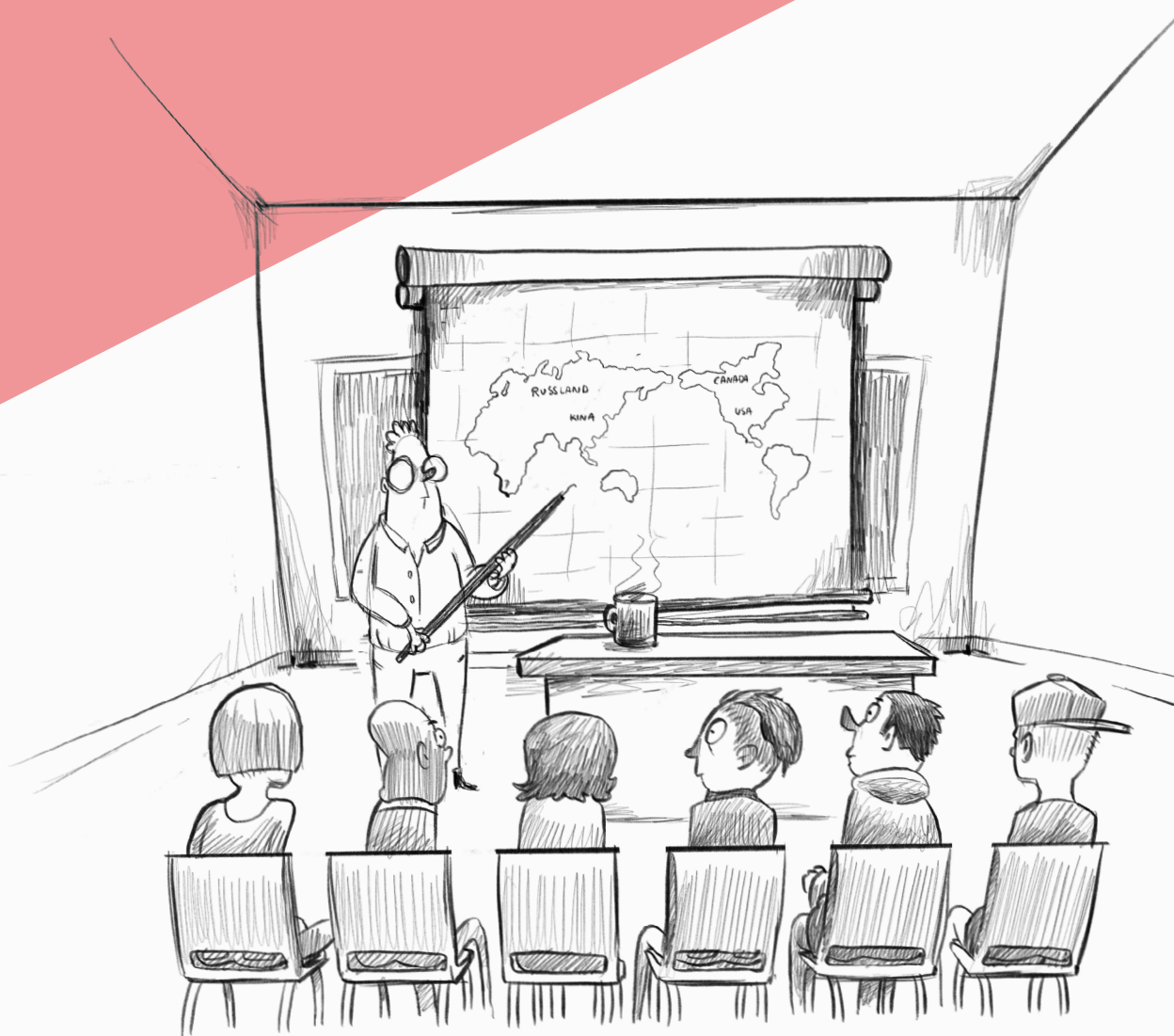


An introduction to
DECOLONIZATION



AND HOW YOU CAN CONTRIBUTE

SAIH | Norwegian Students' and Academics'
International Assistance Fund

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FOREWORD

SUNNIVA FOLGEN HØISKAR

President of SAIH (The Norwegian Students' and Academics' International Assistance Fund)

Dear reader,

Behind this toolkit are hours of discussions, reflecting and writing. At the annual meeting in 2018, SAIH adopted a resolution calling for the decolonization of academia because we wanted to work for equal conditions and opportunities in academia. Along with the peace research institute PRIO's popular seminar about the decolonization of academia, the resolution became the centre of one of the most polarized debates Norwegian academia has seen in modern times. We were heavily criticized, but we also made new allies. It has been an exciting time for SAIH, but also a demanding time. We had no idea what to expect, and we have learned from the debate we found ourselves in the midst of, and the processes we have been a part of since. This, however, is where SAIH should be, challenging the status quo, with knowledge and solidarity as our goal. Although the decolonization of

academia is new territory for us, it is also in many ways what the organization always has worked with.

SAIH's vision is that everyone should have access to an inclusive and good education in a world of fair distribution, without any violation of democracy and human rights. The organisation's foundational values are inspired by the Brazilian liberation pedagogue Paulo Freire's seminal work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Freire, who has inspired liberation movements in many countries, was critical to what he called a "piggy bank education" where students and pupils are treated as empty piggy banks to be filled with knowledge. This type of education will only serve to reproduce the existing power structures and norms in society. Higher education can be one of the most important tools we have to create fairer societies, but that is contingent on an education that starts from the students' own situation, and enables critical and independent thinking.

Our partners for many years, Universidad Autónoma Indígena Intercultural (UAIIN) in Colombia and Universidad de las Regiones Autónomas de la Costa Caribe Nicaragüense (URACCAN) in Nicaragua, have for a long time done ground-breaking work to ensure indigenous peoples' and afro-descendants' rights to an education respectful of to their context. Through their long-term work to gain recognition, they have demonstrated that there is no contradiction between the decolonization and the quality of education and research.

A positive consequence of the work with the decolonization of academia has been that SAIH has made contact with and become acquainted with many accomplished Sámi academics, activists and students. Their contributions, discussions and perspectives over the last year have made this document better and more important. We want to acknowledge all the good work that has been done before the publication of this document to decolonize Norwegian academia.

WHY HAS SAIH PRODUCED A REFLECTION TOOLKIT?

The decolonizing of academia is concerned with unfair power structures, prejudices and lack of knowledge and its possible consequences. Many people might feel they are being unfairly “accused”, and some people perceive decolonization to be a threat to academia. SAIH holds, however, that decolonization is at the core of academia’s mission – to ask critical questions and to evaluate established truths in order to gain new insights. Furthermore, racism and colonial structures are not down to individuals, but structural problems in society. This is why we have made a reflection toolkit, so that more people can reflect on the decolonization of their own education or academic life, and contribute to change.

The decolonization of academia is not a discussion that is best suited in a 500-word newspaper article, nor is it a discussion with clear answers. It has been exciting to discuss the decolonization of academia in the media, but we think it’s important to move the discussions to the universities and campuses where the changes have to take place. We have a big canvas to clear, many curriculums to assess, and issues to discuss. The time is ripe to discuss power structures and representation in academia. It is not (always) pleasant or fun to do so, but that does not make it any less important. It is a matter of reflection and change, of gaining an awareness about why things are the way they are, and who is included and excluded as a result. This is why decolonization will entail different measures at different campuses, within different academic disciplines, and for different people. This toolkit is not a conclusion to the debate, but an attempt to move it from the newspaper pages to the lunchrooms, meetings, lecture halls and seminars on campus.

We also hope it will inspire you as a reader to contribute. If you after reading this disagree with us, we hope at least to have

succeeded in bringing decolonization “to the ground” and demystified the topic a little. We want this toolkit to contribute to students and academics all over Norway to become aware of what the decolonization of academia is about, and how they can contribute.

OUR INSPIRATION

Many people deserve recognition for our work with this toolkit. Firstly, SOAS (School of African and Oriental Studies in London), and especially Dr. Meera Sabaratnam, must be thanked for inspiring and supporting us. The reflection toolkit has been written with inspiration from SOAS’ “Decolonizing SOAS Learning and Teaching Toolkit for Programme and Module Convenors”. Their toolkit has a different form and is written for another audience and context, but we recommend you take a look at it.

Next, SAIH’s partner organizations deserve a warm thank you for being the initial inspiration behind this work. SAIH’s local chapter activists, the board of SAIH, and the secretariat in SAIH have also been important resources. But the biggest thank you goes to the people who have contributed with a significant amount of voluntary work to complete this project, most notably Peder Brende Jenssen, Ixchel León, Stine Bang Svendsen and Kristin Gregers Eriksen.

We hope that you as a reader will see the toolkit’s relevance for your work as a student, teacher or researcher. Our goal is that this toolkit will be used actively at education institutions. We hope that you will become inspired to contribute to a more diverse and curious academia and that you will become a part of the solutions.

Enjoy reading and reflecting!

THIS WORK IS NOT DONE ALONE

We want to begin this text with thanking everyone who has contributed to making this document as good as possible. First of all, we thank Stine Helena Bang Svendsen (NTNU) and Kristin Gregers Eriksen (USN) who have written the main text in close cooperation with the SAIH activists Peder Brende Jensen and Ixchel León. They have contributed with much more than we could have expected. Thank you so much! The previous vice president of SAIH Kristine Bjartnes also deserves a big thanks for her central role in initiating this project, and the present vice president of SAIH Rebekka Ringholm for her role in completing it.

We also thank everyone who has contributed with cases. These texts have offered perspectives we could not have included without you. Warm thanks go to:

Anja Márjía Nystø Keskitalo og
Lise Eder Murberg (SST)
Bashar Marhoon (NMBU)
Cecilia Salinas (OsloMet)
Oda-Kange Midtvåge Diallo (NTNU)
Mariel Aguilar-Støen (UiO)
Sverre Fjellheim (WINU)
Tor A. Benjaminsen (NMBU),
Hanne Svarstad (OsloMet) og
Inger Marie Gaup Eira
(Samisk Høgskole)
Torjer Andreas Olsen (UiT)

Thank you to Johann Schweder Grimstvedt for the beautiful illustrations and to Victor Elias Okpe for proofreading the document.

We would also like to thank Forum for Women and Development (FOKUS) and The Norwegian Children and Youth Council (LNU) greatly for their economical support to this project.

And last but not least thank you to everyone who has contributed with ideas, photography, reading and translation:

Ane Bermudez
Astri Dankertsen (Nord)
Celina Annabell Stifjell (NTNU)
Dag Herbjørnsrud (SGOKI)
Decolonial Research group NTNU
v/Signe Rix Berthelin, Thomas R.
Hilder og Helen Margaret Murray
Elen Ravna (Noereh)
Eva Marie Fjellheim (UiT)
Freya Rixen-Cunow
Frida Brende Jenssen (NTNU)
Hilde Refstie (NTNU)
Håvard Søndena
Ingrid Fadnes (OsloMet)
Ingrid Vonen
Ingvil Bjordal (NTNU)
José Francisco Bustillo Cruz
John Andrew McNeish (NMBU)
Jonas Njau
Jørund Aasetre (NTNU)
Kelly Fisher
Kirsti Stuvøy (NMBU)
Kristin Eide (NTNU)
Kristin Engh Førde (UiO)
María A. Guzmán-Gallegos (VID)
Martin Veier-Olsen (NTNU)
Michelle Iversen Badiane
Mikkel Berg-Nordlie (OsloMet)
Nora Hagesæther
Reidun Heggem (NTNU)
Sadik Qaka
SAIH sitt sekretariat
SAIH sitt styre
Sandra Fylkesnes (OsloMet)
Siri Øyslebø Sørensen (NTNU)
Tord Eriksen Røland
Veronika Brokke Olsen
Waad A. Alrady

INTRODUCTION

This document is a toolkit for reflection. It is a starting point for questioning, investigating, discussing and considering what the decolonization of Norwegian academia might mean in practice. It does not offer final solutions to what decolonization entails, as this will differ between various disciplines. Rather, the toolkit is meant to be an introduction to anyone who wishes to learn more about the topic and how you can practically contribute to the decolonizing of your work as a student or academic at your university or other institution for education and research.

THE GLOBAL PICTURE

Over the last years, students all over the world have fought for the decolonization of higher education, both in previously colonized states and in colonial states. One important goal has been equal access to education for everyone, regardless of your personal financial situation. Economic inequality with its roots in colonial times is reproduced in the access or lack of access people have to higher education. Therefore, working for a free university education is an important part of decolonizing academia. This was the backdrop for the #FeesMustFall protests in South Africa in 2015 and 2016, where students protested against the rising university fees and the lack of loans and stipends, contributing to the exclusion of young people from higher education.

Many people might ask why the decolonization of academia is relevant for a Norwegian context. We hope that Part 1: Historical Backdrop – How did we get here? will clarify why decolonization is something we also have to work with in Norwegian academia.

