Intersectional Perspectives on Equality and Social Justice in Norwegian Higher Education

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Chapter 1

Cracking the coloniality of norwegian monocultural academia

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Introduction

In this chapter, we aim to explore diversity within Norwegian academia (or the lack thereof) contextualized against decolonization initiatives from students and researchers alongside policies representing institutional diversity work in academia over the past decade. While the concept of "diversity" is extensively used in policy and research concerning inclusion and anti-racism in the Norwegian context (Fylkesnes, 2019), this often takes on a neoliberal shape that works to obscure coloniality, racism, and power structures, treating diversity as a check box (Ahmed, 2012). We argue with Zembylas (2023) that a decolonizing approach is needed to disrupt institutionalized diversity work and avoid reinforcing colonial violences. In this chapter, we ask what can explain the widespread desire to externalize decolonization as irrelevant, alien, or threatening in the Norwegian context. Furthermore, we inquire into what would be the significance of addressing the coloniality of monocultures in the context of Norwegian academia. We discuss to what extent the conversation on decoloniality encompasses a wider landscape of social and epistemic justice projects and what perspectives, voices, or contributions are silenced and excluded from the conversation as such.

Recently, Norwegian academia has claimed to have broadened its approach to diversity by implementing new policies and expanding programs on diversity and equality beyond gender (see Kifinfo, 2023). Equality and diversity boards and new policies are implemented in universities, often translated into special advisors on equality and diversity. However, this trend has also seen backlashes not only in the public debate and in everyday practices of discrimination within academia (Maximova-Mentzoni et al., 2016), as well as with the implementation of new and contradictory restrictive measures. These measures include new language requirements for international researchers and PhD students, as well as the introduction of tuition fees for students from outside the European Economic Area (EEA) in 2023, paradoxically challenging a meaningful approach to diversity that reinforces particular forms of colonial violence (Zembylas, 2023).

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While the "insider-perspective" on racism and racialization in Norway is commonly presented as a new phenomenon, pointing out how intellectuals and activists with particularly Brown and Black positionalities are bravely offering their self-biographic narratives on racism, anti-racist critiques are not new to Norway. Saami thinkers posed critiques of the racist nature of policies and educational practices in the early 1900s (Svendsen, 2024), and Tisdel (2022) traces Black anti-racist resistance back to at least the 1960s. A key example is the author Ruth Ann Reese, who, in as early as 1968, shed light on challenges of discrimination against Black people and "blackface" practices in the cultural sphere, topics which are commonly understood as having appeared in the Norwegian context in recent times. Reese also represented an intersectional voice, pointing to situations in which Black women faced double oppression. In her work on tracing Black presences in Oslo, Tisdel further establishes the presence of Blackness from the so-called "Kongo-village"[1] in 1914 to the present, displaying how Black people have been part of shaping the history of Oslo for a long time. Nevertheless, the silencing of Black voices has more nuances than simple ideas of representation allow us to see. The recent report on truth and reconciliation (TRC, 2023) and the demonstrations following the human rights violation of Saami reindeer herders at Fosen have also made visible the active role of academia and universities in upholding oppression toward the Indigenous Saami and the national minorities in Norway (Fjellheim, 2020; Svendsen et al., 2023).

In this chapter, we present a theoretical and conceptual landscape of perspectives that we believe can open deeper and more constructive conversations on and analyses of the prevailing workings of coloniality and its oppressive structural mechanisms such as racism, ableism, misogyny, classism, xenophobia, homophobia, and transphobia in the Norwegian academy. With this, the dual aim of the chapter is to understand conflicting mechanisms at play by questioning the coloniality within anti-decolonial discourses and so-called diversity practices, aiming to intersectionally crack open the monocultures of Norwegian academia and enable glimpses of other possibilities. The concept of "cracking" serves as a metaphor for breaking open the coloniality of Norwegian academia and adopting an intersectional and decolonial perspective on diversity. We argue that the debates must be understood in the context of discursive constructs and affective economies of the nation-state imaginary that uphold sanctioned ignorance of Norway's colonial and racist violences. Establishing a reflexive conversation between Black and Indigenous perspectives, the chapter concludes by emphasizing the significance of intersectionally challenging and dismantling the coloniality embedded in practices of diversity within Norwegian academia and the

