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Essay

Towards Cosmopolitanism in German Academia? Shedding Light on Colonial Underpinnings of Communication Research in a Globalized World

Camila Nobrega Rabello Alves & Débora Medeiros

Abstract: Coloniality is a notion that has been key in many disciplines for addressing power relations and their embeddedness in continuous colonial hierarchies. This essay contributes to the reflections on the notion of cosmopolitanism in German academia, focusing on Communication Studies as a starting point. The possibility to develop research at a university in the Global North is usually presented by the hosting countries as a door to productive exchanges among colleagues from different backgrounds. Nevertheless, many hierarchies and pre-established concepts on knowledge production produce forms of epistemic silencing and other forms of violence and limits in these exchanges. The present essay proposes a process of dialogue with decolonial theories to trace roots on the meaning of cosmopolitanism, its borders and possibilities.

Keywords: cosmopolitanism, decolonial theories, communication studies, epistemic violence, universities, internationalization, knowledge production, Germany

Author information:

Camila Nobrega Rabello Alves is a PhD Candidate at the Otto-Suhr Institute of Political Sciences at Free University of Berlin. She writes her doctoral thesis on feminist and decolonial perspectives on power relations behind a megaproject of a hydropower dam in the State of Pará, in the Brazilian Amazon. Camila is also a journalist and has written for different media outlets. She is the founder of *Beyond the Green* project and a member of the MediaClimate network. She holds a PhD scholarship from Heinrich Böll Foundation.

E-mail: camilaalves@zedat.fu-berlin.de

@camila__nobrega

Dr. Débora Medeiros is a postdoc researcher at the project “Journalism and the Order of Emotions” at the Collaborative Research Center Affective Societies at Freie Universität Berlin. She wrote her doctoral thesis, titled *Engaged Journalism: Contesting Objectivity through Media Practices during the Alternative Coverage of Brazil’s June Journeys*, at the Institute of Communication and Media Studies at FU Berlin. She is also a member of the Institute for Social Movement Studies (ipb) and of the Affect and Colonialism Web Lab. For more information: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4157-9162> and @debmedeiros

E-mail: deb.medeiros@fu-berlin.de

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Throughout the past years, the idea of a cosmopolitan academic culture has gained strength in discussions among communication and media scholars in German academia and in academia in the Global North in general, often spearheaded by international researchers living and working in this context (e.g. Badr et al., 2020; Rao, 2019; Waisbord, 2016). The meaning of cosmopolitanism—as well as what its trajectory has represented so far—is far from being a consensus. For this reason, this essay aims to situate the dominant perspective on the idea of cosmopolitanism in communication studies and then engage with approaches that are increasingly gaining visibility. In particular, it points out epistemological power relations, as well as forms of epistemic violence (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2018) in this process. Lenses from other proposals of cosmopolitanism, such as the one by Isabelle Stengers (2005), and Latin American school of decolonial thought feed into this article.

The debate on the existence of a more internationalized academia, in principle more diverse, has been accompanied, however, by discussions about which values guide this process. Normative notions of objectivity and neutrality have historically set deep roots in social sciences. In the last few years, the objectivity ideal has been particularly criticized in the social sciences as obscuring and reinforcing the othering of non-white and non-male perspectives (Moraes & Silva, 2019, p.2).

In this essay, we highlight some of the shortcomings of internationalization efforts often permeated by ideals of cosmopolitanism. Our approach combines concepts from decolonial theory and brief, exemplary, anonymized vignettes. These situations describe everyday occurrences that illustrate some of the critique contained in the scholarship. Our focus is on colonial structures in academia that enable situations such as the ones described to happen. This is an invitation to look at internationalization and cosmopolitanism through a decolonial lens, with the aim of unveiling aspects that have remained obscured in current approaches.

Many of the issues we raise here go beyond communication and media studies, highlighting scholarly discussions in the political sciences as well as gender studies, for example. This essay connects these broader discussions to more concrete, research-oriented debates already taking place in the discipline, as we believe these debates can acquire further nuance from such an exchange. The article is structured in four sections, besides the introduction and the final discussion. It begins with a critical review of some of the key texts on cosmopolitanism and the de-Westernization debate in communication studies (e.g. Carpentier, Ganter, Ortega, & Torrico, 2020; Waisbord & Mellado, 2014), which is contrasted with studies focusing on questions of (in)visibility in communication studies (e.g. Chakravartty et al., 2018; Ganter & Ortega, 2019; Volk, 2021) to make clear what we regard as some possible shortcomings of a cosmopolitan academic culture without a decolonial lens. The second section is dedicated to a brief discussion on the concept of knowledge production based especially on Walsh (2018). Then we introduce decolonial approaches, bringing a more focused literature review on decolonial authors' critique of cosmopolitanism, as well as clearer definitions of key concepts, such as coloniality, drawing on the

work of authors such as Rivera Cusicanqui (2012, 2018), Curiel Pichardo (2014), Lugones (2010) and Mignolo (2008). In the last part, specific reported situations are described, understanding them as an active part of the theoretical elaboration.