SCOPE

The term 'decolonization' is often associated with the period in the second half of the 20th century when countries in the global south became formally independent from the European colonial powers. It is in fact a much wider concept. The resources in this text do not focus on the material conditions which contribute to maintaining colonial structures, but the conditions directly related to the production and spreading of knowledge. Within academia alone, decolonization is among other things related to research, routines regarding employment, opportunities in publication and creating inclusive campus areas. In this toolkit, we have chosen to focus on education and curriculums. Which suppressive and skewed power structures influence what is recognised as 'knowledge', what is taught and by whom at Norwegian universities today? Who is allowed to feel at home at the university? Which insights are we deprived of when colonial structures exclude and prevent us from being exposed to new perspectives?

We have also chosen to focus the content of the toolkit on what you as a student or academic can do to influence your education and curriculum. In this work, we all have an important role to play, but we also have to join forces in order to make lasting changes.

HOW TO READ AND USE THE DOCUMENT

You can read the toolkit from start to finish or you can choose what seems most relevant to you. Part 1 takes a closer look at the concepts “coloniality” and “decolonization”: what they have meant historically and what they mean today. If you are already familiar with these terms, Part 1 will tell you how we use them in this document, and which perspectives we have chosen to include. Part 2 is about the practical measures you can take. Firstly, it discusses self-reflection and awareness about your own position and privileges. This is followed by some concrete tools which can help to decolonize an education setting.

You will also find several cases written by students and academics at institutions for higher education in Norway for the purpose of this document. Some of the cases give examples of colonial practices and expressions in Norwegian academia and society today, while others show how decolonization can be performed in practice. The contributors express their own opinions in the cases, and our intention is that they might contribute to your own reflections and inspire you as a reader.

Contributing to decolonization requires that we take ourselves, our colleagues and our fellow students seriously as participants in

making changes in society. The systems and traditions we work within are continuously being formed by the people who are a part of them, also within academia. Changing systems and traditions at an institutional level is a collective effort, but we can all contribute on an individual level. We hope this toolkit will make more people aware of their own possibilities to influence, and abilities to contribute to decolonization processes. This will gain both the academic diversity and quality in Norway. ■



[The colonial era]

The colonial era refers to the historical period dating from approximately the 1500s, when mainly European states established colonies all over the world, until around 1970 when many of these colonies gained political independence. A common way of dating the beginning of this era is Christopher Columbus and his company's arrival in the American continent in 1492. This commenced a long historical period of European states colonizing and exploiting areas in South and North America and Southeast Asia initially, and eventually large parts of the African continent.

1

PART

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

How did we get here?

WHAT IS COLONIALITY?

To explain the concept of decolonization, we will begin with the term coloniality. Coloniality refers to the ways in which power relations and attitudes to knowledge constructed during the colonial era continue to form our society and production of knowledge today (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). Coloniality¹ is inextricably linked with the development of modern society. When European countries colonized large parts of the world from the 1500s and onwards, they built on a worldview that perceived Europe to be superior to other cultures, forms of knowledge, societies and peoples. Anibal Quijano (2000) describes how the Spanish colonization of Latin America established a racist social order. Spanish people were ranked highest while others, such as indigenous people and the descendants of African slaves (afro-descendants), were placed at the bottom due to their physical attributes and cultural differences. Similar processes took place in colonies elsewhere in the world. A main feature of the racism from this period was to deprive colonized people of their humanity and rationality in the eyes of the Europeans. It also influenced how they saw themselves. Racism was used to legitimize a local and eventually global labour distribution in which colonized people were exploited as a free labour force, often with fatal consequences (ibid.).

¹ The origin of the term can be traced to branches of the so-called subaltern studies in Latin America and especially the work of Anibal Quijano.



[Racialization / Racifying]

Racialization refers to the ways in which racism reproduces stereotypes and expectations to people based on physical appearances, ethnicity, religion or cultural heritage. Put simply, to be racialized means that you are particularly vulnerable to racism, whether this is something you in practice experience frequently or rarely. In this sense, the racism is not on the level of the individual, where the blame is often placed on other individuals, but rather on a structural level where the majority has defined whom we perceive as “others”. This does not mean that individuals belonging to the majority consciously try to exclude other people, but that they more or less unknowingly say things and act in ways that create exclusion and alienation. Learn more about micro-aggressions in the section concerning “Privileges and White Ignorance”. (Midtbøen & Rogstad, 2010)

Materially and financially, coloniality is expressed today for instance in the continuation of the global distribution of labour. The financially “wealthy” global north consists largely of former colonial powers, while the financially “poor” global south consists of former colonies. Material wealth in the global north is to a certain extent still based on the financial exploitation of the global south. Many people in the global south, for instance, have undignified working conditions producing goods sold at a low cost in the global north. The sociologist Boaventura de Souza Santos (2018) emphasises that the global north

and the global south are not purely geographical terms. Rather, they denote colonial power dynamics which still partly exist in the patterns between countries, and also between groups and individuals within a country. For instance, racialized people living in the global north experience a systematic form of racism and structural injustice for instance in the job market. This is also apparent in Norwegian academia, which takes us to our section about decolonization and anti-racism in higher education.

WHAT IS COLONIALITY?

When it comes to knowledge, coloniality is expressed in the dominating position people from the global north have in academia, and that academic perspectives from the global north have a hegemony over what type of knowledge is given validity and valued as “true” or “good”. This ties in with how science as a term defines some forms of knowledge as invalid, and renders other forms of knowledge invisible. What we recognise as science is historically and culturally interlaced with western modernity, and in turn, coloniality. Coloniality in academia thus relates to who is granted or denied access to participate in, and influence research processes, as well as how we define and practice science. One example is the experiential knowledge about sustainable use and care of the land of indigenous people which has not been granted the status “scientific”, and hence, valid knowledge². In this way, important discoveries and ideas which could contribute to a more nuanced understanding of sustainable development are rendered invisible.

COLONIALITY IN RESEARCH AND EDUCATION – A BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

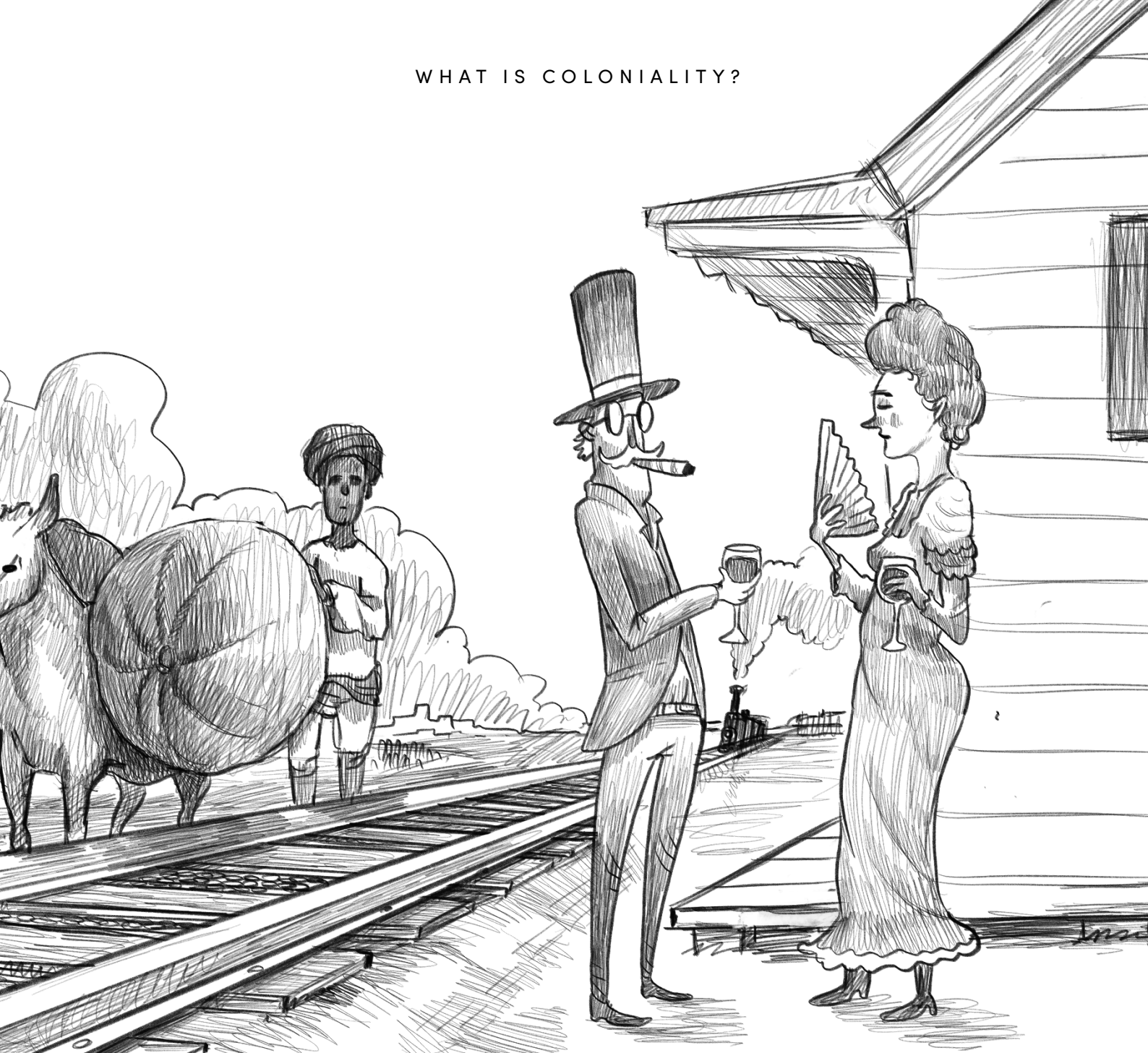
Many academic disciplines within the humanities and social sciences have their origins in colonial Europe. Therefore, eurocentrism influences what is given attention through our curriculum, and what it conceals by exclusion. One example is how the industrial revolution in the UK is often referred to in history classes as one of the most important signs of modern progress. Although this is not necessarily a false claim, this perspective on history is highly selective. Often ignored is how this “progress” was enabled by the UK’s slave-based cotton production in the US, Egypt and India. India, for instance, was the leading producer and exporter of cotton fabrics and clothing until the 1700s. When the British conquered and colonized the country, India’s share of the global gross national product more than



halved during the 1800s (Eriksen & Feldberg, 2013, p. 55). The voices and experiences of historically discriminated groups have largely been absent in the dominating historical narratives. What is referred to as “progress” in a European perspective also relates to processes which have led to unfathomable human suffering in the form of slavery, massacres, eradication of entire ethnic groups, and the robbing of land.

² These mechanisms also exist in Norway, where knowledge produced by indigenous people is devalued. See for instance the case about reindeer herding under Coloniality in Norway.

In this context it often relates to a white Western Europe, and thus the perspectives of indigenous and other minorities are often not included in eurocentrism.



Two sides of the industrial revolution

Eurocentrism is apparent in academic course profiles and curriculums which place studies and theories from Western countries at the centre of what is relevant for the discipline. Eurocentrism is often embedded in the disciplines' literary canon, which consists of a number of classical studies which subsequently define the core of the discipline. In social sciences, this is often literature from the 1800s and early 1900s, and the supremacy

of white men and the European culture is taken for granted. Many of the founders of today's scientific disciplines had a racist understanding of society or did not consider women or colonized people capable of rational thought (Herbjørnsrud, 2016). This does not necessarily weaken their contributions to the disciplines, but it has influenced who and what was the subject of research, as well as who was allowed to conduct research. Western



Eurocentrism and the “discovery” of the world

Eurocentrism is a term that denotes the act of placing Europe and all things European at the centre, as a starting point for discussion or a measure by which other cultures are judged³. Because History as an academic discipline was established by men in the upper social spheres in Europe in the 1800s, it was shaped by their particular context and perspective. This has enabled Norwegian textbooks to portray the colonial era as a narrative of how the Europeans, led by Columbus, “discovered” the rest of the world in 1492. To claim that Columbus discovered a continent already inhabited by people, places Europeans and “the discovered” in an asymmetric power relation. An alternative way of telling this story could be that Columbus crossed the Atlantic Ocean searching for a shorter route to India. This marks the beginning of the colonial era in the Americas, and a systematic exploitation of resources and peoples.

3 In this context it often relates to a white Western Europe, and thus the perspectives of indigenous and other minorities are often not included in eurocentrism.

science also contributed to legitimizing why colonized people and women should not be granted the same access to education as white privileged men. The history of race biology and physical anthropology exemplifies how these projects set the tone for Norwegian universities way into the 1900s (Kyllingstad, 2014, Michelet, 2018). The academic disciplines within the humanities and social sciences in Norway have only to a small extent explored the role racism has had for the scientific theories which continue to form the foundation of their subjects. We will return to this in the section “Coloniality in Norway”.

Today, coloniality has a clear presence in research and education. The knowledge that is rewarded as “scientific” or “good” is largely produced in the global north, whereas the data stems from the global south (Connell, 2019). This situation may be seen as a perpetuation of colonialist ideas, where rationality was considered to be a feature reserved to white people⁴ and the European culture (Quijano, 2000). Although there are exceptions, it is most often the case that knowledge from the global south has to be “verified” through publication in American and European journals in order to gain authority and citations in the international academic literature (Connell, 2019). When academics from all over the world are forced to make their way into the Northern and Western context in order to be heard, the global north continues to be perceived as the undisputable centre of academic knowledge. Thus, the reproduction of colonial structures perpetuates (Alcoff, 2007). This in turn limits what kinds of knowledge are produced, and thus the development of knowledge as a whole. This is an important point to take on board if we want academic research to contribute to dealing with complex challenges in society.