1 The so-called Kongo-village was part of the celebration of the 100-year anniversary of the Norwegian constitution in 1814. In the park Frognerparken in Oslo, an exhibition was set up with straw huts and 80 human beings from the African continent (in fact from Senegal rather than Kongo) as objects to gaze at for the pleasure of the public.

embodiment of alternative corporealities. We argue that a broader and more inclusive project for cracking open the monocultures in Norwegian academia needs to see these different perspectives in conjunction.

Methodology: Cracking the monocultures of coloniality

As authors of this chapter, we all share a commitment to the need for a paradigmatic transition and institutional changes in academia that disrupt the idea of a universal view of the world embedded in the logic of coloniality. We are united by our work toward the dissemination of "histories, subjectivities, knowledges, narratives, and struggles against the modern/colonial order and for an otherwise" (Faria Nunes, 2022; Mignolo & Walsh 2018, p. 3, see also Eriksen, 2021; Håndlykken-Luz, 2023; Mezzanotti, Kvalvaag, Silva, 2024; Mezzanotti, Kvalvaag, 2022; Muñoz Llort et al., 2021). Reflexivity and relationality play an essential role in feminist decolonial research. Being actively reflexive means engaging in the dynamic, continual, and fluid practice of interrogating our own assumptions of positionality, how positionality is being read by others, and the impact of these assessments throughout the research process. As explained by Escobar (2018), "reality is relational through and through" (p. xiv). We therefore understand the dynamic nature of positionality, the importance of relationality, and its impact on research design and data interpretation. The analytical contribution of this chapter is a collective effort rooted in values like care, empathy, dialogue, and reciprocity to weave our knowledges together. We choose to intertwine our experiences in solidarity with all those who have been, and still are, oppressed, excluded, and ignored in academia, to crack the structural hierarchies that uphold epistemological monocultures in Norway. In referring to epistemic *monocultures*, we are inspired by Vandana Shiva's concept of monocultures of the mind. As Shiva (1993) argues, the unquestioned dominance of the modern-western knowledge system as allegedly universal makes alternatives disappear, either by negating their existence, denying them the status of knowledge, or by erasing the space for them to flourish. By *cracking*, we refer to the stance from which we acknowledge the inherent violence and unsustainability of the "house modernity built" (cf. Stein et al., 2020), realizing that the alleged promises of Western-modern academia are built upon exclusions and violences. With this chapter, we are contributing to the emerging cracks in the house "so as to invite people to glimpse at other possibilities" (p. 56). This piece is an invitation to find new ways to decolonize and include a path toward decolonial diversity in Norwegian academic spaces.

Decolonial perspectives on diversity and intersectionality in Norwegian academia: movements and receptions

In 2018, the Students' and Academics International Help Fund (SAIH) adopted a resolution calling for the decolonization of Norwegian academia

and higher education. The main arguments from SAIH were the need for the democratization of knowledge, critical thinking related to the alleged universality of Western-modern perspectives in research, including more perspectives and voices in syllabi and among university staff and students, and equal access to education and research for all (SAIH, 2020). The reception in public debate for a large part revealed harsh refusals toward decolonization, ascribing SAIH's ideas and opinions as representing dangerous "threats" to the quality of research and higher education as such, as well as appropriating an alleged foreign and imported debate into the Norwegian context (Høiskar, 2020). Upholding that the decolonization movement somehow supports "cancel culture," many of the critics themselves admittedly rooted for the full disqualification of decolonization from the Norwegian debate as such (Eriksen, 2022). Contrasting SAIH's statements on decolonization with its reception in public debate reveals a striking discrepancy between the actual project and its critiques, highlighting the importance of exploring the theoretical foundations of decolonial thought and practice. Parts of the confusion with decolonization, as seen in the reception of the debates above, may be related to the fact that the concept actually refers to several intersecting elements. Thinking with Bacchi (2009), we see how the discourses are productive in actively giving shape to what is represented to be the problem. In the discourses, decolonization is frequently characterized as an alleged contamination of the purity of Norwegian democratic culture and identity, described as a threat to freedom of speech, and "our" values of tolerance, freedom, and democracy, and as a radical "ideology." As Bacchi (2009) points out, the way the problem is represented, in turn, shapes the solutions we can imagine.