This essay seeks to contribute to the discussion on cosmopolitanism, shedding light on structural inequalities and hegemonic notions that are neglected in many analyses about the topic.

Is Cosmopolitanism enough?

Discussions around cosmopolitanism in academia have often been accompanied by calls to de-westernize the field, understood in different ways in Western contexts and in non-Western contexts (Curran & Park, 2003; Thusu, 2013). In Western countries, to de-westernize means “to broaden the analysis by considering experiences, research findings, and theoretical frameworks developed in the rest of the world” (Waisbord & Mellado, 2014, p. 362). This translates into an effort to expand communication studies’ focus beyond the theories and methods developed in the US and in Western Europe. In countries outside the West, the discussions around de-westernizing scholarship have a longer tradition than in the West and are guided by demands to “reorient intellectual work against academic Eurocentrism” (Waisbord & Mellado, 2014, p. 362). Thus, the discussion’s main focus is on highlighting the shortcomings that theories and methods developed in the West pose when applied to non-Western contexts and recognizing the value of scholarship developed in non-Western countries.

The debate around de-Westernization provides us with four dimensions of analysis that can be useful to understand cosmopolitanism in practice as well: “the subject of study, the body of evidence, analytical frameworks, and academic cultures” (Waisbord & Mellado, 2014, p. 363).

On the level of subject of study, Waisbord argues that de-westernizing communication research would enable researchers to focus on subjects that are supposedly not as relevant in the West, such as “the complex relationships between journalism, religion, and ethnicity; media clientelism; media and armed conflict; news and humanitarian crises; corruption in the news media” (Waisbord, 2016, p. 879). It is, however, up for debate whether these issues really are only of relevance in non-Western countries. Current events and the research already being conducted on them seem to contradict this claim, such as wars on the European continent and how media cover it (Fengler et al., 2020) or the murder of European journalists such as Daphne Caruana Galizia for covering corruption in their countries (Reporters Without Borders & The Shift News, 2019). In addition, discussions around how journalism portrays ethnic and religious minorities in countries like Germany (Lünenborg & Maier, 2017) are strongly present in the discipline.

De-westernizing research here should, rather, mean explicitly acknowledging that such issues are present worldwide, albeit in different forms, instead of marking non-Western countries as dysfunctional and Western countries as the places where researchers can focus primarily on issues such as big data, trust in the media or the mediatization of politics, to stick with Waisbord's examples (2016, p. 879)—not to mention that such questions are also part of extensive research already taking place in the Global South.

Focusing on the level of body of evidence and analytical frameworks, cross-border researcher Sarah Anne Ganter offers a nuanced definition of academic cosmopolitanism that provides a starting point for the engagement with these three aspects in our essay. In a conversation with Nico Carpentier, Félix Ortega and Erick Torrico Villanueva, she argues: “Cosmopolitan researchers look across and share disciplinary, cultural, geographical, linguistic and structural borders, accepting the challenges that this imposes” (Carpentier et al., 2020, p. 292). Concretely, this means reading and citing scholarship from the countries which researchers approach in their empirical studies. She mentions that particularly Western researchers often fail to incorporate scholarship produced in non-Western countries even when performing case studies there. This is visible, for example, in an analysis of articles published in European journals on Latin America that Ganter and Ortega (2019) performed. Their study showed that scholars based in European institutions and researching Latin American contexts often failed to cite scholarship produced in the region. As a result, many researchers ended up ignoring the academic production happening in the contexts they are researching empirically. This is, however, “pivotal to improve the contextualization and interpretation of results and to trigger further questions” (Carpentier et al., 2020, p. 292).

Writing specifically with the German context in mind, Badr et al. (2020) also place an emphasis on contextualizing results. In particular, they highlight the issue of comparisons between countries that set Western contexts as the standard for measuring phenomena worldwide. This leads to a perception of the Global South as lacking whenever Western standards do not apply. Opportunities to learn from each other through more plural and decentralized approaches are lost in this setup. Understanding the specificities of various contexts when performing comparative studies is pointed in their perspective as a solution for that (Badr et al., 2020, p. 299–300).

However, many of these issues are of structural nature, which leads us to the fourth dimension that permeates this discussion and that will be mostly the topic of this essay: academic cultures, which can be understood as “prevalent ways in which excellence is commonly defined and understood in scholarly work” (Waisbord, 2016, p. 870). This involves a complex interplay between practices and values that define what constitutes excellent teaching, thinking or researching and how scholars perceive the role of knowledge production in the society a certain academic culture is embedded in.