4 Whiteness in this context does not only relate to skin colour. For more information, see Racism in Norway

Reflection questions

NORWAY'S ROLE IN COLONIZATION



1. What do you know about Norway's role in colonization processes?
2. If you went to a Norwegian school, what did you learn about this topic in your education?
3. • Why do you think this has been given little attention in the Norwegian education system?

COLONIALITY IN NORWAY

When we talk about decolonization in a Norwegian context, it is often claimed that this is an irrelevant issue because Norway did not have colonies in a direct sense, and that Norway itself did not gain independence until 1905. Norway was in union with Denmark and cannot be regarded as a colony per se. Norway brought Greenland into the union with Denmark, and Denmark-Norway had small colonies in Africa, India and the Caribbean. Norwegian commerce profited on colonization during the so-called Age of Sail (Kjerland & Bertelsen, 2014) when Norwegian ship-owners traded and transported goods produced by slaves.

A colony is a country or an area that is annexed by force, typically military, or reconstruction with the support of the state. Denmark-Norway colonized the land of the Sámi people, Sápmi/Sábme/Saepmie, from the 1500s and onwards. From approximately the mid-1800s to the 1960s, the colonization of Sápmi happened through a state-endorsed racism and a policy of "Norwegianization", which in addition to the Sámi population affected Norway's national minorities⁵. From 1902, the Norwegian state demanded that its citizens had a Norwegian name and spoke Norwegian if they were to own land. This had serious consequences for Sámi, Kvens and Norwegian Finns in Troms and Finnmark

(Ravna 2011). From 1880, the Norwegian parliament ended the teaching of Sámi and Kven languages, and opened the first boarding schools in the early 1900s (Minde, 2005). The boarding schools were established in order to Norwegianize Sámi and Kven children by extracting them from their home community and exposing them to Norwegian culture at school. Norwegian teachers were given precedence at schools in multilingual areas, while Kven and Sámi teachers were subject to a vast discrimination in the job market. The consequences of the Norwegianization-policy were detrimental to the people it targeted. With the creation of the boarding schools, for example, children were forced to tear loose from close relations; subject to unsafe conditions and a general lack of care; deprived of their mother tongue and the generational knowledge passed down from parents and grandparents; and exposed to the negative stereotypes of them in Norwegian society. This has led to a substantial damage of Sámi and Kven communities, and the health and self-image of the afflicted individuals. When faced with this policy, many of them judged that the safest option for themselves, and especially their children, was to "become Norwegian" as quickly as possible. An apt illustration of this is the consensus in Kvænangen County in Troms. In 1930, they counted 863 Sámi, 325 Kvens and 785 Norwegians; in 1950, five Sámi, two Kvens and 2501 Norwegians (Bjørklund,

⁵ The five national minorities in Norway are Kvens, Forest Finns, Romani, Roma and Jews.

When a professor's theory becomes a Sámi tragedy

Sverre Fjellheim – Senior Lecturer and Honorary Doctor at the World Indigenous Nations University (WINU).

«**N**år en professors teori blir en samisk tragedie», or “When a professor’s theory becomes a Sámi tragedy”, is the title of an article I wrote for a book recently published by Orkana Publishing House. The book, “En trengselens historie”, is an anthology about Yngvar Nielsen. Nielsen (1843-1916) was a historian and geographer, and the manager of the university’s ethnographic museum in Oslo from 1890.

22nd November 1889 Nielsen received a grant to examine the situation of the Sámi people along the Norwegian border to Sweden from Femunden in the south, and northwards to the valley Namdalen. After spending a week in the Røros-region and approximately a fortnight in Namdalen, Nielsen presented his so-called “advancing theory” where he claims that the “laps” first came from Namdalen to Røros as late as 1750. In other words, they came to the region after its farming population had settled there. The theory backed a legislation where the rights of the Sámi reindeer herders were weaker than those of the permanent farming population. The Sámi areas were restricted, and they had to pay substantial compensations for the damages their reindeer had caused on the farmers’ land.

This quickly stitched theory had an incredibly long life with detrimental consequences to the Sámi reindeer herders in the region, and contributed to an almost everlasting struggle for Sámi rights in the Røros-region – which in principle has gone on to this day. Already in 1897, only a few years after Nielsen launched his theory, a verdict fell in the Supreme Court in a lawsuit concerning damages at Riasten, which the Sámi lost. In this verdict it is stated that Yngvar Nielsen’s “scientific research has arguably proven that the permanent population’s rights in this region pre-date the Laps”. Many people had similar charges against them and had to pay compensations that were so large, they became starved and impoverished.

To this day, over a century since the advancing theory first saw life, the Sámi population in the Røros-region have, with reference to this “scientific research”, lost numerous cases in Supreme Court. How is this possible when later research in several disciplines (archaeology, history and language research) have shown that Yngvar Nielsen was thoroughly mistaken?

This tragic story is discussed in detail in the mentioned article about Yngvar Nielsen, and in the book “Gåebrien sijte – En sameby i Rørostraktene” (“A Sámi Town in the Røros Region”), which was independently published in 2012. ■



The Winderen Laboratory, which was the (TK) Jon Alfred Mjøen's workplace. Sverre Fjellheim was given this photo in 1970 from his mother, who is standing to the far left in the picture. Paula was 12 years old when this happened, and she died in 2002, 92 years old.

1985). At the time, Norwegianization was perceived as a modernization project, which shows how modernity and coloniality can be studied as inter-related concepts.

The Norwegianization policy, enforced by the Norwegian state from the mid-1800s and onwards, was founded in popularized research on race-biology which conveyed racist portrayals of minorities and promoted the idea of a racial hierarchy. The ways racialized minorities were treated, differed. The Norwegianization policy, which aimed at assimilation, targeted in particular Sámi, Kvens, forest Finns and Romani people. The measures used by the state relating to the different groups varied, and the Romani people received particularly brutal treatment, such as having their children forcefully adopted from them or placed in foster homes, and women and girls forcefully sterilized. Some of the abuses to the Romani people and the consequences thereof are documented in NOU 2015:7, *Assimilation and Resistance – Norwegian policies towards the Tatars/Romani people from 1850 to our time*. Romani people and Jews were the target of political exclusion and for periods denied entrance to Norway, for instance through the

so-called “gipsy paragraph” from 1927. The exclusion policy aimed at Romani people in Norway led to many of them being killed in Nazi concentration camps during the second world war (Brustad, Rosvoll & Lien, 2015), and half of all Jews in Norway being sent to the death camps in Eastern Europe during the reign of the National Socialist government. Measures related to Romani people continued with the ideals and demands which came with the development of the welfare state, and the social hygienic ideals of the post-war era. The Svanviken labour camp for Romani people was shut down as late as in 1989.

Norway has a colonial history in Sápmi and a history of state-endorsed racism legitimized by scientific research, which are ignored in academia, schools and the national public debate today. This contributes to the general lack of knowledge regarding colonization and racism in Norwegian society because it enables us to pretend that these problems belong to other countries and cultures. As a European country, Norway also carries a tradition of modern Western knowledge that builds on colonial perspectives.

Decolonization and Sámi Reindeer Herding

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In the historical colonization of Sámi areas in Norway, academic research has played a central role up until our times. Research on Sámi has undermined their history and presence in Norway. One example is research on Sámi reindeer herding, which is currently being corrected by new scholars with a decolonizing perspective.

Ecology as an academic discipline today is perhaps the most notable representative of a colonial academic tradition. While ecologists (albeit with honourable exceptions) often try to pass as scientists conducting objective and neutral research, their research is in fact heavily influenced by the values and narrow frameworks prescribed by “correct” interpretations of how the world is and should be. For this reason, ecology has been labelled “the science of empire” due to the long tradition of ecologists legitimizing colonial environmental politics in Africa and Asia, during and following the

colonial era, which has had high costs for the local population. We see examples of this when a local population is accused of destroying their own environment. They then lose access to their land and natural resources, for reasons with no firm roots in research-based knowledge.

Within reindeer herding research, academic ecologists have for a long time had absolute authority when it comes to influencing the Norwegian state’s colonial reindeer herding policies. This is not unique to Norway. It has taken place since colonial times in all countries where herding populations exist. Academic ecologists thus contribute to the “scientification” of the national reindeer herding policies. This is especially the case for researchers in the research institutes who are dependent on receiving external funding in order to have a job. The Ministry of Agriculture and Food has for the last 20 years given large funds to ecological research on Sámi reindeer herding, which has been a much needed source of income for researchers and their departments. Regardless of what their data actually shows, they have presented conclusions stating that there are too many reindeer in proportion to available pastures. This has given a false legitimacy to the continued policy of reducing the number of reindeer and reindeer owners.

Commissioned by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, ecologists have measured and weighed the vegetation of the Finnmark Plateau (Finnmarksvidda) in 1998, 2005, 2010 and 2013. The results from the measurements on average show that the vegetation has increased significantly from 1998

to 2013, although there are local and temporal variations. This knowledge has not been conveyed to the public. Instead, researchers have given an impression that their data supports the idea of a crisis on the plateau where a rapid loss of pastures has been caused by an excessive amount of reindeer. This is also the narrative we are served in the media.

Researchers pretend their data confirms the notion of overgrazing on the Finnmark Plateau. The actual results do not fit in with national reindeer herding policies. It is not surprising, then, that the Ministry of Agriculture and Food in its report to the parliament regarding reindeer herding in 2017 ignores the results from an investigation they themselves have financed. Many people want to put limits on reindeer herding because it collides with other uses of the land, advocated by influential forces, for instance building mines, windmill parks and cabin developments. Some conservationists think reindeer herding prevents larger numbers of predatory animals in these areas. Therefore, many forces in society want to reduce reindeer herding, and they have their supporters in the Norwegian Parliament (Stortinget). The reindeer herders, however, have hardly ever been represented in Stortinget.

Academic ecologists have been more than willing to act as a scientific alibi for national politics. This is not only the case for commissioned research. One professor of biology, for example, has suggested stopping all reindeer herding, while another biology professor has claimed that the knowledge behind reindeer herding is like a “remnant from the hippie era”, based on “a narrative

that native populations have a deep wisdom about living in pact with nature”. Thus, the majority society’s mocking and condescending view of reindeer herding is reproduced.

There is, however, nothing mystical or supernatural about the knowledge behind reindeer herding. This is practical knowledge based on trial and error conducted over centuries. But this knowledge is neglected in the prevailing perspectives on reindeer herding. The reindeer owners, for example, say it is wise to have a fair amount of strong animals in the flock, such as oxen and castrates, who can dig up snow and ice to provide access to the pastures during winter. But based on the recommendations of biologists, the state forces reindeer herding into a structure with flocks of reindeer cows who produce calves during spring and only a few oxen for reproductive purposes. The result is a form of reindeer herding which is more vulnerable during harsh winters with difficult snow conditions. Furthermore, the reindeer herd is more vulnerable to attacks from predators with only a few strong animals to defend it. This type of traditional knowledge can complement scientific knowledge without necessarily having to contradict it.

Ecological research on Sámi reindeer herding is an example that shows why the debate about decolonization is relevant to Norwegian academia, and that it can contribute to make researchers and other actors more aware, and thus heighten the quality of the research. The example illustrates how the state’s narrow frameworks of knowledge can also lead to poor research. ■

RACISM IN NORWAY

Race research was extensive in Norway and researchers from many different disciplines wanted to keep up with the Swedish research front at the National Institute for Race-biology at the University of Uppsala. Examinations of the Sámi population were conducted, as illustrated in the picture above. Although it is widely agreed amongst academics and others that the biological race-terminology has now been discredited, race still exists as a social construction (see for instance, Guðjónsdóttir, 2014 and Guðjónsdóttir & Loftsdóttir, 2017). The sociologists Jon Rogstad and Arnfinn Midtbøen write:



To what extent is it meaningful to talk about racism when biologists have rejected the existence of human races? From a sociological perspective, we argue it is important. If people behave as if there are differences between races, race is still important regardless of its biological validity; it is a category made real in its consequences and they must be subject to analytical investigation.

(2010, s. 4).

Racism refers to “a generalization expressed through the attribution of certain qualities to certain people based on their belonging to a certain group, and that these qualities are defined as so negative that they form an argument to keep members of this group at distance, to exclude them, and, if possible, actively discriminate against them” (Bangstad and Døving, 2015: 16). Racism relates to people’s skin colour, religion, language or culture (ibid.). Today, Norwegian society is marked by a “colour-blind” racism. This form of racism entails that discrimination based on culture, religion, language or skin colour is to a great extent not credited as real. Colour-blind racism is used to deny the fact that skin colour matters in today’s society because you yourself feel it should not matter (Bonilla-Silva, 2013). The Norwegian anthropologist Marianne Gullestad described the Norwegian denial of racism extensively in the early

2000s (2002). She showed how a denial of racism is widespread in Norwegian society and that this denial contributes to a normalization of racist ideas, words and actions (ibid., see also Gullestad, 2005). We still observe this today, for example when people who talk about or point out racist actions and structures are often accused of producing racism (Joof, 2018).