Decolonization refers to a variety of intellectual, academic, and social movements that share a common aim of criticizing and actively opposing structures (e.g., legal, social) and perceptions that colonization processes created. These structures and perceptions persist in and through the structures of Western capitalist modernity, notably the Eurocentric definition of rationality and knowledge as such (see Eriksen, 2021; Håndlykken-Luz, 2022; Kuokkanen, 2022; Lugones, 2010; Mezzanotti & Kvalvaag, 2022; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Quijano, 2000, 2007; Segato, 2021). Furthermore, the representation of decolonization as external to Norway re-actualizes coloniality and additionally obscures the contributions to the anti-colonial, decolonial, feminist, and anti-racist fields made by Saami thinkers back in the early 20th century (Kortekangas, 2021; Svendsen, 2021, 2024), as well as Black intellectuals and activists (Tisdel, 2022) and queer people in the last decade (Paramalingam, 2022).

SAIH and related academic movements internationally are part of a long-standing resistance that is in practice as old as colonialism itself. Such movements are aligned with the call for "…a transition to an altogether different world" (Escobar, 2011, p. 138), resonating with a pluriversal logic that stands for a radical transformation of the world leading to multiple ways of being and knowing, and contesting "pre-existing universals" (Escobar, 2018, p. 66). The

concept of pluriversality emphasizes the coexistence of multiple worldviews and knowledge systems, challenging the dominance of Western epistemology. The pluriverse is rooted in relational logic as the foundation for a worldview in which everything is connected to everything else (Mezzanotti 2024). Such debates and the decolonial praxis, including epistemological and ontological perspectives, involve a conversation between transdisciplinary scholarship from Latin American and Indigenous scholarship (Anzaldúa 1987; Escobar, 2018; Krenak, 2020; Lugones, 2010; Quijano, 2000; Smith, 2012), Black feminist (Collins, 1999; Gonzalez, 2020; hooks, 1989), Postcolonial studies (Fanon, 1967; Mbembe, 2021; Spivak, 1999), Critical disability studies (Dirth & Adams, 2019; Mitchell & Snyder, 2015; Russell, 2019) and Nordic decolonial scholarship (Eriksen & Svendsen, 2020; Groglopo & Suarez-Krabbe, 2023; Kuokkanen, 2008, 2022). According to Mignolo and Walsh (2018) decoloniality implies: recognition and undoing of the "hierarchical structures of race, gender, heteropatriarchy, and class that continue to control life, knowledge, spirituality, and thought, structures that are clearly intertwined with and constitutive of global capitalism and Western modernity" (p. 17). Such a conception of decoloniality draws on Quijano's groundbreaking work on the coloniality of power (2007) which challenges us to understand how colonial structures have shaped power dynamics and social hierarchies that persist to this day. As Quijano explains, "Coloniality is one of the constitutive and specific elements of the world pattern of capitalist power. It is founded on the imposition of a racial classification of the population of the world as the cornerstone of this pattern of power" (p. 93). Thus, from a decolonial perspective, racial hierarchies permeate and shape everyday life. Hence, living coloniality means that power relations produced through and by colonialism continue to inform society and institutions, reinforcing oppressive and assimilationist tendencies (Mezzanotti & Kvalvaag, 2022).