Waisbord (2016) describes how certain academic cultures in communication studies—which he defines in terms of the nation states they are based in—are becoming more globalized, as “scholars and academic programs around the world become increasingly interconnected” (p. 869) through the establishment of international networks between institutions, large international conferences, as well as journals and books - especially in English - that circulate worldwide. However, he recognizes that such structural shifts do not necessarily mean that academic cultures abandon national perspectives, nor do they become automatically homogenized. He proposes cosmopolitanism as a way to really benefit from the interconnectedness that globalization provides communication studies with, “unshackling minds from the harnesses of tradition and provincialism” (Waisbord, 2016, p. 880) in favor of cultivating “zones of contact and to engage with others and supersede cultural differences” (Waisbord, 2016, p. 881). However, other than the argument that tolerance towards diversity of languages and (national) academic cultures is not enough, the author does not really specify how these zones of contact should look like.

If we think about one of the areas in which academic cosmopolitanism is most discussed, namely collaborative transnational research, it becomes clear that inequalities cannot be as easily superseded as Waisbord (2016) seems to argue. In her systematic analysis of 355 comparative studies published in 27 top communication journals, Sophia Volk found clear imbalances in terms of both authorship and geographical focus, with authors based in Western institutions publishing 87.4 percent of all comparative studies analyzed (Volk, 2021, p. 180). Collaborations with authors working from institutions in the Global South were scarce, while collaborations amongst authors based in the same continent—most often Europe—predominated. As the author summarizes, “*truly global* co-author teams were the exception” (Volk, 2021, p. 179, emphasis in the original).

Lack of diversity is also visible in the data on the countries studied in comparative efforts: “It is noteworthy that among the 30 most often studied countries, 19 are Western European” (Volk, 2021, p. 176). Geopolitically strong countries such as the US, Russia, Brazil, Mainland China or India dominated the focus beyond Europe. African countries did not even make it to the top 30 (Volk, 2021, p. 176).

In addition, the strong focus on cross-national collaboration and opening up national academic cultures seems to us one of the blind spots of cosmopolitan discourses, as it leaves out other important aspects. Grounded on a decolonial perspective, Paula Chakravartty, Rachel Kuo, Victoria Grubbs and Charlton McIlwain (2018) make visible the racial inequalities that permeate communication studies in the US, a context widely seen as cosmopolitan. Their analysis of 12 English language top journals in the communication studies field revealed that non-White scholars were both under-represented in the pages of these journals—thus getting published less often than their white peers—and in the citations in other articles in the field, with white authors being cited disproportionately more often than non-white ones (Chakravartty et al., 2018, p. 259–261). The authors’ attention to publication and

citation practices brings to light “a hierarchy of visibility and value” with “material consequences on the field’s quality of knowledge and on the social, emotional, professional, economic, and political lives of people of color” (Chakravartty et al., 2018, p. 257).

As Chakravartty et al.’s (2018) study exemplifies, decolonial perspectives¹ may contribute to expand the focus of discussions around making academia more inclusive beyond the terminology of cosmopolitanism, highlighting structural inequalities grounded on both historical and current colonial processes, such as the exclusion of racialized bodies and their knowledge. Thus, by applying a decolonial lens to this debate, we hope to highlight aspects that have fallen too short in the discussion so far.

Knowledge production and whiteness at universities

Before we can proceed further with decolonial discussions of cosmopolitanism, it is necessary to train our focus on the conditions of knowledge production in universities, especially in the Global North.

From a decolonial perspective, universities’ claim to be the only—or at least the main—place of knowledge production already poses a problem, as theorists like Catherine Walsh (2018, p. 28) point out. Challenging established norms such as objectivity, neutrality, and Eurocentric understandings of theory is only possible through the fulfillment of these norms. Therefore, she proposes:

“Theory—as knowledge—derives from and is formed, molded, and shaped in and by actors, histories, territories, and place that, whether recognized or not, are marked by the colonial horizon of modernity, and by the racialized, classed, gendered, heteronormativized, and Western-Euro-U.S.-centric systems of power, knowledge, being, civilization, and life that such horizon has constructed and perpetuated.” (Walsh, 2018, p. 28)

Thinking about knowledge in these terms helps us identify mechanisms that enforce claims to universality from parts of academia that are only possible by obscuring their own situatedness in the colonial matrix of power. Or, as Lucas van Milders concretely puts it, “the white university is conceptualized as grafting an institutionally obscured conception of humanity-as-whiteness onto the university as a site of knowledge production as well as subject formation” (van Milders, 2019, p. 42). In their study on the publication and circulation of communication research performed by authors of color, Chakravartty et al. (2018) point out what this form of knowledge production means for our discipline: “In the absence of a deliberate racial analytic, communication scholarship normalizes Whiteness. (...) any economy of knowledge production that perpetuates the ongoing universalization of a specific expression of humanity will continue to institute racial subjection” (p. 262–263).