An important reason why racist ideas are hard to get rid of, is that they have been incorporated over centuries through colonization and imperialism. They cannot simply be erased from culture, social structures or people's unconscious or conscious perceptions. They can, however, be challenged, and over time many racist ideas have all but disappeared because they no longer seem important or credible. Few people in Norway today believe that Kvens are Finnish-Russian spies, as the Norwegian authorities claimed at the beginning of the previous century (Niemi, 1981). Meanwhile, Muslims have to a greater extent become suspects for treason and terrorism as a result of the so-called "war against terror". Changes in international politics have a great impact on changes in racist perceptions.

The role of skin colour in racist perceptions is also changing. The colonization of Africa and slavery contributed to a widespread racism towards people of African heritage. The hierarchy of race-biology also emphasized a schism between people with light and dark skin. But as the act of skull-measuring depicted above illustrates, skin colour has only been one of many "signs" that have been used to create perceptions about different human races. Sámi, Kvens, Forest Finns, Romani people, Roma and Jews have been subject to racism despite the fact that most of these groups are today perceived as "white". This is partly because the racist ideas about what defines a Jew or a Sámi are less widespread than before, although they still circulate in society (Dankertsen, 2019). Whiteness is a term often used in discussions

about racism relating to the privilege of being exempt from racism. Within the colonial logic, white is the invisible, unnoticeable norm. Other people "have" a race. Whiteness, however, in this context relates to more than skin colour. It discloses a system of privileges and power, which also influences people's perception of themselves, others and the society around them (Dankertsen, 2019). With this understanding of whiteness, the Sámi and Norwegian national minorities are also excluded from the category. Meanwhile, whiteness affects people differently according to physical attributes. People with light skin may "pass" as white if they avoid showing other features of their minority position. Individuals with dark skin do not have the same opportunity to make themselves "invisible" in relation to whiteness (Sibeko, 2019). When we refer to whiteness in this document, it is in this wider understanding of the term.

In a Norwegian context, we have a lot more knowledge about inequality and gender discrimination at the universities, than about racism and the consequences of colonialism and imperialism. It is important to see equality at the universities in relation to the discrimination of racialized students and employees, immigrants, national minorities and indigenous people. The background for this is that gender, for instance, takes on different meanings for people with different backgrounds. For example, racialized women meet other and more challenges related to equality than white women experience (Mälck, 2013). Our position is that we have to work with these questions intersectionally, which involves seeing how different social categories work together in people's everyday lives (Crenshaw, 1991). Categories such as skin colour, sexuality, ethnicity, class, abilities and so forth have implications for how you experience a given situation. ■

"We are the worst of the worst, that's just how it is"

Ixchel A. León H. – MA in International Relations from Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NTNU)/Postgraduate Student in Gender Studies at the University of Oslo

This is a saying I grew up with. It was used by female family members among us women to explain and understand who we were, are and are supposed to be in a hierarchy with its roots in colonialism. The saying was also meant to be used to "accept" and show that we were aware of the fact that we existed within an established reality and power relations where we were not subjects, but objects. We, the Maya women, were objects who were and are used to create the subject we are not and should not be. Although the saying was supposed to explain our existence in Guatemalan society, I see that it can also apply in a Norwegian context.

My brown skin in Norway does not indicate an indigenous person, but a foreigner. As a foreigner, I am an image of what is described as "not ethnic Norwegian". I was not born here, so it should not bother me to be seen in this way, but it does. It bothers me because I am aware of the fact that this portrayal is based on power relations, which also

classify ethnic Norwegians with a different skin colour or religion as "not Norwegian". This is not based on an idea that all individuals are different, but that I and we who are "the others" are different; an idea that claims that people who are different, are "deviants" from the norm.

When people discover that I am Latin American, I can be met with another type of reaction. Sometimes these reactions are so "minor" that I choose to overlook them – perhaps because I am used to hearing that I do not dress like a Latin American, or that I must "be spicy, like to dance" etc. At other occasions, the reactions can create fear and discomfort. Like the time when a friend of mine from Cape Verde and I were followed to the bathroom by an older white Norwegian man who asked us if we were Brazilian. We answered "no" in shock and anger that someone had thought it was okay to follow two young women on their way to the bathroom. Then he explained that he was looking for a Brazilian woman because they were "easier" to take home. My friend and I left the bar and went home. Both of us were frustrated by what had happened. We had been classified as a certain nationality because we were brown and talked to each other in a mixture of Norwegian, Spanish and Portuguese. But being mistaken for Brazilian was not the problem. What infuriated us was that we as women, and potentially "Brazilian women", were sexualized on a whole other level. Brazilian women were reduced to objects which in this man's mind existed in order to satisfy his needs. The fact that we

were young bachelor students from other countries than Brazil was rendered invisible, and wasn't even a possible idea in this man's head.

In some cases, when my identity as Maya is known, I am categorized as exotic. As something people can hardly believe still exists. The ignorance about indigenous people shows that we have been overlooked by the dominating history that is told about conquering and coloniality. In Guatemala, the majority of the population is indigenous people, and descendants of the survivors of colonization and the national attempt to assimilate the population after Guatemala's independence from Spain. Furthermore, indigenous people most frequently migrate from the country, and young Maya children have died near the border to the United States.

Like melanin rich individuals, I experience how quickly I can change the atmosphere in a room simply by being present – simply by existing. When you share a negative experience, the atmosphere quickly becomes uncomfortable. There and then, the urge to excuse yourself becomes pressing, but I am trying to resist satisfying or making other people's privileged positions easier while I/we struggle. Other times it feels like you are seen before you are heard. It is this approach that makes me work hard to prove and to challenge assumptions that can arise when people see my skin, my body and me first. I work hard, until I am completely exhausted, to be enough. To not be trapped in the idea that I am "the worst of the worst". Because that is something I refuse to be. ■

WHAT IS DECOLONIZATION?

The term decolonization is often associated with the period in the second half of the 1900s when countries in the global south became formally independent from the European colonial powers, but is in fact a much broader term. Decolonization entails breaking down the structures, laws and perceptions which colonization processes have created, and which continue to be active in depriving colonized people of their prospects, humanity and authority. Eve Tuck and Wayne Yang (2012) stress that decolonization is not a metaphor. It is not sufficient to declare that you are against racism or support social justice, for instance by including statements in the university's set of values, if it has no practical consequences. Knowledge and material realities are closely connected. Decolonization cannot be extracted from the concrete material questions regarding rights to land and water for indigenous peoples in the world, for example. The decolonization of education is about making space for people and forms of knowledge which may contribute to other possibilities for present and future generations. We must make space for more perspectives and forms of knowledge, and for more diverse people to share knowledge. This also means challenging the assumption that it is only what we commonly understand as Western knowledge that promotes good and valuable knowledge.

DECOLONIZATION AND THE PRODUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE

In the decolonization debate in Norway, many people have assumed that decolonization is about getting rid of the entire Western academic tradition. Such a misunderstanding does not lead to a constructive debate. It is not the modern European philosophical and scientific tradition in itself that is the problem. The problem is the way it places the Western world at the centre of scientific knowledge in a way that renders knowledge from the rest of the world less valuable or relevant. Knowledge produced in other contexts or with other contextual frameworks, are underestimated and rendered invisible, or perceived as invalid within this system (Walsh, 2012). Decolonization, therefore, does not seek to disqualify Western science, but to enable a widening of our understanding of science. The decolonization of academia is in this sense a process that involves a democratization of research and a strengthening of knowledge, by making space for more voices, perspectives and a wider exchange of opinions. Furthermore, making space for other perspectives and forms of knowledge does not mean to give equal validity to different viewpoints uncritically, but rather to provide equal opportunities and to read them in a balanced relation to Western contributions, and with the same critical methodological assessment. In doing so, we may discover the relevance in what we perceive as different, and use the perspectives and forms of knowledge for what they are.

In education and research, decolonization among other things means questioning what we recognize as knowledge, what is given status as literary canon and placed on the course curriculum, and who is allowed

to represent that knowledge. Power, perspectives and context influence knowledge. Because coloniality continues to be active financially and academically, decolonization cannot be seen as a finished process. Moreover, the term does not point towards a defined goal or a future ideal situation. It may perhaps be better described as an approach to a form of practice, or an alternative. Decolonization is about being systemically critical and portraying complexity and diversity, while acknowledging that we do not have all the answers or a recipe to how decolonization “should” be performed.

The reproduction of eurocentrism is a crucial problem for academia. One way of challenging eurocentrism is to continue to read the canon of the discipline with a critical perspective as to how colonial ideologies and practices influence them. Another way of challenging eurocentrism is to include other texts produced other places or by other groups in society, containing other perspectives. We repeat that this is not a matter of removing all knowledge produced by white Western men, but that these should not be the only perspectives students are introduced to. You can read more about this in the section “Tools for decolonizing education”.

SITUATED KNOWLEDGE

In Eurocentric research, it has been common practice to universalize knowledge produced in Western societies. This knowledge has been considered relevant and applicable all over the world, while knowledge created elsewhere has been seen to have a limited relevance beyond the context from which it stems. An important tool in creating this effect has been the practice of a “God’s view” in academic

literature, where the social, geographical and historical context for the research and the researcher’s perspective have been made invisible (Haraway, 1988). Feminist and anti-racist scientific criticism has emphasized the importance of acknowledging that all research is formed by the epistemological, social and political context in which it is produced. For social sciences and the humanities, this is obviously important because the researcher’s interpretations will depend on his/her already acquired knowledge about the subject of his/her research. But it is also important to the natural sciences, because the questions we ask and the research that receives funding are formed by the society we work in. This is apparent in the relative shortage of research on women’s specific health issues.

In a decolonization perspective, it is important to acknowledge that knowledge is situated, and that experiential knowledge affects which questions are considered important. This does not mean that it is impossible to give a qualitative assessment of knowledge; the different sciences have developed many good methods to ascertain with as much certainty as possible the accuracy of their conclusions. These methods are important to academic development, and to ensure that we become better equipped to understand the world we live in. A democratic society depends on truth. A topic should be examined from as many angles as possible and in as many ways as possible. For this to be possible, more forms of knowledge, methods, theories and contexts must be acknowledged as legitimate contributions.

Studying social anthropology as an indirect research object

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– PhD candidate at the
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Jeg I am a social anthropologist with a BA and MA from the University of Copenhagen. I am also the child of a white Norwegian mother and a black Fulani father, and stood out as one of two students of color in my year. I had butterflies in my stomach when I started my degree, hoping to find a place of openness and consciousness of a global world. I discovered, however, that the discipline also has a complicated baggage. Historically, social anthropology is a subject with close ties to the European colonization of the world. Studying “the Other” had a clear political goal of justifying and making colonial processes more effective. This history has been addressed in anthropological circles for decades and was especially prevalent during the representation debate in the 1980s. Here the role of anthropology as a colonial practice and how this could be rectified was discussed. One emphasis was the researcher-subject’s position, and it became more important to reflect on how the presence of the researcher

influenced an environment. Meanwhile, another narrative has been allowed to claim a big part of anthropology’s self-image. This is precisely the value of studying something and someone “foreign” to yourself. One of the first pieces of advice we were given about research methodology, was that we should never ask someone “why” they did/thought/were something. This was because people could then make up answers, despite perhaps being unaware of doing so. Instead, we should ask open questions and in addition observe and participate in their everyday life in order to see the difference between what people say and what they do. So, I was taught to believe that there are clear differences between the researcher and the subject.

We had many books at home, but it was not until I wanted to write my master thesis about racism at Danish universities that I discovered the critical literature about colonization, identity and racism that was right there in our bookshelf next to Norwegian crime novels and old albums. Although my relationship to my parents has always been and still can be affected by global and local racism, different citizenship statuses and cultural differences, these topics have mostly been under the surface during my childhood. It was not until I had a class on the Fulani people, that I felt an inner conflict. I did not recognise myself in the way the Fulani were described and found it absurd when two researchers were arguing about whether there were tribes or only large groups of family in this ethnic group, or whether this was in fact

the same thing. I went home and expressed my frustration over the lack of nuances and the lack of understanding to my parents. My father laughed and said that many anthropologists had done fieldwork on the Fulani throughout history, and he had several examples of the lies people had served to Western anthropologists, just to give them something ‘interesting’ to interpret. The trope of the “natives” performing in a characterized way in front of anthropologists is well-known in anthropological satire as a criticism of differences between the traditional and the modern. This satire, however, lacks an important point, which I have borrowed here from Tuck & Yang (2014), namely that there is a great deal of knowledge that the anthropologist and Western academia in general does not “deserve” to obtain, and that research is not always the intervention that is needed. Instead of seeing this as a limitation, I think these are important points to include in future (anthropological) research, and it will require a greater restructuring of power and a greater awareness of the role of the anthropologist. ■



The representation debate

In the 1980s, anthropologists were debating what role the (Western) researcher's presence plays in an often non-Western local community, including how and if anthropologist can 'represent' the stories of their interlocutors.

Fulani

Fula/Fulbe/Peul is a nomadic ethnic group of 120-150 million people who live across the Sahel region in Africa, from Mauritania in the northwest to Cameroon in the southwest and Sudan in the east.

The position of the researcher subject

The way those who are "researched" are positioned (politically, historically, personally) in relation to the person researching and what is being researched.