Within such a context, and to crack Norwegian monocultures, it is important to situate our understanding of intersectionality and the need to not only recognize but dismantle the interlocking oppressions inherent to the logic of coloniality. Although working from different conceptual frames, a long history of Black women's struggles and the writings of African and South American Black feminists have added to the need for decolonizing gender for many decades (Martins, 2016; Tica, 2021). In Brazil, for instance, Gonzalez's work in the 1970s and 1980s highlighted the compounded oppressions faced by Black women, emphasizing the intersections of race, gender, and class (Håndlykken-Luz, 2022). In 1976, Nascimento wrote: "If Black women today continue to occupy jobs similar to those they held in colonial society, it is both because they are Black women and because their ancestors were slaves" (cited in Ratts, 2007, p. 104). Inspired by Quijano, and also shedding light on the intersection of race, class, gender, and sexuality, Lugones (2010) coined the term coloniality of gender to argue that the alleged universality of Modern-Western conceptualizations of gender itself is a colonial construct. Coloniality of gender refers to how the colonial systems shaped and enforced gender norms,

often erasing preexisting gender concepts and imposing a Western binary understanding of gender (Connell, 2014; Lugones, 2010).

The term intersectionality has its origins in Black feminism, and it was coined by Crenshaw (1989) as an analytical tool for understanding the oppression experienced by Black women in the US and how multiple forms of inequality or disadvantage can be compounded. For us, intersectionality needs to focus not only on the premise of oppression faced by certain identities but also on political, economic, social, historical, and institutional systems anchored in the nation-state systems within the matrix of domination and oppression such as racism, ableism, cis-heteronormativity, and class hierarchies (Dhamoon, 2015). Through the critical lenses of intersectionality, we may understand how intertwined and co-dependent these institutional dynamics and processes are, and how they impact the multidimensional construction of subjective experiences within Norwegian academia (Hernández-Saca et al., 2018). Further, critical understandings of intersectionality can help us connect oppressed voices in academia, enhancing the strength of interdisciplinary approaches that can seek epistemic and social justice, thereby creating new ways of organizing academia. Through a groundbreaking study on blackness in the Norwegian context, Diallo (2023) argues the need for a project that enables queering and the abolishment of binaries, boundaries, and hierarchies for envisioning a Black feminist liberatory approach in the Nordics.

As Sandset and Bangstad (2019) describe, decolonization is at the same time a political imperative and a demand for social justice in academia related to access, representation, and power, and a series of epistemological questions related to how knowledge is produced, who defines knowledge, whose knowledge counts, and so on. Scholars such as Smith (2012) critique the colonial legacy of research and advocate for methodologies that respect and incorporate Indigenous perspectives. Smith (2012) argues that "the ways in which scientific research is implicated in the worst excesses of colonialism remain a powerful remembered history for many of the world's colonized peoples" (p. 1). The work of de/colonizing research is to create a space of intersectionality, highlighting individual standpoints while offering solidarity to others in similar situations (Bhattacharya, 2016). When Mbembe (2021) calls for thinking and writing the world from Africa or the South, this South also includes Southern and marginalized knowledge within the North, such as the contributions by Black and Saami thinkers in the Nordics (Groglopo & Suarez-Krabbe, 2023). Theories from or of the South emphasize the importance of understanding the world from the margins (Connell, 2007). As Mbembe (2021) explains,

> Major transformations in the way in which we think about the histories of the world are underway. In this context, any inquiry into the place of Africa—and by extension the global South—in theory is necessarily an interrogation concerning the experience of the world.
>
> (p. 13).

The idea here is not to create a dichotomy between the North and the South but to recognize a pluriversality of knowledges and challenge the monoculture of Norwegian academia by breaking with the persistent, still widely omnipresent division between the center and periphery of "relevant" theory. This division, in the words of Wynter (1990), defines who and where are the "theory-givers/ (and the) theory-takers" (p. 359).

Silenced voices and sanctioned ignorances: coloniality in Norwegian academia

The denial of coloniality in Norway

The national imaginary of Norway as particularly democratic, anti-racist, and benign has been described as a nation-branding of National exceptionalism. A main feature of National exceptionalism is the idea of being innocent of colonialism (Eriksen, 2021, Eriksen et al., 2024). As colonialism is rarely mentioned in the "official" narratives about Norway, this selective presentation of history involves the ignorance of how the dual kingdom of Denmark-Norway colonized areas in what is today Ghana, South-Eastern India, and the Caribbean Islands, beginning in the 17th century, and ship merchants acquired large fortunes from slave-based trade (Kjerland & Bertelsen, 2014). Furthermore, this idea of Norway's colonial innocence upholds a sanctioned ignorance of the colonization of Sápmi. Settler colonialism is commonly avoided when discussing the Nordic states' approaches to Sápmi. When colonialism is mentioned, it is presented as a more "benign" form or as "internal colonialism." As Kuokkanen (2022) argues, however, the structures of the Nordic colonization of Sápmi bear striking resemblances to those of the more traditional settler colonial states such as the US and Canada.