¹ In the next two sections, we provide more details on the theory that grounds the decolonial perspective this article discusses.

In particular with regards to objectivity, the Belgian philosopher Isabelle Stengers offers a critique on the notion of cosmopolitanism coined by a Kantian approach, which was based on a universal idea of progress and humanity (Stengers, 2005, p. 995). Therefore, she builds another idea of the “cosmos” as designating the unknown that constitutes multiple, divergent worlds and different articulations. It also goes in the opposite direction of the objective to encompass all particular worlds, their divergences and oppositions. According to this perspective, the obsessive goal of finding only confluences eventually leads to the erasure of differences, under the imposition of a process that would understand the divergence as a particular expression of a convergence of all, or an equivalence (Stengers, 2005, p. 995). From this perspective, instead of constituting and aiming only for a middle point, there is a key that would invite or open space to hesitate about what is considered “good”.

Unlike the other views discussed so far, Stengers does not aim to present a solution-oriented perspective. Instead, the point is to open space to question common interests that are taken for granted and to rethink the sense of cosmos, as it can be perceived as an operator of a notion of equality (Stengers, 2005, p. 1003), which would build a fictional space of mutual exchanges with equal benefits for all. From the creation of an idea of a common good world, a fictional perception that everybody could “see with the eyes of the other” emerge, with a sense of interchangeable lenses. Ultimately, this view helps to think about the rapid assimilation of views that occurs within academic corridors, as if it were possible to build convergences and reduce so-called obstacles—actually differences—, as well as suspend hierarchies generated by historical matrices of power.

Building upon these critical definitions, in the next section, we introduce decolonial perspectives on cosmopolitanism.

Is there a possibility of a decolonial cosmopolitanism?

Decoloniality emerges from transdisciplinary notions and collaboration between researchers in the Global South. Latin American scholars have become some of the main references, introducing multiple lenses of analysis.

Walter D. Mignolo (2000, p. 26) defined the colonial difference as something created and embedded in categories that allow the power of coloniality to perpetuate, based on values that create hierarchies in a global design. He coined the term “coloniality of power and of knowledge” (Mignolo, 2008), to describe continuous processes that did not end with the colonial periods defined according to historical approaches. “I never thought that cosmopolitanism was a field of study” (Mignolo, 2018, p. 101). With this quote, Mignolo starts his chapter “Border thinking and decolonial cosmopolitanism: overcoming colonial/imperial differences”, published at the International Handbook of Cosmopolitan Studies. On the level of more specific discussions on cosmopolitanism, Mignolo has made recent important contributions from the angles of decolonial thinking, thus unveiling its roots and colonial embeddedness.

This perspective is anchored in the fact that cosmopolitanism is Eurocentered from its basis (Mignolo, 2018, p. 101), meaning the idea of a universal cosmopolitanism. The starting point is the critique on the Kantian notion and the attempt to unite humanity around some idea of citizenship that would come from a unique approach of progress.

Through this angle, cosmopolitanism came from a project aiming for global conviviality, but according to a notion of deficiency, as civilizations all over the world other than France, England and Germany would lack attributes in relation to standards set by these countries (Mignolo, 2018, p. 106). He affirms that the politics of Eurocentered cosmopolitanism is not different from the politics of banks and corporations, in the sense that it presents a solution for you and the future for all: “You have just to sign and follow the rules, to be saved and developed” (Mignolo, 2018, p. 108).

Decolonial perspectives help in understanding many challenges, limits and processes of extraction that non-Western scholars have been addressing. One of the starting points in dialogue with Latin American decolonial thought is the fact that the standards set by a few countries that dictate the logic of the academic world categorize knowledge production in many other parts of the world as peripheral. Nevertheless, decolonial approaches have made more visible in the last decades the provincialism of Western academic thinking that tries to unrestrictedly apply the standards predominant in a very specific geopolitical area to the majority of the world². Challenging the idea of universal cosmopolitanism, decolonial theories show the limits of perspectives developed in Europe and placed as a standard for elsewhere.

Therefore, a starting point towards decolonial lenses would be that any cosmopolitan project could not be proposed as a new universal alternative to past and existing universal or global designs (Mignolo, 2000a). How to turn decolonial responses into decolonial cosmopolitanism is then the main question Mignolo addresses. According to his concept of decolonial cosmopolitanism, this would be based on a pluriversal comprehension instead of universal, bringing in the process of reviewing, recognizing and naming the genocide of the Indigenous peoples, massive expropriation and processes of dispossession of land by European monarchies and the enormous slave trade and exploitation of labor (Mignolo, 2018, p. 105). In this sense, decolonial cosmopolitanism would not mean a new alternative cosmopolitan project. Instead, it would pave the way for decentered networks, denying the newness that Mignolo understands as another colonial symptom in dominant academic epistemologies. Walter Mignolo's work on decolonial theory, which has established itself as an international reference on the subject, does not address, however, the decolonial construction as an approach which was born out of different sources and cannot be easily defined or encompassed in one definition.