DECOLONIZATION AND ANTI-RACISM IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The access to free higher education is a strength in Norwegian education, which is important to protect. Free education, however, does not in itself prevent discrimination and marginalization in higher education. Students from a poorer financial background, with less educated parents, who belong to a minority group, or a combination of these factors may face numerous obstacles. The cultural scholar Sara Ahmed has pointed out that a university can be seen as an extended family where it is important to resemble members of the older generation in order to "fit in" (2012, p. 486). Therefore, it is easier to feel at home at a university when you see yourself reflected in the academic staff and in your fellow students. This is one of many reasons why diversity amongst the academic staff is an important contribution to decolonization. Another important reason why diverse recruitment ought to be a priority is that racism is an unreasonable toll on racialized teachers and students, and contributes to pushing people out of academic carriers. It is, however, not such that discrimination automatically disappears when staff representation becomes more balanced. A Swedish study has shown how a "colour-blind" racism continues to maintain white privileges despite an increased share of racialized academics in the university staff (Mählek, 2013). Unequal treatment does not necessarily manifest itself in direct discrimination. The decolonization of higher education also entails, among other things, that different people should have access to education and academic carriers regardless of their background and identity, and that institutions of higher educations and research should be perceived as safe and good for everyone.

The research-based knowledge about racism and discrimination in higher education in Norway is limited, but is a growing area of research. We know for instance that:

- White men from the upper social classes still hold most professorships and have the shortest carrier paths to the top in academia

WHAT IS DECOLONIZATION?

- Despite the fact that there has been a gender balance in PhD candidates in Norway for more than ten years, 70 % of professors are still men (She Figures, 2018)

- Numbers from 2016 show that the share of female professors was the highest in medicine and health (40%), followed by the humanities (33%) and social sciences (31%). The lowest share of women was in technology (12%), and mathematics and natural sciences (17%) (Næss, Gunnes and Wendt, 2018:15)

- A greater share of female professors (70%) is recruited from their own institution, compared to male professors (60%) (Næss, Gunnes and Wendt, 2018).

- Following the carrier progressions of immigrants in Norwegian academia has shown that it can be more challenging for immigrants to establish themselves permanently and to build a carrier in higher education and research in Norway (Maximova-Mentzoni et al., 2016)

- Other studies show that male applicants with an international background (PhDs from institutions outside Norway) stand a better chance at gaining permanent employment compared to women of international background (Moratti et al., 2019)

- Amongst those who complete a PhD in Norway, the probability of getting a permanent position in academia is higher for majority-Norwegians than for people of foreign origin, especially from the global south, and the difference is especially significant in the humanities. The differences are smaller in the natural sciences (Askvik & Drange, 2019)

- In 2018, five students at the University of Oslo reported experiences of discrimination based on gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnic background, religion or ability (NTB, 2018).

Making the Sámi visible

Lise Eder Murberg jih Anja
Márjá Nystø Keskitalo –
Saemien Studeenth Tråantesne

Under During Tråante2017, which marked the centenary of the first Sámi congress, the city centre was decorated with Sámi art, culture and Sámi people dressed in national costumes, Gapta. It was a special experience to see such a visible Sámi presence in the town. Tråante2017 was a great inspiration to continue to promote the Sámi community in Tråante (Trondheim).

Ahead of the jubilee, the Sámi student union Saemien Studeenth Tråantesne (SST) was established. The motivation behind starting it was to create a meeting place for Sámi students in Tråante. There was a clear need for Sámi knowledge because the organization soon received and continues to receive, requests to contribute with Sámi content at kindergartens, schools, museums and other organizations. To many Sámi students, SST became a refuge where they could strengthen a part of their identity and at the same time not have to explain it. As Sámi students, we

often experience having to answer questions about the Sámi from our fellow students. Many people admit that they know too little about the Sámi, which is noticeable. Many people do not know that there are Sámi south of Northern-Norway, or that reindeer herding takes place not far from the university town. This shows that the teaching at schools is insufficient. And when you learn nothing about it at the university, when will you ever learn it?

In an attempt to give attention to the Sámi culture and history at the university in Trondheim (NTNU), SST and SAIH Trondheim arranged a seminar about the decolonization of academia. SST also wrote a resolution about “Sámi perspectives in education” which was passed at the Student Parliament in April 2019. The resolution addresses NTNU’s responsibility as an institution for education, as well as the importance of including Sámi content in education. The resolution was the result of a frustration that several Sámi students felt from the fact that knowledge about the Sámi was rarely or never talked about at the university, along with the frustration of always having to take the role as teacher to educate their fellow curious students.

During the Norwegianization-period, the authorities’ goal was to obliterate the Sámi culture

and people. For us in SST, decolonization is about promoting and making things visible. There is a need both for Sámi knowledge and for knowledge about the Sámi. This is what we are working for in our university town. ■

WHY DOES DECOLONIZATION MATTER?

The decolonization of education is a project that has humankind's ability to change society for the better at its core. We argue that decolonization will lead to an increased awareness and facilitate action and change. Decolonization is a democratic project because it invites and opens for more voices, perspectives and forms of knowledge. Decolonization is important if we want to produce knowledge for a fairer and more sustainable world.

Students in Norway can have better opportunities to meet knowledge from various minorities and parts of the world than is

currently presented to them. We can obtain far better ways of understanding how and why racism continues to have a big impact both geopolitically and in our everyday lives. The measures we suggest may also contribute to more students experiencing that the knowledge presented to them is relevant to their lives and that – ideally – no one has to face racism and discrimination. In addition, we want everyone to gain a better foundation to critically examine the knowledge they obtain.



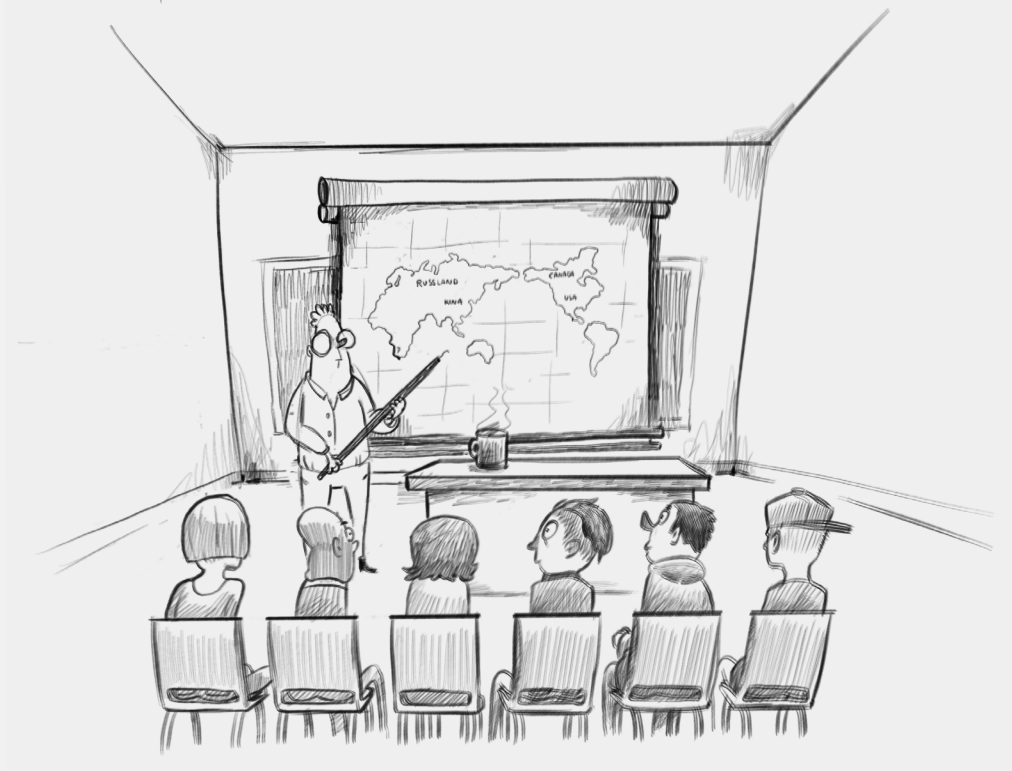
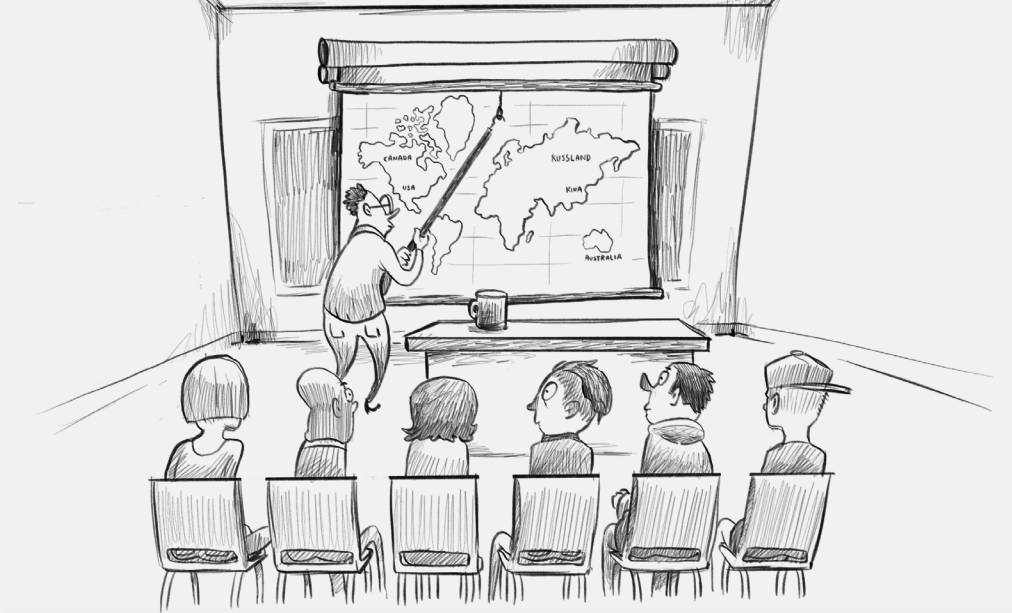
Questions for reflection

1. What feelings and thoughts do you get when you read about coloniality and decolonization?
2. Do you feel resistance, or curiosity?
3. What opportunities might come with more knowledge and awareness about coloniality and decolonization?
4. What could explain why the call for decolonization is met with debate and resistance?

REFLECTING ON YOUR OWN PRACTICES AND
SHARING OF KNOWLEDGE

PART **2**

HOW CAN
YOU CONTRIBUTE?



REFLECTING ON YOUR OWN PRACTICES AND SHARING OF KNOWLEDGE

Decolonization is a political process that requires political effort, but we can also do a lot with our practices at education institutions. In this part, you will find practical tips and questions for reflection which educators can use to plan and assess their own sharing of knowledge, teaching and tutoring. Teachers are more able to do something about the curriculum and the course content but that does not mean that students are not able to contribute to decolonization. We think these tools will enable everyone to contribute, regardless of which side of the education situation you start from. As a student, you can use the tools in relation to your teachers and fellow students, course evaluations and written assignments. Make yourself and your fellow students acquainted with your rights to influence your education, and challenge them if they are not good enough. Through written assignments and seminar groups, you can choose to draw on academic literature and minority perspectives that challenge the literary canon of your discipline.

Feel free to use the questions for reflection and examples as a starting point for discussion and dialogue. Self-reflection, awareness about power relations and the importance of context are key elements in pedagogical strategies promoting decolonization. At the same time, these aspects play a big part in how we think about

research methods and ethics from a decolonization perspective. For this reason, many of the examples in this section are also relevant to research, and to the interaction between research and education. Although the tips and questions for reflection you find here are primarily related to education, they are also useful to reflect on beyond an academic context.

The decolonization of education is an academic, political and antiracist project building on what we refer to as emancipatory pedagogical principles. One of the main works in emancipatory pedagogy is *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* by Paulo Freire (1999). A central point in this theory is that true critical thinking is not just something that takes place in the mind of a student or within the four walls of a classroom; it also leads to changes in society. Education should affect society in a positive direction of increased social justice. A decolonizing education starts from the assumption that students are human beings with the ability to change the society they belong to. They should contribute with their own thoughts, reflections and experiences at the universities. Students can and should contribute with perspectives that stimulate to critical thinking and challenge the knowledge we take for granted. We view education as an arena for learning for both students and educators. A prerequisite is that the teaching space should feel safe for everyone, and for this reason, all forms of discrimination, sexism and racism must be actively combated. That educators have a genuine interest in, curiosity and compassion for all students, and the ability to enjoy communal learning processes, is the starting point for conducting a good and potentially decolonizing education. The responsibility to practice a decolonizing form of education does not exclusively lie with the educator. Students also have the power and possibility to influence their education situation and curriculum.



Questions for reflection YOUR OWN POSITION

1. What role might decolonization play in how you live your life, your relationships and how you face and understand the public debate?
2. How does your background influence how you relate to students/educators and how they relate to you?

