and historical repairs — but also recovered old issues that have not been discussed much in past decades, such as technology development geopolitics, cultural differences beyond Scandinavia versus US, tokenistic participation, and decentralised power structures. The contribution of this movement to Participatory Design in its early years, mainly through the work of Paulo Freire, has kept an open door for further dialogue, opportunity explored in depth only in recent years (Serpa et al., 2020). Like in any dialogue, both sides are expected to contribute to each other and make something together.

To avoid the anti-dialogical praxis (Freire, 1985), of extractivism, the contributions of anticolonial, postcolonial, decolonial, and pluriversal Participatory Design should also aim at contributing to the decolonisation movements they originate from, otherwise, Participatory Design becomes a (colonialist) end in itself. Other authors have also made similar points regarding other social movements (Bannon et al., 2018b). Thus rather than just incorporating new theories and practices stemming from the Global South, Participatory Design has to find its political place in the decolonising movement and, from that position, act meaningfully for the emancipation, liberation, and independence of the oppressed people.

Among the many positions suggested in this chapter, we would like to draw attention to the position against digital colonialism (Barendregt et al., 2021; Faustino & Lippold, 2023; Kwet, 2019), which we think Participatory Design can have a strong impact on. Against this form of colonialism, people from the Global North and the Global South should join forces, as the process does not follow the traditional North-to-South route. Digital colonialism supports new forms of imperialism, such as the US's influence over Europe and China's influence over Africa, for example. The Scandinavian workers and citizens of today are also prone to these new forms of colonialism, which would require organised forms of resistance across countries and regions to be operationalised. The decolonisation movement today should be betting in collective, inclusive and democratic participation to counter digital colonialism and similar geopolitical menaces. This won't be achieved through a design by the oppressors, for the oppressed, but through a design by the oppressed, for the oppressed — as the Design & Oppression Network likes to put (van Amstel et al., 2023).

6.4. Concluding remarks

As we stated in the introduction, our ambition in the chapter is not to cover all grounds in relation to the diversified theoretical discourses, research and practices of decolonisation. More broadly speaking, the literature on anticolonial, postcolonial, decolonial, and pluriversal is greatly divergent, and often tied to geographically and culturally situated understandings of decolonisation rather than following coherent theoretical strands (Davis and Walsh, 2020). At once, there are many contributions written based on geographical regions, reporting on

research projects, but who tend to take the political, theoretical and historical background for granted, and thus only engage superficially with the challenges of decolonisation. Hence, this chapter is by no means exhaustive, and does not aim to reduce the entanglement and complexity of the concepts, methods and theories involved, but rather to take a Participatory Design stance on these for the matter of this book and for future research.

Looking at past and contemporary Participatory Design decolonisation initiatives, it is evident that these efforts have remained isolated, often disjointed from and unaware of actual decolonisation movements and consequently with limited impact on the ground. Weaving alliances, partnerships, and coalitions is fundamental to position the field within the wider decolonisation movements but also to ground their responsibilities and accountabilities on very specific localities and lifeworlds. We believe that, through the dialogues here united, we positioned and repositioned ourselves as self and other, unsettling entanglements and raising contradictions and questions lingering in the Participatory Design field, potentially contributing to making worlds otherwise.

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