² This debate has not remained unnoticed inside the German communication studies community. For critical reflections on provincialism taking place in the discipline, see Behmer and Wimmer (2009) as well as Hafez (2002).

According to Sílvia Rivera Cusicanqui, a Bolivian Aymara thinker, the centralization of the discussion on decolonial thinking around some few scholars, among them Walter Mignolo, is also a problem. On the level of the emergence of decolonial thinking, she points out its direct relation with forms of knowledge production that take place in different communities and outside universities, which in her perspective should impose a limit to extraction of ideas and easy forms of reallocation to any context of analysis.

In asking “What is decolonization then? Can it be understood as a thought or a discourse?” (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2012), she argues that no decolonial movement or way of thinking can exist without a decolonial practice. In this sense, there is a need to deepen the term, bringing its roots to the front—the contexts that led to the elaboration of the criticisms it carries—so that it does not serve as a continuous process of appropriation and re-colonization, a hybrid that mischaracterizes the radicality and the initial transforming power of decolonial movements and reflections.

Contrary to the direction of searching for a solution to respond to what a cosmopolitan academic world would be, decolonial thinking emerged from a diversity of thoughts and cannot be separated from that. This also means that decolonial epistemologies cannot be disconnected from the processes that produced them (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2012).

Especially Latin American women, who have been producing knowledge more collectively on the continent, call into question the construction of a centralized meaning of decoloniality. They point out the different layers that make up interweavings of oppressions, as the Dominican anthropologist, artist and activist Ochy Curiel, who also identifies herself as a lesbian woman, called it, building a methodology of analysis on heteropatriarchal discourses. This understanding was part of her attempt to organize feminist methodologies from a decolonial feminism placed in Latin America (Curiel Pichardo, 2014, p. 45–59). The concept speaks with a broader framework that different feminist scholars have been developing, such as Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) in her notion of intersectionality and Patricia Hill Collins (1990) in the work of unveiling the complexity of power hierarchies and structures through a matrix of domination.

The Argentinian sociologist Maria Lugones also works with the notion of coloniality from its intersection with the hierarchies created within different oppressions. Lugones emphasizes that the dichotomous, hierarchical categorical logic is a core notion on modern capitalism and the scholar builds up an approach that unveils colonial thinking about race, gender, and sexuality. She developed the concept of coloniality of gender (2010). According to her, the colonial mindset creates the European, bourgeois, modern colonial man, who became then a subject/agent, fit to decide, for public life and government, a being of civilization, heterosexual, Christian, a being of mind and reason (Lugones, 2010, p. 743).

However, Lugones does not set a tone of coloniality as something complete, univocal, without gaps. On the contrary, she focuses her analysis on the fractures that exist, embodied as resistances, other cosmologies and living practices that challenge the colonial mindset. In this sense, the concept of fractured locus (Lugones, 2010, p. 753) highlights the tensions between more transformative pressures for structural changes in the production of discourses and the ongoing coexistence of these critical discourses in spaces of power. The fractured locus is a place of resistance to the coloniality of gender in many senses, including epistemological terms, which are the focus in this article.

Decolonial thinking has shown that obstacles to some discourses are extremely well defined. At the same time, they are almost invisible, as they mainly apply to some bodies: non-white European, non-male, queer, from lower social classes. We work from these perspectives to contribute with lenses that can help unravel the role of coloniality in discourses from the idea of interweaving of oppressions (Curiel Pichardo, 2014), as recent debates also address another layer, of citizenship and its relation with stories of immigration.

In this sense, the place of immigrant observation related to layers of class, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity is still under-explored within German academia. For centuries, since the beginning of the colonial period, travelling narratives played a huge role in setting imaginaries about the so-called Global South. A movement has been naturalized, of researchers leaving the Global North and going to different places on the planet, analyzing and writing about everything, categorizing animals, plant species, humans. This has also been called objectivity, distancing.

From this perspective, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui's work is seminal in its critique of hegemonic social science and the hierarchies and binarisms it brings (2018, p. 17)³. She puts into debate not a single way of solution, but a dialogue based on the complex constitution of Latin American societies, starting from the Bolivian context.

Rivera Cusicanqui describes a temporal trajectory according to which in the 1970s and 1980s part of the academic debate took for granted a process of imminent homogenization and hybridization of societies, including Latin American ones. In the 1990s, however, she recognizes an eruption of what she calls indigested and indigestible pasts (2018, p. 17), bringing to the front indigenous and feminist struggles, as well as Latin American environmental movements that resisted the idea of a global humankind. The line of thought she presents complexifies the understanding of spaces of dialogue between multiple cultures, introducing the scenario of not only diversity, but a “multitemporal condition of the social heterogeneity that we experience in our territories” (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2018, p. 19). To this end, she introduces the concept of a possible “ch'ixi” world, as an epistemology capable of nourishing

³ For more on the concept of binarisms in the context of post-colonial and decolonial theories, see Acheraiou (2011), building on the works on Fanon, Césaire and Memmi.

itself from paths with no solution and of historical complexities, instead of denying them.