ACKNOWLEDGING THAT YOU ARE A PART OF THE PROBLEM AND THE SOLUTION

The first step in contributing to decolonization is often the hardest because it is acknowledging that you are a part of the problem. A premise to working with self-reflection is to acknowledge that we all contribute to maintaining unfair power structures despite our best intentions. Although it is not our intention to act in a racist way, for instance, our good intentions cannot be considered more important than people's right to not experience racism. Regardless of our class, skin colour, gender or cultural belonging, we all have internalized perceptions about white Western supremacy (Battiste, 2013). In various ways, we have gone through an education that promotes the achievements of white men within science and philosophy, and that normalizes a perception of the intellectual superiority of the West. Knowledge produced by men is the undisputed centre of all other disciplines than gender studies, and knowledge produced by white people is at the centre of all other disciplines than indigenous studies at Norwegian universities.

This is why self-reflection is the most important work in decolonizing pedagogy. This involves becoming aware of the fact that what you have learned and experienced affects how you produce and share knowledge. To see that what you have learned to take for granted as true, universal or valid knowledge is dominated by a specific and limited perspective, requires both practice and determination. At the same time, self-reflection is a tool available to all of us, and can have a significant effect on how we act. Decolonization begins with the determination to make changes through creating an awareness about our thoughts and actions. This is true whether we work with young children in a kindergarten, with schoolchildren or with adults at the university or in other contexts. In this sense, we are also all a part of the solutions. We must begin with being open to changing our knowledge and to tolerating ambivalence and diversity. The Western modern way of thinking about knowledge and truth has taught us to strive and hope for clear and universal answers to most questions. A decolonizing approach to knowledge emphasises that knowledge is often complex, multifaceted and provides different answers in different contexts.



Questions for reflection

KNOWLEDGE, AMBIVALENCE AND DIVERSITY

1. How do you relate to unfamiliar, unconventional, or ambiguous knowledge? What influences your approach to this kind of knowledge?
2. How do you react when the knowledge you take for granted is challenged or at stake?
3. How can you support yourself and others in handling knowledge that is challenging, uncomfortable, ambivalent, or ambiguous?
4. What are the possibilities and what do we have to gain by opening for other possibilities and ways of thinking in your teaching and/or research?

Our history is plural

Cecilia Salinas – Course leader at the Department for International Studies and Interpreting, Oslo Metropolitan University (OsloMet)

In the summer of 2007, I taught a 50-session course in Norwegian language and social sciences for newly arrived immigrants. In addition to regular school classes, the course involves guided tours in museums, cultural centres, galleries and political institutions, and one day the Norwegian parliament, “Stortinget”, was on our schedule. A young Norwegian woman received us: myself, originally from Argentina, and a group of approximately 30 adults from various countries in Latin America. She told us about the history of Stortinget, and the work that takes place there, and about central works of art in the building that reflect Norwegian history. I translated for those who did not understand Norwegian. In one of the large halls, we stopped in front of “Frihetens søstre II”, a large painting by Arne Ekeland from 1958.

The Norwegian guide explained that the two female figures in the centre of the painting represented humanity. The white woman and all the white figures symbolized science, technology and knowledge. This could be read from symbols

such as books, tools and buildings in the left part of the image, which could be interpreted as representing cities. The black woman and dark figures on the right hand side, the guide told us, symbolized the earth’s natural resources. She pointed at this part of the painting and brought our attention to the fact that the dark figures were surrounded by cultivated land. She mentioned something about the clouds representing Europe and Africa, and that the white woman had the power to tear apart the map of the world.

Before I could say anything, those who understood Norwegian reacted to what the guide said. They wanted me to confirm that they had understood her correctly. We explained it to those who did not understand Norwegian. Everyone was upset. We knew far too well the effects of such a dominating lie and stereotype that whiteness represents science, technology and knowledge, while darkness only represents natural resources. As polite guests, we joked away the guide’s presentations while we moved on. Later I discovered that we had not only been subject to one guide’s interpretation. Both in digitalmuseum.no and the Norwegian Art Encyclopaedia, we can read: “The white figure symbolises human knowledge, culture [...] The black woman symbolises the treasures of the earth”.

This episode illustrates the necessity of talking about history

in plural form. We cannot limit ourselves to offering one interpretation of an image or a historical event. Multiple interpretations must be presented at the same time as we create an opportunity for reflection, to see the ambivalence and unintended consequences of attitudes, perspectives, ideologies, which in themselves may be well meant. Works of art in public spaces enlighten and contribute to creating understanding. They are not politically neutral and their meaning changes with time and according to context. This is why it is important to have a temporal contextualisation of events and public symbols in relation to when they were painted or written, and in relation to the audiences of today. Existing controversial pieces bear witness of unacceptable attitudes. They could be used actively in questioning whose stories we retell and reproduce, and which universal and essential truths contribute to creating prejudices, negative stereotypes and history falsifications. Our public spaces should be filled with multiple interpretations of, and discussions about the portrayals and messages communicated in art. In this way, we can disclose and challenge established truths that promote hatred, division and estrangement together. ■

Talking about colonialism, coloniality and decolonization has been given little or no attention in the basic and higher education, as well as the public debate, in Norway. This makes it difficult to see these connections, or to understand what they are about. Decolonization is among other things about acknowledging that our educations primarily make us knowledgeable within a specific geographical and historical context. As mentioned above, decolonization is a project that seeks to expand our knowledge and makes us realise that we must actively seek out knowledge that has been made invisible or in other ways unavailable to the majority population (de Souza Santos, 2018). The communal and experiential knowledge many indigenous groups have is often not recognised, although it in many cases

builds on many years of trial and error⁶. We have to critically question what a certain form of knowledge says something about, and what it does not say anything about. This also relates to the power of definition in the production of knowledge. People who have been rendered invisible, are not given the opportunity to tell their side of the story of what our world is like for them, in their own terms. Racialized people in Norway say they experience whiteness as a system of privileges precisely through their experiences of the downsides that come with not being white. When the white majority responds with rejecting that whiteness is a relevant perspective, we lose important knowledge about racialized people's experiences of racism.



Thought experiment

How is knowledge made invisible to us through colonial processes?

If you find it a bit abstract to think about that the knowledge produced outside a western modern context is often invisible to us, you can try this thought experiment. Imagine that you are going to harvest sweetcorn. Imagine picking the cobs. Remove the leaves and place the corn in front of you. What is the image you get of what the corn looks like?

Unless you have grown up in certain parts of South America, you will most likely imagine cobs with yellow, identically coloured, symmetrical sweetcorn. In actual fact, there is a great natural diversity of corn types, with corn in different colours, sizes, and combinations, from blue and white to pink and orange. The fact that most of us imagine a specific type of corn is a result of a domestication and standardization process in the international

corn production, which promotes the production of one specific type.

In the same way that the yellow, symmetrical sweetcorn has "colonized" the definition of what sweetcorn is, a Western modern way of thinking has colonized and defined what is classified as knowledge. In the same way that it is difficult, or almost impossible, for many people to imagine sweetcorn in other colours and shapes, it is difficult to see other types of knowledge than the Western modern one as equally valid and true within the colonial framework we are used to placing knowledge within.

(Source: Andreotti, 2011).

⁶ This is well illustrated in the case about Sàmi reindeer herding under Coloniality in Norway.



Thought experiment
**How is knowledge
made invisible to us
through colonial
processes?**



The picture is taken by Ane Bermudez in Quiche, Guatemala.

REFLECTING ON YOUR OWN POSITION AND KNOWLEDGE

Our experiential and social positions give us different starting points, and different strengths and weaknesses in our work with decolonization. Many people who are Sámi and Kven have an insight into how colonization has marginalized and oppressed people and forms of knowledge, and that pointing this out has been arrogantly rejected in academia. Black Norwegians often have experiences showing that a person's skin colour is decisive for how you experience racism, despite the fact that people often claim that skin colour is of no importance. White Norwegians have often grown up with a colour-blind view of life with limited knowledge of how racism is decisive to people's life conditions. We must become aware of the forms of knowledge and the experiences we have, and the ones we lack. Examining our own experiential knowledge is a good place to start when reflecting about our position and perspective. In clarifying our prerequisites, preconceived understandings and insights, we can build a foundation to make space for other and more questions and forms of knowledge.



Questions for reflection

HOW ARE WE INFLUENCED BY OUR POSITION AND EXPERIENCES?

1. How have the experiences I have had as a human being at and outside university influenced the topics I am interested in?
2. Which questions have I had to consider, and which have I been able to ignore? (Consider for instance questions relating to estrangement, discrimination, sexism and racism)
3. How does my life influence my research and my teaching?
4. How am I influenced by experiences of being in a minority or privileged position in society?
5. When approaching an academic text, you may ask: Why is this person looking into this topic? What is their context? What theoretical and experiential knowledge do they have? How might these factors influence this person in their portrayal of the topic?

Positions and roles when working with indigenous peoples

Torjer A. Olsen – Professor of Indigenous Studies, Centre of Sámi Studies, University of Tromsø

Who you are as a researcher (or teacher or aid worker or something else), matters. Who you are affects how you think and act. It both limits and liberates you. Doors open and windows are closed.

Identity is a key word and topic for anyone who studies indigenous groups. People often ask me: Are you indigenous? Are you Sámi? I have to tell them I am not, which puts me in one box and outside another.

Within the indigenous field of study, experience and history show that there is good reason to be sceptical and critical to people from the outside. Especially scientists. They (we) have narrated History from different perspectives, but (too) often not from the perspective of indigenous people. They (we) have measured people's heads based

on the premises set by race theory. They (we) have used research in a way that (too) often has not been beneficial to indigenous communities or supported the interests of indigenous people. The fact that indigenous people have become scientists and teachers is therefore the most important development within the studies of indigenous people.

At the same time, this is not a black/white image. Herein are the reasons why I think it is okay to be a scientist of indigenous studies despite being a plain old ethnic Norwegian.

Although indigenous/not-indigenous is a clear dichotomy on paper, the reality is not necessarily so straightforward. The Australian indigenous scientist Martin Nakata describes "the cultural interface" between indigenous and non-indigenous people. Instead of a clear division, there is a fluid border where it is possible to be in different places and have different perspectives.

One example is how the Norwegianization process and historical changes have led to different ways of being Sámi in Sápmi/Sábme/Saepmie. Some people wear their traditional costume and have Sámi as their first language. Some people

do not wear the traditional costume and do not speak Sámi. The positions between these two are many. The same goes for scientists.

Furthermore, what is beneficial to the indigenous communities is not necessarily straightforward. By drawing on gender or geography, for instance, the question regarding the interests of indigenous people is suddenly more complex. Do we know for sure that indigenous men and indigenous women always have the same interests? Do indigenous people in towns have the same interests as indigenous people in rural areas?

These are clarifications and reflections I include in my work with indigenous topics. What is my role? Which interests support my work? Which perspectives are given space? There are different roles to have or take in the work with indigenous people. You can be an observer, narrator, participant, spokesperson, activist or critic. All of them can be acceptable roles. Speaking for myself, I often choose all of them – at different times and in different situations. Being aware of your choice and perspective is what is most important. Then you can include who you are in what you do. ■



A norm and power-critical education and reflection

Norm-criticism is a tool for reflection that encourages you to critically analyse and challenge the structures or norms that lead to exclusion and discrimination, and that can prevent safe, fair and diverse spaces for teaching and research. Norm-criticism can be used as a concrete teaching strategy, where themes relating to racism, discrimination, sexism and social injustice are explored and discussed explicitly. Norm-critical exercises can also be useful if you want to work with increasing self-reflection and awareness of yourself, your colleagues and/or your fellow students – especially studying your or other people's privileges, for instance related to skin colour, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, ability or social background. The organisation Skeiv Ungdom has made an education leaflet with various exercises in working in a norm and power critical way. The leaflet is called Riv Gjerdene and can be accessed here: <https://skeivungdom.no/brosjyrer/> See especially the list of privileges, "privilegielista", on page 41-43.

PRIVILEGES AND WHITE IGNORANCE

Privileges are advantages people have in society related to their social position. These are often not visible to us until they are challenged. But to those people who are exposed to the negative consequences of other people's privileges, they are very obvious. One example of a privilege is our level of physical ability, which determines whether or not you can use public transport.

The most obvious structure of privileges that is historically intertwined with colonization is whiteness. Examples of white privileges are not being subject to racial profiling by the police, or not being subject to micro-aggressions such as not always having to answer the question of where you come from. White people's reluctance to acknowledge their own privileges are referred to by Charles Mills (1991) as white ignorance. Mills describes white people's resistance to acknowledge the importance of racism in society also in the face of clear evidence of its existence. Especially the insight of how racism means white people experience positive special treatment at the expense of others is difficult for some people to acknowledge. Few people who have special privileges from belonging to a certain group have experiential knowledge that confirms this. This is because they compare themselves to other people from their own group and not with people from other groups. White ignorance is often expressed in a resistance to gaining knowledge about racism in society.



Questions for reflection YOUR PRIVILEGES

1. What privileges have you got, for instance in your line of education or profession?
2. Have you experienced that the colour of your skin has had an importance for instance in your education or professional life?
3. What are the possible reasons why you have/have not experienced this?
4. What concrete efforts do you make in your daily actions to become an ally of colleagues or students that are less privileged or experience injustice?