The coloniality of states that benefit from the modern capitalist matrix becomes evident when breaking with methodological nationalism and state-centric narratives that aim to erase and normalize a history of profit made on the back of commodified, gendered, and racialized peoples (Favell 2022; Mezzanotti, Kvalvaag, Silva, 2024; Ahmed (2004) powerfully describes that nations are imagined communities that "are invented as familiar spaces" against the unfamiliar, constructing some bodies as belonging and others as strangers, through the construction of boundaries in the affective as well as the physical sense. Among the key metaphors of nation-state community in Western nation-states such as Norway is the imaginary of the family. Looking at the violent assimilationist policies born in the making of the Norwegian national exceptionalist identity from the late 19th century, it becomes clear how it was also centered on exactly the policing and control of the family through measures such as boarding schools for children and forced sterilizations, and how civility was intertwined with logics of race, whiteness, heteronormativity, and ability. Conversely, ideas about race and ability were used interchangeably and variably with culture, language, phenotypes, and other aspects of "strangeness," as described by Kyllingstad (2024) and Annamma et al. (2013). These

eclectic logics also resulted in different logics and politics toward different minorities. However, they were all entrenched in the Norwegian construction of "equality as sameness": the idea that people have to feel that they are more or less the same in order to be of equal value (Gullestad, 2002).

The national minority groups Kven, Forest Finns, Roma, Romani/Tater, and Jews are formally recognized national minorities with a presence in Norway of more than 100 years. As a large survey recently showed, racist prejudices toward these groups are reproduced, most aggressively toward the Roma and Romani/Tater (NIM, 2022). Research on and from the groups is scarce, and when Roma and Romani/Tater are even mentioned in educational or research settings in the Nordic contexts, the representations are dominated by benevolent but paternalistic attitudes that center on Romani victimhood (Selling, 2022). As contributions from Saami thinkers shed light on, the exclusion of Indigenous and racialized minorities from knowledge production and the academy is not a question of representation or inclusion alone but highlights broader questions about epistemic power and who is positioned as knowledge subjects (Finbog, 2023; Kuokkanen, 2008). The sanctioned ignorance concerning colonization of Sápmi does not only render Saami history invisible as part of the greater narratives about Norway but also obscures the early contributions of Saami activists and intellectuals to understandings of racism and coloniality in Norway and Sápmi. In her research on Saami political organization from the early 20th century, Svendsen (2021) foregrounds feminists Elsa Laula Renberg (1877–1931) and Karin Stenberg (1884–1969), as well as education intellectual Per Fokstad (1890–1973). As Svendsen finds, these intellectuals were all revolutionary and novel in their analyses of and resistance toward racism, coloniality, and oppressive educational systems. Many of these ideas reappeared in writings on Black and postcolonial feminism in the Nordics as well as the field of multicultural education in the 1980s and 1990s. Current research has pointed out how the exclusion of Saami knowledges from the understanding of knowledge leads to catastrophic outcomes in land use conflicts between the Saami, the State, and corporate interests (Fjellheim, 2023; Joks & Law, 2017).

As becomes clear from the seminal work of Kuokkanen (2008), the academy is characterized by prevailing epistemic ignorance, upholding the exclusion of other than dominant Western epistemologies and intellectual traditions. Thinking with Spivak (1999), Kuokkanen argues that this leads to a situation where Indigenous "cannot speak" in the academy and conduct research from the framework of their own epistemic conventions. Kuokkanen argues that instead of the academy "welcoming" Indigenous people, it must critically look at its own assumptions and epistemic blindness to engender change in the very structures of the institution as such. Eriksen and Jore (2023) further argue that the exclusion of Indigenous, Black, and racialized/disabled bodies in educational narratives can be understood as a manifestation of the coloniality of being: the positioning of the Eurocentric, White male standpoint as the definition of rationality and thinking in Cartesian logic. The consequence is

that even in the presence of minorities in the curriculum, research, or faculty, the epistemological structures may often render them invisible as knowledge producers and truth holders.