According to this epistemological view, the search for common senses in the process of intellectual production as a final goal constitutes a repressive force (2018, p. 36). Colonialism and its power structures, including the spaces of knowledge production in most universities, does not account for kaleidoscopic heterogeneity of differences and, instead, proposes a normalization-totalization that organizes bodies and knowledges (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2018, p. 36).

Starting from this combination of decolonial approaches, we do not intend to offer a solution for the implementation of a form of cosmopolitanism. On the contrary, we highlight the heterogeneity and complexity that emerges, especially from the critique of the most diverse forms of colonialism expressed in the everyday life of the academic context, especially in Europe. In the next section, we reflect on some experiences that international scholars living and working in Germany might make.

Migrant academics' experiences and the shortcomings of internationalization in institutions' everyday life

Drawing on the discussions from the previous sections, we now zoom in on the context in German academia, which is gradually becoming more international and, thus, potentially cosmopolitan through internationalization efforts. Such efforts, especially in universities of the Global North, can be regarded as bearing the possibility of establishing further “zones of contact” (Waisbord, 2016, p. 881)—in which academic cosmopolitanism could thrive, as researchers from all over the world are able to meet in the university’s physical space. However, the structural inequalities decolonial theory highlights do not seem to be present in the policies surrounding internationalization. This has consequences to the lived experienced of those who arrive at Global North institutions through those measures.

Internationalization is firmly anchored as an institutional goal in research institutions and funding agencies. For 2019, the German Research Foundation (DFG), the main research funding agency in the country, lists over 930 projects focused on establishing or maintaining international contacts in the scientific context (DFG, 2020). In addition, although there are no central statistics on that matter, the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) and the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation together count over 6000 scholarship holders from non-EU countries that have come to Germany for research stays between 2012 and 2016 (DFG, 2018). On the level of communication studies, the German Communication Association (DGPUK) has also published recommendations for its members on how to strengthen and increase international partnerships and approaches to the discipline (Naab, Peter, Bilandzic, Lauf, & Hartmann, 2015). While this data certainly reveals that the goal of establishing an international research landscape in Germany has received strong

institutional support, it cannot say anything about the many intersecting aspects that structure internationalization as a lived reality when individuals of various backgrounds meet in the shared university space.

This section attempts to retrace how this may play out through vignettes of everyday situations in German academia. They are based on situations that we have experienced personally, witnessed happen to others or learned about through conversations with colleagues throughout the years. In fact, the reader might have encountered similar scenarios herself. By combining the theoretical viewpoints from the previous section with these vignettes, our essay seeks to open up perspectives and contribute to discussions that seem to be just starting to take place in German academia.

Exclusion through language

It is the first institute meeting that the newly arrived early career researcher is attending. A woman of color, she is the only person in the room who does not speak German, although there are other international researchers present as well. After she introduces herself in English, the meeting starts and the other attendants soon switch to German while discussing the topics on the agenda. They seem unaware of the exclusion that this creates. She cannot take part in the conversation, yet she does not feel comfortable interrupting the others to request they switch to English. Thus, she stands up and politely excuses herself, as realization dawns on her colleagues' faces. They try to apologize, but she decides it is still better to leave, in order to make the situation less awkward.

While outreach measures to attract international researchers often build on the assumption that English as a working language is a common thing in German institutions, reality looks quite different, with meetings and internal communication in German predominating in many institutes, especially in the social sciences and in the humanities. This seems to fit the German government's broader policies towards migrants, which place fluent German as a precondition for a successful integration and, thus, access to the sphere of basic rights and participation (Castro Varela, 2013, p. 36-37). While political leaders consider it is enough to provide a few months of German courses to the different groups of migrants, reality is much more complicated than that. In the specific case of academics, it takes several years to speak a language well enough in order to navigate academia in it. And not all researchers want to—or can—stay in the country for that long. Institutions should counter this by providing a multilingual infrastructure that international researchers can navigate more easily. After all, what good is it attracting excellent researchers from all over the world if your institution does not plan for conditions that allow a nuanced exchange between colleagues?

Epistemic hierarchization cloaked as critique

In her first time attending a reading of a text by Gloria Anzaldúa with a group composed mainly by European researchers, a Latin American scholar followed a feedback session that, in her perspective, was very much marked by a logic of hierarchization between forms of knowledge production. Anzaldúa, the author being discussed, was a North American researcher of Mexican descent and is nowadays a worldwide reference on Feminist and Queer Theories. The scholar's work dives into intersections between gender, race, ethnicity, and addresses mainly the place of the border, senses of hybridity, and identity. Just after the first part of the reading, instead of engaging with the content of the text, several students and researchers that were present made criticisms such as: it is not science, it brings obstacles to understanding with the words in Spanish, it is mainly emotive writing.