MICROAGGRESSIONS

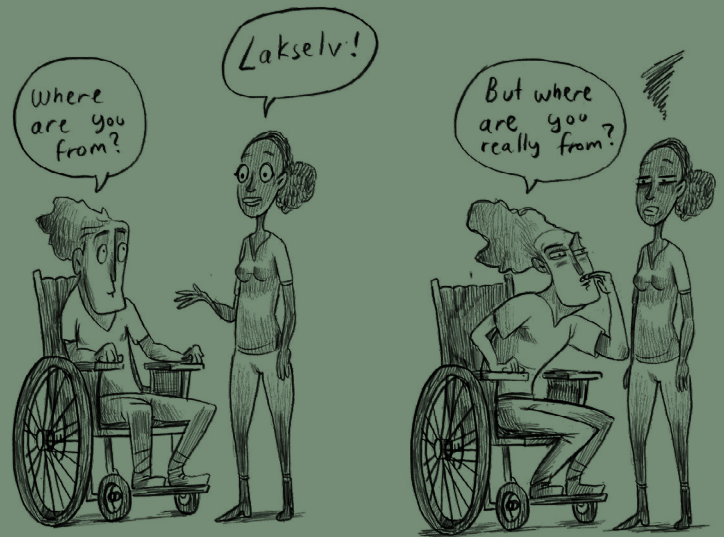
Racism in education settings and in the everyday life at universities is often expressed in the form of microaggressions. Microaggressions are everyday actions or comments which marginalize or degrade the people who experience them (Gressgård and Harlap, 2014). Although these actions are often not intended to be harmful, they can cause a significant amount of discomfort. Microaggressions can occur when you are sceptical to someone, stare at them or ignore them (ibid.: 24). Some examples:

- Avoidant behaviour towards people with black or brown skin
- Preconceived notions about where racialized people come from. For instance asking, "Where do you really come from?"
- Showing an exaggerated interest in someone's cultural background or origin. For instance asking, "Are you 100 % Sámi?"
- Showing a blatant lack of knowledge that demonstrates someone's invisibility. For instance saying, "Are you a Kven? I had no idea they existed!"
- Getting people of minority mixed up. For instance, when your lecturer calls you by the name of another woman of African origin in your seminar group.
- Having an exoticizing or objectifying fascination with people who are black, Muslim or indigenous. For instance asking, "Can I touch your hair?"
- Sexual objectification. For instance saying, "I hope you don't mind me saying this, but you are a very good-looking (black) man"
- Generalization: When individuals are turned into a representative for everyone in their minority group. For instance asking, "What do you as a Muslim think about this?"



In addition, there can be an unconscious racism in teachers' expectations to students. Racialized people often face lower expectations in basic and higher education, which can make it more challenging for them to perform on an equal level to other students. Microaggressions might seem trivial when presented as isolated examples, but are serious when many people repeat them. When you are exposed to repeated acts of microaggressions over time, they create an experience of marginalization and lower sense of self-worth. Microaggressions are thus a structural problem. The privilege of not having to face microaggressions all the time is one especially white people enjoy.

All of us can be guilty of performing microaggressions regardless of our background. Because microaggressions are inextricably linked with structural injustice, working against them also requires changes on a societal level. But we can nonetheless work with gaining an increased awareness of how we meet other people and how we use language. This can for instance be done through norm-critical reflection (see previous page). If you yourself are not faced with microaggressions, or find it difficult to understand their negative impact, you can still become an ally by listening to other people's experiences.



MAKING SPACE FOR MORE VOICES AND PERSPECTIVES

People who are in privileged positions and lack experiential knowledge about exclusion, racism or discrimination have a responsibility to acquire this knowledge. It is not an ethically or politically defensible position to allow people who are subject to racism, colonization or other forms of marginalization to singlehandedly do all the work because they know their own situation best. Because people in these positions have important knowledge that the majority does not have, it is essential to make space for this knowledge to become available to more people.

Contributing to decolonization involves partaking in communal exchanges of solidarity across academic disciplines and personal experiences in order to create change. Often we have to make use of the knowledge from social movements outside of the university. Students and academics both have the possibility to promote marginalized and silenced voices. Investigate which organizations and movements exist in your own academic field which you can include and learn from. If you are non-Sámi and are going to convey knowledge about Sámi culture or history, you can use literature published by a Sámi publishing company, written by Sámi writers.



Questions of reflection

WHOM DO YOU MAKE SPACE FOR?

1. Which organizations, movements or activists exist within your academic field which you can include and learn from?
2. In what ways can you make space to include them and acknowledge their position/contributions?
3. What can these voices contribute with that research or literature is unable to?



POSSIBLE FURTHER WORK:

Investigate and challenge your education institution as to what concrete efforts can make the institution more attractive and interesting to a diversity of academics and students.

HAVING A GENUINE INTEREST IN YOUR ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE

Contributing to decolonization involves a significant academic effort. Decolonization encourages all of us to question the established limits of our academic disciplines and subject areas, and to be attentive to relevant knowledge that is excluded in canonized knowledge. This is essentially a matter of having a genuine interest in, and perhaps also a passion for our subject areas and knowledge.

To understand the importance of this, it is also necessary to learn about how colonialism has shaped the world and how we assess and approach knowledge. Try to make it an aim to critically examine the knowledge you hold and share, and question the interests they serve. Practice positioning the knowledge you promote geographically, historically and politically. Challenge yourself by bringing in alternatives and discussing them in your education settings as a teacher or student.

Decolonization through the production of knowledge

Bashar Marhoon – Master of International Relations from Noragric, Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NTNU)

In 2017-2018, I started my master thesis in International Relations (IR) about the Bahraini national identity. From the start, I knew that although my dissertation would not focus on decolonization (it actually focused on some of the effects of colonisation), I was in a unique position to contribute to the demystification of a part of the so-called Middle East.

One of my secondary aims was to offer a more nuanced portrayal and to offer alternative methods to understand conflicts in the Arabian Gulf, contrasting the traditional approach presenting sectarian conflicts and a self-content civil society. As a small country in Western Asia, which most people did not know existed, I knew that my research on Bahrain could contribute to producing concrete knowledge, while also shedding light on the nuances in the often generalized “Arab World”. Bahrain is for instance one of the countries that stems from an ancient civilisation that existed as far back as year 2000 BC. Bahraini perspectives on the British and Pan-Arabism are complex and need to be given more depth, not generalized.

I also sought local interpretations of Bahraini identity and history, as opposed to the foreign analyses of Arab identity that are prevalent in IR. In doing so, Bahraini voices were accentuated,

which should be our aim.

Some of the methods and arguments I used to achieve my secondary goal – decolonization:

- Avoid translating some of the local expressions and concepts. Instead, I used transliteration, which allows the local knowledge to be presented as unaltered as possible.
- Argue that the fissures in the Bahraini society are along financial and national axes, not purely the simplified “Sunni vs. Shia”-conflict used in mainstream IR-studies and the media.
- Deorientalize parts of the “Middle East” by presenting the plural and complex layers of the Bahraini national identity and conflict, and by showing that the Middle East can be studied in other ways than just “war” and “jihadism”. ■



Questions for reflection

WHAT OR WHO HAS A DOMINATING POSITION IN YOUR ACADEMIC FIELD?

Questions you can bring to a topic, or a contribution to a subject area may be:

1. What is portrayed as a problem or a challenge?
2. Whom or what interests does this portrayal serve?
3. Are there other possible perspectives?
4. What knowledge, coming from what people or which groups, are seen as “universal” and “true”?
5. What knowledge is described as “culture” or “myths”?

BECOME AWARE OF YOUR PREDETERMINED AND INVISIBLE COURSE CONTENT

All courses have implicit expectations to, and goals on behalf of the students and requirements that are not always explicit in the course description. What do you take for granted the students know before they start your course? What experiences do you expect the students to have? In teacher training courses one often assumes that the students have an elementary education from Norway, in other words that they have 13 years of experience from the Norwegian school system. It can be

very demanding for people with other backgrounds to take this education. Other courses may have less extensive implicit requirements to pre-obtained experiential knowledge, but they often exist nonetheless. Consider this in your own subject area: Are there any patterns as to who does especially well and who struggles in your courses? Do they follow categories such as class, sexuality, gender and ethnic background? What might explain this?



Questions of reflection

WHO HOLD PRIVILEGES IN YOUR TEACHING?

1. Have you considered that some students might more easily relate to the course content than others?
2. What forms of knowledge and skills are prerequisites in your teaching? Collegial guidance can be a good method for increasing awareness. Observe each other's teaching and discuss these questions afterwards.
3. How can you try to make the visible course description less prominent?

STORYTELLING AS A TEACHING STRATEGY

- Universities traditionally organize teaching based on the curriculum and the teacher's relation to the curriculum. The lecture form is an example of this. The lecture enables you to share your own perspective on the curriculum with your students. You can make your own views clear to the students, and students can listen and evaluate whether they see the same things as you do, or if they see something else.
- In a decolonization perspective, stories are especially important. The story can be a case, a practical narrative, an experience or a retelling of an incident. We use stories to make the course content concrete and relevant, and to open it up to reflection and new meanings. A story can be a starting point for discussion. The story offers a mutual framework to reflect within. It allows

you to exemplify and to unfold the factors that frame the often implicit thought processes when we make abstractions towards general principles or points. Starting with a good story, you can ask your students:

- How do you understand this?
- What do you think is important to pay attention to?
- What might be the reason we give more or less importance to different aspects of the story?
- How can we highlight this problem, or investigate this situation?

Feel free to use one of the stories or experiences in this document and discuss it with your students or colleagues.

The Inclusive Classroom – Experiences from a norm-critical course for undergraduate students in social anthropology

Oda-Kange Midtvåge Diallo – PhD candidate at the Department for Interdisciplinary Studies of Culture, Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU)

The classroom has a potential to be a place where social and political systems of power can be challenged – despite the fact that the classroom, historically and today, can be an arena of suppression. In the spring of 2018, my colleague, Nico Miskow Friborg and I taught a course we called “norm-critical perspectives on discrimination” to a group of undergraduate students in social anthropology. Our framework was the overall progress of applied anthropology, so the course would consist of both theory and work done for an organisation or company.

The topic the student had been given to investigate was discrimination in spare time activities, and each project group did fieldwork in cooperation with different after school clubs and organisations. My colleague and I agreed that we wanted to provide a course that shed light on norms, instead of what we assume are breaches with the norms. Many anthropological studies are concerned with different types of marginalization and focus on the experience of being a “minority” and being subject to discrimination, but few

studies address the actual norms and systems that deny certain people the access to participate in society equally. Anthropological methods build on long-term fieldwork and building close bonds with people through participatory observation. With this in mind, it was a challenge to create a course where the students were given the opportunity to challenge existing power dynamics and to learn more about their own positions.

The students identified primarily as white with Danish citizenship, from middle class background, able-bodied and cis-gender. Some students were racialized, non-binary/trans or had disabilities, including myself and my colleague, who in different ways challenged the norms of anthropology teachers. We therefore found it important to spend time creating a safer space in the classroom, where everyone, and especially the marginalized students could unfold themselves. We did this by making a common set of guidelines for the teaching and the environment in the classroom and groups. All of the students contributed with wishes for these common rules, which among other things related to being aware of your own privileges and being mindful of how dominating your are in a discussion. Other rules addressed not asking people with concrete life experiences to explain, represent or legitimize their experiences to others. At the same time, we were concerned with cultivating a critical sense among the students. This happened both through critical readings of academic texts and exercises in critical questions to the coursework, the empirical literature and each other. We made use of other types of knowledge such as blogs, videos and newspapers. It also became crucial to talk about methodology in a detailed and concrete way. To solve the

potential problem of othering, one of the groups looked into forms of masculinity and heterosexuality in football, others looked into whiteness-norms and exclusion among scouts, while another group carried out a study of inclusion and empowerment in a roller-derby club.

People often talk about how students experience a form of academic and personal crisis when they are introduced to critical theories about gender, class and race, but if you aim to make investigating potential conflicts safer, at the same time as connecting the theory to practice; this crisis may be experienced as beneficial rather than detrimental. If I were to highlight some of the things we learned from this course, it would be the importance of cooperation between students and teachers – that we can create a course that enables us to learn in new ways and to produce better knowledge together. ■

Reflection questions

1. Who are we (both as a group and as individuals) and what are the conditions we have to carry out this study?
2. What questions do we ask, and how do we come up with them (i.e. what are some pre-conceived notions guiding our interest)?
3. Whom do we ask, and are these questions relevant for the people we are asking?
4. Whom can/should we be given access to, or what can/should we not get involved in?
5. til og hva kan/bør vi ikke involvere oss i?

POWER-CRITICAL APPROACHES TO DIALOGUE

Promoting dialogue might seem easier in smaller groups of students, but lecture halls with hundreds of students can also contain elements of dialogue. This can contribute to making the teaching more rewarding for everyone. Not all students are used to being heard in the lecture halls. You must therefore emphasize that you are interested in what they have to share. The social position and

experiences of the student often have an effect on how safe they feel when it comes to expressing themselves in the lecture hall. Below you will find elements that can promote a dialogue that is sensitive to power differences:

- Ask open questions that do not presume “correct” or one-sided answers. They can be variations of, “How do you understand this situation or this problem?” or “What does this mean to you?”