Diversity gap and tokenization in Norwegian academia

Since 2022, Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) have become mandatory for funding, prompting Norwegian universities to focus on gender diversity while increasingly recognizing the importance of ethnic diversity, as seen in the latest BALANSE+ call from the Norwegian Research Council (2023). A report from the Academy for Young Researchers (AYF) published in 2019 reveals that while young researchers in Norway are positive about internationalization in academia, one in four researchers with an immigrant background faces discrimination and a lack of inclusion (AYF, 2019; Erdal et al., 2019). Research indicates that academic migrants in Norway often face structural discrimination and difficulties in advancing their careers (Maximova-Mentzoni et al., 2016). Additional barriers include language obstacles, onboarding issues, lack of social integration (Flikke, 2024) and bureaucratic challenges (Bråten & Mikalsen, 2022). Gender and being born in another country are frequently linked with experiences of discrimination in academia (AYF, 2019). These findings suggest that research institutions need to improve their efforts to foster inclusive workplaces and better utilize the diversity among researchers (Erdal et al., 2019). These numbers are relevant when contrasted with the fact that 54% of all applicants for professorships in Norwegian universities and university colleges in the period of 2014–2018 were from abroad (Gunnes & Steine 2020). Inversely, Askvik and Drange (2019) emphasize considerable differences in who remains in academia after achieving a PhD, particularly when comparing the majority population with immigrants.

The diversity work within Norwegian academia reveals a "diversity gap" (Ahmed, 2012) between policies that welcome diversity and the experiences reported by staff with immigrant backgrounds (AYF, 2019; Erdal et al., 2019). Structural discrimination and career advancement difficulties, as highlighted in the studies mentioned, evoke the image of a "revolving door" (Ahmed 2021, p. 243). This metaphor illustrates the increasing obstacles and restrictive measures faced by staff and students from non-European countries and the Global South, such as language requirements, courses, and tuition fees, which might contribute to growing monocultures within Norwegian academia. This resonates with Ahmed's "revolving door" metaphor. As Ahmed (2021) states:

> Diversity is often figured as an open door (…) Another woman of color described her department as a revolving door: women and minorities enter; perhaps they are even encouraged to enter-come in, come in—only to head right out again: whoosh, whoosh.
>
> (pp. 242–243)

The recently published *Forskrift til universitets- og høyskoleloven (universitets- og høyskoleforskriften) - Lovdata*, effective August 1, 2024, mandates that PhD fellows and post-docs complete 15 ECTS in Norwegian language, while teaching staff and professors must achieve B2 proficiency in Norwegian. In 2023–2024, researchers mobilized against these measures, although there was an apparent disregard for their claims by the government. Additionally, the introduction of tuition fees for non-EEA students in 2023 indicates the devastating impact of commodification of higher education in Norway. The potential consequences of such new regulations include severe challenges for international research growth, a rise in social discrimination and unfairness, and limitations to academic cross-pollination, leading to a decline in attracting strong international scholars and/or an opportunity for blocking their entrance to the university or sending them back through "the revolving door" (Ahmed, 2021). These challenges denote a clear orientation, now embedded in the laws of the country, for a monocultural and less diverse academic environment, revealing nationalist populist discourses that were fundamental to passing such legislation and reaffirming the coloniality of Norwegian academia.

An international researcher, scholar, PhD candidate, or student from outside the EEA may be initially welcomed as a representative of diversity. This allows Western academia to meet its formal diversity criteria, securing funding for research and academic projects and internationalization requirements for a competitive European higher-educational system, as part of its obligations under, for example, the Bologna process. For that, they are invited into the open diversity door as exposed in the policies and strategies. However, when they question the bullying, everyday discrimination, micro-aggressions, or the requirement of 15 ECTS in Norwegian language for a PhD Fellow who will leave the country in three years, the answer may be: this is "how we do things here" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 25), as an invitation to go out of the diversity door, as it hits them in their faces (Ahmed, 2021). While we are writing a text on diversity that could be shared within universities and read by our students, an attempt to intersectionally crack the monoculture of Norwegian academia feels like only a scratch on the "brickwall" (Ahmed, 2021, p. 54).