From this situation, some questions arise. The first one is related to points already mentioned above, which concern the legitimization of what counts as academic excellence standards, centered mainly on a single way of systematizing the world. Labeling the text “not science” and “emotive writing” seems like a rather superficial way of dismissing Anzaldúa's contributions to scholarship instead of engaging with them, which is a form of discrimination. A situation like this also points out existing barriers in the Western rationality and standards to analyze academic works coming from different backgrounds. The dominant perspective of knowledge production offers tools that ultimately usually lead to identification of knowledge limitations in other ways of thinking, producing, writing. However, from the critical lens of the notion of universal cosmopolitanism, an inversion becomes possible. Mignolo applies the idea of provincialism to understand the limitations of the mostly European lens that until today is accepted in many spaces as a possible gaze of analysis and systematization of knowledge valid for the entire world (Mignolo, 2018). Thus, points of myopia become evident.

Not by coincidence, but because the scholar was confronted with these kinds of feedback throughout her life, Anzaldúa herself built theoretical-methodological paths related to her writing. She worked with a concept of Conocimiento (Knowledge), as a process of acknowledging layers of power and oppressions we are in, as migrant women, through writing. In her last anthology, Anzaldúa proposes Conocimiento as a path to start knowledge production from within, in order to encounter our shadows and to confront what we have been programmed to avoid (Anzaldúa, 2002, p. 540). According to her, the path creates a ritual of questioning and disengagement, “un ritual de conocimiento”. This process—or ritual—is constituted by not only positive steps, but also discomfort, feelings of alienation and isolation, as Anzaldúa suggests in her writings.

In a text entitled “Speaking In Tongues: A Letter To 3rd World Women Writers” (Anzaldúa, 1983), she writes about the challenges for women writers and scholars from the Third World to overcome barriers imposed by an universal look that

neglects any other methodology and writing, any other form of access and document processes of knowledge. “Does not our class, our culture as well as the white man tell us writing is not for women such as us?” (Anzaldúa, 1983).

Hierarchical power and the neglect of responsibilities to oneself and to others

Faced with mounting tensions in her country of origin around her initial research topic, a PhD student is forced to seriously consider how to perform field research without risking her personal safety or putting interview partners in further danger. Although she knows her interview partners and the region she is researching quite well, she still feels unsure about how to behave while investigating sensitive questions on the ground, as this could attract the attention of other actors in the field known for previous crimes against activists, journalists and others that had been working on similar topics. She tries to discuss these issues with her supervisor, a professor in a German institute, before making travel arrangements. Instead of listening to her concerns, the supervisor seems more focused on getting her to go to the field as soon as possible, so that the thesis can further develop. The supervisor explains that she sees her role as that of someone who must make sure PhD students do not get stuck in the writing process—pressuring them to take the next steps is part of that. In addition, she argues that the university has no official policies regarding safety on the ground in the region where the PhD student will perform field research, so that probably means it is reasonably safe there. The PhD student tries to find support somewhere else and ends up traveling to do field research with many unresolved questions in mind. When she comes back, bringing new concerns on how to address these questions, expectations and risks—especially in relation to people that agreed to give so much information for the research itself—she again realizes it is not considered an important part of the research ethics itself at the university where she is enrolled.

As María do Mar Castro Varela (2013, p. 18) noted, migrants possess hybrid identities that have the potential to make them feel at home everywhere and nowhere at the same time. In supervising relationships, which are permeated by differences in terms of power, experience and disciplinary standing, the tensions between a hegemonic academic culture and the hybridity of individual trajectories seems to play a central role. While academics socialized exclusively in one academic culture often regard the way research, teaching and ethics are handled in the academic culture they inhabit as natural, migrant academics often struggle with the idea that there is only one way to do things, as many supervisors may argue. Having inhabited at least two academic cultures intensively, they may be able to see the differences and similarities between them more clearly. Instead of a clash between supposedly absolute rules, supervision relationships could benefit more of a mutual recognition of different kinds of expertise. Supervisors could become more open to learn about how international researchers approach empirical challenges with tools acquired in other academic cultures, maybe even incorporating some of these approaches to their own

practices. International researchers, on the other hand, can benefit from supervisors' willingness to share their extensive experience with both normative notions and unspoken rules in the German academic culture, as long as these are not presented as something absolute, but rather as the most commonly accepted way of doing things in the given context. In both cases, it is necessary to apply a layer of thinking about practices and discourse as just one possible way of doing things.