- Taking on a more passive role as a teacher can also be a way of promoting the student’s perspective. Instead of commenting on the student’s oral contributions, you can ask other students to respond to statements and create a dialogue between the students.

- Enable anonymity in the exchange of opinions. This can be done by providing an easily accessible link to an online learning or sharing platform where the students can write their suggestions or thoughts without having to sign their name. In smaller groups, post it-notes can serve the same purpose.

- Assign roles, perspectives or positions for the students to present or defend in advance, in order to separate between self-representation and an opinion.

- Let the students prepare conversations and dialogues, and provide enough time. 2-3 minutes individual free writing can be a good place to start. You can then let the students express their thoughts to each other, for instance in pairs, with the same amount of time each.

- Be attentive to the use of domineering tactics and strategies aimed at ignoring and disrespecting other people during the dialogue sessions. Do not let these dynamics pass unnoticed. Take the side of the person who is subject to this treatment.

- Be considerate of the fact that not all students are equally safe to make public statements. To make it possible for everyone to participate in a communal discussion, you as a teacher have to create a safe space and establish trust between students and in scholars.

Challenging the power dynamics in the classroom

**MARIEL AGUILAR-STØEN –
PROFESSOR AT THE CENTRE
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OSLO**

The classroom is a space that is shaped by hierarchical power dynamics we are often unaware of. How a table is placed in a room, where the lecturer stands, where the students sit, who gives feedback to whom, who decides what is expected academically and methodically and not to mention socially from lectures signal your position in the hierarchy. As a lecturer, I am aware of this and I am concerned with promoting teaching forms that can contribute to building less hierarchical power dynamics. Every student that comes to classroom has their own personal stories, previous experiences and knowledge. Because I teach in an interdisciplinary programme, the students have very different backgrounds and interests. Experiences, knowledge, personal stories and interests to a certain extent form the foundation of how you learn and how you can contribute to the environment. The students should

be seen and appreciated – both as individuals and as a group. I am very concerned with using teaching methods that promote fellowship, cooperation and compassion. What does this mean in practice?

Two concrete examples:

1. Breaking with the normal ways of using the classroom

I begin my course with asking my students to introduce themselves and share their expectations to the course. When they are finished, I tell them what I expect from the course: curiosity, critical thinking, to be challenged and to learn something together. I hope that the learning in the course is a shared project with shared responsibility. It is something we do together, and how good the course will be depends on how much each of us contributes. As long as it is preferable, I place the tables in a circle, and I take a random seat. I do not use PowerPoint-presentations in my lectures, as my experience is that PowerPoint is not suitable for creating a learning environment where discussion and enthusiasm is at the centre. In my first conversations with the students, I am curious about what they already know; often someone has more profound or interesting knowledge about a given topic than I do, some of them have also had experiences from “real life” which we can actively use in our discussions. I have experienced that when the students know that their knowledge and experiences are acknowledged, they

more often take the initiative to participate and perhaps contribute to shedding more light on a topic.

2. Liberating feedback

Feedback from lecturers can be disciplinary or liberating. I prefer the latter. My feedback is as concrete and direct as possible, and I always start from what the students have decided they want to do with an assignment or presentation. I signalize that creativity is highly valued, and as long as the students argue with reference to the topic they are free to find their own voice and way of structuring their work. In the course, we also use a method we call “work in progress”. At the end of the course, all of the students hand in a text. To get feedback on their text, the students are divided into smaller groups (for instance groups of ten). Each student is in charge of giving oral and written comments to a text by a fellow student. The others are also expected to read all of the texts and give oral feedback to everyone. Each group has two or three meetings together with the lecturer where each student gets feedback from fellow students and finally the course leader. Then the students get two weeks to continue working on the text before submitting a final draft. ■



Questions for reflection SAFE CLASSROOMS

1. Have you reflected on what makes the teaching setting safe for you?
2. What ground rules would you personally appreciate?
3. Might other people with other positions and privileges than you need other frameworks to feel safe?
4. How can you facilitate a conversation about how to work against all forms of discrimination in teaching settings?
5. What is the role of the teacher and what is the role of the students?

A DIALOGUE THAT PROMOTES LISTENING RATHER THAN COMPETITION

Decolonization encourages you to promote a diversity of perspectives and complexity, which the students can contribute to creating. Dialogues and discussions in the teaching contexts will often reward students who are good at discussing and forming an argument. Sometimes this can lead to an increased focus on winning the discussion rather than its academic content. A way of making space for different perspectives is to use methods for dialogue and sharing that promote the ability to listen. For example:

- **In smaller groups:** Sit in a circle. Let everyone in the circle take turns in sharing an experience or an opinion related to the topic at hand. The statement is not supposed to be answered, challenged or defended.
- **In larger groups:** Try creating a “fishbowl” dialogue. This works best if the room can be organized so that there are two empty chairs in the middle, with the others sitting around them. In a traditional lecture hall, this can be solved by placing

two empty chairs at the front. Two students take a seat in the empty chairs and express an opinion regarding the topic at hand. No one else in the room is supposed to ask questions or give comments. When a student has made a statement, the student goes back to sit with the others. Students who feel they have a relevant statement or experience to share can then take a seat in the empty chair.

- **In pairs:** The students work together with the person next to them. One of them gives their opinion on a matter, shares thoughts or an experience relevant to the topic at hand. The other student listens without responding. This can also be done with a time limit. When the time is up, some of the students who acted as listeners can attempt to convey what their partner said to the rest of the class or in a larger group.

DECOLONIZATION OF THE CURRICULUM, COURSE CONTENT AND ASSESSMENT FORMS

Decolonization is not a process with a defined endpoint but a critical and democratic perspective on knowledge and the distribution of knowledge. This can be done with specific measures such as ensuring that the curriculum is regularly updated and discussed with the students, and that it reflects a multitude of voices. Critically and continuously consider the approaches you as a teacher offer your students through the course content. By opening for more perspectives, you can enable critical thinking about the course content. This section is first and foremost aimed at teachers and course administrators, but we hope it can also give students some useful perspectives to share with their lecturers or use in a feedback group.

The core of the decolonization of academic course content is decentring, which is a key term in social movements working with decolonization. Decentring describes the efforts we have to make in allowing space for more experiences and forms of knowledge at the university. This is why we for instance talk about the decentring of whiteness and European philosophy. Decentring is not the same as erasing. It means giving something less space in order for other perspectives to be included and to contribute to an increased understanding of the subject. This is for instance what lies behind the demand for more knowledge from other continents and people to enter into the curriculum. It entails making more space for other forms of knowledge.

Some people who oppose decolonization claim that decentring will weaken the sciences because “poorer” forms of knowledge will be rewarded an authority they do not deserve. This argument is based on an assumption that students read and learn uncritically. In an emancipatory pedagogical perspective, decentring and equalizing different forms of knowledge can be seen as a foundation for critical analysis. If opponents to decolonization are right in that the white, western and male dominance of the university comes down to a difference in quality alone, then the decentring of this knowledge can make students equipped to assess for themselves whether this is true. Decentring can also relate to relations between people. Being able to put yourself aside to make space for others is a vital pedagogical skill, whether you support decolonization or not. Below, you will find a list of approaches to the course content that can promote decolonization and a critical approach to the production of knowledge.

- **Mapping and contextualizing the course literature**

Facilitate a historical, geographical and political assessment of your course content. This can be done with the entire curriculum or a selection of texts. You can split the students into groups that work on timelines, world maps or mapping the political implications of the problems that are examined. In addition, facilitating the students to examine the financial and political interests that shape the choices made in their subject area, and the consequences this has had for which questions are given priority and which are not.

- **Disclosing the political conflicts in the subject area**

Most subject areas and disciplines have key conflicts and schisms. These conflicts may be used to enlighten the different focuses and functions of the subject area, which often have political implications. Many academics are good at teaching about historical disputes in their subject area, but not always equally good at addressing current ones that we are positioned and invested in. When we enter into the current academic arguments, we are forced to let go of our neutrality and disclose our own position to the students. This enables us to enter a learning process with the students, where something is at stake for us as well.

- **Comparative work**

Eurocentrism can be challenged by shedding light on key questions in the subject area in other contexts than the Euro-American. Because the students will often be well acquainted with the European or Norwegian context, this will form a natural foundation for comparative analysis. Strive to find examples, texts and topics from other contexts than the Euro-American.

- **Historical analysis of the subject area**

Subject areas and disciplines are in a continuous state of change partly caused by academic developments, academic political disputes and conditions in society. Colonialism, imperialism and racism are central topics in most of the histories of the subject areas. Investigate which positions and roles the subject area has had in relation to colonialism, imperialism and racism. For the social sciences and humanities, as well as biology and medicine, this is a practice of becoming acquainted with the coloniality of the academic disciplines. In the natural sciences, there is often a need to work with the

politics of distribution and selection.

- **Multilingual work**

Many people take it for granted that all texts are readable to everyone, and that knowledge which is not available in English, Norwegian or the language courses' specific languages should not make its way to the universities. Bringing in alternative forms of knowledge into the seminar room can in some cases mean bringing in alternative languages. Through the colonization of Sàpmi, Norwegian has suppressed the Sámi languages. The same goes for the languages of the national minorities in Norway. Therefore, Norwegian as a subject area arguably has a responsibility to include knowledge about these languages, both at schools and universities. English as a subject area also contains a history of linguistic colonization and imperialism. One way of working against this is using multilingual education practices where suppressed or creolized languages are acknowledged.

- **Academic contrasting**

The academic disciplines have established certain ways of understanding a set of problems. Strict academic processes are demanding to combine with a more diverse epistemology. This approach is often closely linked to the canonized literature of the academic discipline. If we want to work with more forms of knowledge and ways of thinking, we must draw more academic approaches into the teaching. Academic contrasting is a simple way of doing this. Teachers who have multi- or interdisciplinary course groups, can use this to disclose the epistemological differences between the disciplines, and the implications these have for the role the discipline has in society. Academics who only work with their own discipline can use empirical cases and theory from other subject areas to disclose other ways of obtaining knowledge or other perspectives on central questions in their own subject area.

- **Course revision**

Many teachers are required to use feedback groups in their course revision, which can be an acceptable way of getting the students' evaluation of the course. It is, however, not a method that gives teachers a very clear picture of the students' experiences of the course content. A better method can be to have a workshop at the end of the course where the students are asked to compare what they have learned and perceived as important in the course to the course description available online. Through this process, the teacher will gain an

insight into how the students understand the course description, and how they perceive the subject. It is very useful in course revisions and gives the students the opportunity to contribute to this process.

- **Assessment**

The most effective way of changing a subject is often by changing the assessment form. What is measured in the exam, how and why? The assessment form to a great extent determines what kind of knowledge and skills are rewarded in the course. Various forms of individual written exams are most common at universities. Most courses could benefit from using other assessment forms in order to reward other forms of knowledge and skills. For instance, it is an advantage to use group exams in professional degrees in professions where tasks are solved in cooperation with others (which are most professions). More use of oral exams, individually, in pairs or in a group, will also reward different skills. Variations in the assessment form can be done in a subject by dividing the exam into different parts.

The measures we have written about here can be used to strengthen the teaching in many university disciplines, regardless of whether or not the end goal is decolonization. Acknowledging more forms of knowledge and skills at the university, combined with an aim to give students (with different backgrounds) equal opportunities to use their experiential knowledge as a strength, can contribute to decolonization. We hope you have discovered some measures that you can use in your own teaching and education, adapted to the challenges that are most relevant to your own context.

FINAL WORDS

“Decolonization is an option, not a mission”, write Mignolo and Walsh (2018). Although decolonization necessarily emphasizes the awareness and dismantling of violent and unfair knowledge and structure, decolonization is primarily concerned with opening for new opportunities. It is a process of dismantling and rebuilding. How can we together enable a wider-reaching production of knowledge, which is more inclusive, open and fair, for everyone? How can we meet each other with radical compassion and a fundamental acknowledgement of each other’s humanity and value (Sandoval, 2000)? Decolonization is a collective project to spread awareness and create change. It is about becoming aware of suppressive patterns and practices which all of us to varying degrees reproduce despite not wanting to, and enabling ourselves and others to change them. Because decolonization is not a mission and does not offer the recipe of an ideal condition, we have to be open to experiment, try things out and risk failure along the way.

This toolkit has been made with this kind of collective, creative effort. Participants from SAIH and activists and academics from all over Norway have in different ways contributed to this process, initiated and directed by SAIH. We have in cooperation with Ixchel León and Peder Brende Jenssen from SAIH to the best of our abilities turned this collective knowledge into a text about what the decolonization of universities can entail in theory and practice. Through several sessions we have discussed, written extracts, received feedback from near and far, discussed and edited. Putting this work into writing has felt

like an important responsibility on behalf of the public, but working in this way has also given rise to a sense of mutual compassion and a felt common vision to build something new. As academics, the work has given us a valuable opportunity to explore how we can move towards more fair and open academic processes in practice. We want to thank SAIH for the opportunity to take part in this work. We acknowledge that this is only a small contribution to an extensive process and that the text does not represent an endpoint but portrays the discussion as it currently stands. We look forward to following this discussion, and we encourage everyone who wishes to participate. Remember that you are not alone.

Stine Helena Bang Svendsen
and Kristin Gregers Eriksen,
January 2020.

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