Institutions are resistant to intersectional "diversity work" or a move toward decolonization. We can see a "diversity gap" and a paradox: while in the past years, universities in Norway have implemented action plans, committees, and advisors for diversity and inclusion, we can observe a "gap" between the policies and strategies, and the actual practice and experiences when we try to change universities and monocultures from within. The prevailing discourse arising from the setup of diversity strategies and boards in academia tends to become mere paperwork focused on a binary cis-heteronormative understanding of gender and ethnicity, ignoring other social constructs that are blatantly invisibilized in academia such as sexual orientation, class, or disability (McRuer, 2006). This is not only caused by the gap between policies, procedures, and board mandates and what is actually *de facto* implemented in the institutions, as very few initiatives are concretely implemented in a

satisfactory way (AYF, 2019). These developments also raise critical questions about the gap between discourse in academia, the regulatory frames, and the power holders that reproduce colonial structures in academia. They suggest inconsistencies in a legal system that generally prohibits any type of discrimination in the workplace and, in a later Act, promotes it. They suggest the need to discuss the democratization of knowledge, the value of plural perspectives, the impact on knowledge creation and representation within Norwegian universities, but above all, the missed opportunity to elevate the quality of domestic academic resources by changing the organizational structures that enable monocultures in academia, embracing pluriversality (Mezzanotti, 2024). It is nonetheless unclear whether this new approach denotes an arrogant superiority notion of the intended monocultures or if it is a symptom of the discomfort generated by a more competitive research environment with the inclusion of international researchers.

Diversity gap and the need for the embodiment of alternative corporealities

The invisibilization of certain epistemologies is blatant when it comes to the inclusion of groups that historically have been silenced in the Norwegian context. This selective ignorance of the histories and voices of national minorities, Indigenous, other racialized minorities, plurilingual, transnational, queer and trans, disabled, working class and poor in the Norwegian history and present-day contexts are rarely included in the diversity initiatives in academia. In our collective encounters with our different ignorances, we see that the absence is especially exacerbated by the lack of visibility and representation of disability approaches, which describe not only how disability is constructed through the classification of normative bodies and employability that pushes disabled individuals to exclusion from social, political, and economic dynamics, but also how we can recognize new ways of embodiment of alternative corporealities and embrace collective knowledge creation (Mitchell & Snyder, 2015). These approaches are mostly absent in Norwegian higher education institutions, most probably for what Mitchell (2016) describes as:

> The avoidance of disability amid the professed diversity pursuits in institutions of higher education is, in many ways, a given due to the academy's longstanding emphasis on producing members of a normative professional middle class as one key rite of passage into bourgeois (i.e., managerial) lifestyles.
>
> (p. 10)

Norway is well known for its strong welfare state and has its own definitions of disability, employability, and rights to support, and these critical perspectives point against the ablenationalism the state—and by its educational nature, higher education institutions—uphold (Mitchell, 2016; Mitchell & Snyder, 2015; Russell, 2019). Both disability critical race studies (DisCrit) (Annama et

al., 2013), crip theory, critical disability studies, and biopolitics of disability are highly relevant interdisciplinary perspectives to give queer and disabled people their right to their bodies and their political agendas back, also in academic spaces. Higher education institutions should have the organizational responsibility to include disability scholars and voices in their diversity processes, as well as to introduce students to theoretical perspectives that are critical to power structures, power dynamics, and other epistemologies of injustice that are necessary in Norway. At the same time, resisting the epistemologies of injustice is also approached by including theoretical approaches that come directly from the voices, embodiments, and experiences from historically oppressed groups in higher education. The active resistance toward conversations on decolonization in the Norwegian context corroborates the ignorance of the histories and voices of national minorities, Indigenous, other racialized minorities, queer and trans, disabled, migrant, working class and poor in the Norwegian history and presence, being stimulated by and upholding an affective economy of the nation-state and its ideal (White, able-bodied, middle-class, native speaker, and cis-heteronormative) citizens as inherently good and exceptional, denouncing what Boatcă (2021) defines as the coloniality of citizenship.