Tentative steps for countering funding inequalities and ensuring more horizontal forms of knowledge production

A group of early career researchers, composed of Germans with experience abroad and international scholars with experience in German academia, has been coordinating a newly founded transnational research network. They have acquired a grant and can now employ the funding to establish partnerships with fellow scholars based in other countries. Aware of the inequalities in terms of the global publication and circulation of research being produced in institutions in the Global South, they decide to focus primarily on colleagues working from those institutions. Meetings between the network coordinators often take hours, in which they discuss the most appropriate way to communicate about the network's aim, how to avoid reproducing power dynamics due to funding, how each one in the coordinating group sees certain issues, how the partners may see them, how to take the next steps in a timely manner... The discussions are long, sometimes exhausting, and would probably seem inefficient to others used to more streamlined forms of collaboration. However, the early career scholars feel they cannot ignore the differences in perspective and working conditions each participant will bring to the network. This would mean ignoring the diversity of forms of knowledge production that they think should co-exist in a horizontal way in the research network. They would also feel uncomfortable imposing a unique way of doing things just because they happen to have the funding—funding that is intricately connected to Germany's status as a wealthy, exports-oriented economy that profits from global inequalities. However, this is an on-going process and will probably be constitutive of the research network's activities.

We argue that, in regarding cosmopolitanism, it is essential to take coloniality into account, as it permeates relations between individual researchers, but also between researchers and institutions, as well as between researchers and the scientific community. We do not see an instant solution to these questions. Our aim in this essay is to enable a broader discussion in the first place, highlighting some of the everyday repercussions that silencing such questions may have.

Discussion

The discourses around cosmopolitanism and de-westernization of scholarship seem to be already circulating and permeating the work of many scholars in

communication studies, leading them to reflect upon more horizontal forms of collaborating across borders or expanding the scope of theories, methods and objects of study. This essay seeks to contribute to this discussion by arguing that, despite the many possible benefits that what has been called cosmopolitan academic cultures may bring, it is still necessary to bring structural inequalities and hegemonic ideals to the forefront of academic debates on the topic. The heterogeneity that is constitutive of decolonial theories helps us conceptualize these inequalities as having deep historical roots, dating back to colonization processes worldwide and the way these still permeate processes of knowledge production today. As Walter D. Mignolo points out, a universal cosmopolitanism is necessarily rooted in and a constitutive part of new forms of colonization (Mignolo, 2018, p. 101).

In this sense, more than pointing out the possibility of concrete steps of cosmopolitanism from decolonial theory, as Mignolo himself proposes, this essay contributes to expand decolonial theories' references, presenting an ongoing dialogue mainly with Latin American feminist researchers. The trajectory of thought of the Bolivian-Aymara thinker Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui brings a perspective on the heterogeneity and multi-temporal coexistences present in Latin America, as well as in various parts of the world. This scenario goes in the opposite direction to the idea of homogeneity and hybridization in the processes of intellectual production (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2018), which imposes structures of institutionalization and epistemological erasure.

In addition, we particularly looked into the tensions and promises internationalization poses to scholarship in the Global North, especially in Germany, where we are both currently based. Through a mixture of everyday scenes and critical literature, we point out the need to look beyond the numbers on research stays and transnational partnerships. We also highlight the importance of listening to international researchers' individual and collective experiences. While Germany invests considerable resources in internationalization initiatives, colonial forms of structuring interactions between scholars from the Global North and the Global South inside German institutions are still predominant.

Many of the authors we cited in this essay already propose various practical ways of trying to improve everyday conditions in which internationalization and collaborative transnational research take place (e.g. Badr et al., 2020; Chakravartty et al., 2018; Ganter & Ortega, 2019; Rao, 2019; Volk, 2021). While we recognize the importance of pointing concrete paths forward, this essay does not offer additional solutions. Instead, it aims at encouraging readers to reflect on their own role in the academic structures they inhabit and on what practices they may adopt to help decolonize these structures. As the decoloniality debate presented shows, there is no change of colonial patterns without practice. Therefore, hierarchies need to be made visible and discussed. Without doing this, the concept of cosmopolitanism will probably remain trapped in logics of tokenism and exploitation that mark many of the current transnational relationships.

In increasingly diverse societies, lack of diversity in institutions such as universities poses one of the main challenges to their credibility among the public. By ignoring a considerable portion of the population, these institutions increasingly become targets of criticism as elitist or inaccessible. This "(...) impacts Euro-American scholars as much as female, scholars of color, and those from economically marginalized groups", as Rao (2019, p. 702) accurately notes.

The calls to decolonize scholarship, which we join in this essay, make clear that the discourse on cosmopolitanism and internationalization needs to be placed in a broader ongoing debate on how coloniality organizes perspectives and bodies. Knowledge production should be situated within the discussion of geopolitics in order to be representative of complex social realities it embraces.

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