The collective way beyond coloniality: cracking the monocultures of Norwegian academia

Through our explorations and reflections in this chapter, we have tried to outline a range of perspectives that, in different but intersecting ways, represent alternatives to coloniality and the current monocultural paradigm in Norwegian academia. The attempt to engage our different reflexive experiences and theoretical positions to start a discussion that is highly necessary to open for equity, diversity, and social justice in Norwegian academia has shown us that we are in a continuous process of learning and unlearning (see Håndlykken-Luz, 2022). Through the collective and reflexive work of writing this chapter across intersectional and theoretical borders, experiences, and struggles, we have engaged with diversity and aimed at cracking the coloniality of monoculture in Norwegian academia. By engaging in this work, we acknowledge that it is an open-ended, ongoing process of engaging in our common humanity and freedom, and that by writing this chapter, we in no way present blueprints or models for a perfect or one-size-fits-all academia. We rather see our work as an invitation for new conversations, gesturing toward different ways of thinking and acting, imagining the decolonial otherwise. This is a call to collectively engage in the process of sowing the seeds for cracking the brick wall that we have started to crack.

We started from a broad understanding of decolonization as a stance, or option, not a fixed state or solution, not disqualifying Western/modern epistemologies but rather opposing their alleged universality (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). We have argued that the prevailing notion of decolonial thinking being an international import or appropriation to the Norwegian context

is enabled by the ignorance of the contributions of Indigenous and racially minoritized activists and intellectuals, with a history spanning back at least 100 years. The decolonial is too often, especially by its opponents, perceived through what it is against, rather than what it is for. However, here we have presented different perspectives that we think, when intertwined in different ways, can point toward the decolonial *for*. From our reflections, it becomes clear that the allegedly inclusive ambitions of diversity work can also work to conceal intersectional struggles, as we have discussed through the diversity gap in Norwegian academia. When we refer to "cracking the brick wall," we imply a common struggle of writing from the margins, transcending physical territories. This struggle involves silenced voices from the South as well as from the South of the North, including Indigenous and Black movements in Norway and the Nordics, as well as the Global South, and beyond. Our aim is to think otherwise through cracking the coloniality of Norwegian monocultural academia and the "house modernity built" (cf. Stein et al., 2020), which implies a reflexive, decolonial, and intersectional scratch on the brick wall.

For future conversations, it is important to enhance the plurality of voices and experiences framed within decolonial understandings and epistemologies that should also include the silenced voices of racialized minorities, plurilingual, transnational, queer and trans, disabled, working class and poor individuals in Norwegian academia, so they can together work for new and pluriversal futures.

Through this chapter, we have realized the commonality in the intertwined oppressions we experience and how we can work epistemologically, institutionally, and otherwise to enhance the practical intersectional perspectives in academic spaces. We are humble to admit that cracking coloniality is a joint effort that hopefully many more will want to join, and that always will be and has to be a collective process. In this closing discussion, we have visibilized the silenced voices we still have in academia, in order to open an invitation to collectively continue the discussion we barely opened in this chapter, and that hopefully more voices within academia will join and continue, to enable a transition to the pluriverse, to a "world in which many worlds fit" (Enlace Zapatista, 1996; Escobar, 2012). Cracking the coloniality of monoculture in Norwegian academia means thinking otherwise across epistemologies and different struggles, undoing the coloniality of diversity gaps in academia, and striving for an intersectional approach. A meaningful critique of diversity that does not serve to reproduce coloniality implies a decolonial perspective on diversity: intersectionally cracking monoculture through reflexivity, writing across, and joining our intersectional struggles. A reflexive cracking of diversity toward a pluriversal approach encourages thinking otherwise. We wish to invite to continue the cracking of monocultures to go beyond, sowing the seeds for pluriversal futures in academia and beyond.

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