

JOURNAL FÜR ENTWICKLUNGSPOLITIK

vol. XXXIX 1/2–2023

UN/DOING EPISTEMIC VIOLENCE

Special Issue Guest Editor: Claudia Brunner

Published by:

Mattersburger Kreis für Entwicklungspolitik
an den österreichischen Universitäten

Journal für Entwicklungspolitik (JEP)
Austrian Journal of Development Studies

Publisher: Mattersburger Kreis für Entwicklungspolitik an den österreichischen Universitäten

Editorial Team: Monika Austaller, Tobias Boos, Alina Brad, Eric Burton, Antje Daniel, Felix Dorn, Julia Eder, Nora Faltmann, Gerald Faschingeder, Karin Fischer, Daniel Fuchs, Sophie Gleitsmann, Daniel Görgl, Inge Grau, Pedro Gross, Markus Hafner-Auinger, Johannes Jäger, Bettina Köhler, Johannes Korak, Magdalena Kraus, Franziska Kusche, Luisa Leisenheimer, Bernhard Leubolt, Sebastian Luckeneder, Clemens Pfeffer, Stefan Pimmer, Jonathan Scalet, Lukas Schmidt, Gregor Seidl, Shikha Sethia, Nicolas Schlitz, Koen Smet

Board of Editors: Henry Bernstein (London), Patrick Bond (Johannesburg), Dieter Boris (Marburg), John-ren Chen (Innsbruck), Hartmut Elsenhans (Leipzig), Jacques Forster (Genève), John Friedman (St. Kilda), Peter Jankowitsch (Wien), Franz Kolland (Wien), Helmut Konrad (Graz), Uma Kothari (Manchester), Ulrich Menzel (Braunschweig), Jean-Philippe Platteau (Namur), Dieter Rothermund (Heidelberg), Alfredo Saad-Filho (London), Dieter Senghaas (Bremen), Heribert Steinbauer (Wien), Osvaldo Sunkel (Santiago de Chile)

Publications Manager: Clemens Pfeffer

Cover: Clemens Pfeffer

Photo: Emil Widlund, 2019;

<https://unsplash.com/photos/xrbbXIXAWYo>

Contents

- 5 CLAUDIA BRUNNER
Un/Doing Epistemic Violence while Trying to Change the World
- 30 FARIDA GLOBAL WRITING COLLECTIVE
Undoing Epistemic Violence in Academic Knowledge Production
through Survivors' Participation: Learning from the Experiences of
Yazidi Survivors
- 50 CHRISTINA PAULS
Performing Cracks in Public Memory: Undoing Epistemic Violence
Through Artistic Interventions
- 74 MECHTHILD EXO
Democratic Peace Concepts Beyond the Abyss: Examples from
Afghanistan, Nagaland, and Kurdistan
- 100 MELANIE HUSSAK
Exploring Self-in-Relation: UnDoing Epistemic and Ontological
Violence in the Context of Indigenous Peace
- 122 LENA MERKLE
Epistemological Anarchism Against Epistemic Violence? A
Rereading of Paul Feyerabend towards the Decolonisation of
Academic Knowledge Production

139 SIMONE MÜLLER

Undoing Epistemic Violence in Educational Philosophy: Changing
the Story with Donna Haraway's SF

162 URSULA POSRATSCHNIG

Epistemic Violence and the Carnistic Matrix: Intersecting
Oppressive Hierarchies among Human and Animal Others

185 Editors and Authors of the Special Issue

190 Publication Details

MELANIE HUSSAK

Exploring Self-in-Relation: UnDoing Epistemic and Ontological Violence in the Context of Indigenous Peace

ABSTRACT Indigenous scholars have criticised the hegemony of Western epistemologies and ontologies as constituting profound aspects of the colonial process, marginalising and erasing Indigenous knowledge. Based on my research experiences in the field of Peace Studies with Indigenous communities in North America, I discuss the transformative claims of Indigenous relational research paradigms that require far-reaching changes in the positioning and role of the researcher. Informed by an approach of self-in-relation, I reflect on the potential and limitations of reducing epistemic and ontological violence in Peace Studies from the perspective of a European researcher.

KEYWORDS Indigenous peaces, Indigenous research paradigms, Peace Studies, epistemic and ontological violence, Dakota and Lakota

1. Introduction

Under the rule of the settler colonies in the U.S.A., colonisation led to genocide and ethnocide and institutionalised violence as a hegemonic system which consisted of structures like established institutions and laws (Dunbar-Ortiz 2014: 38). Waziyatawin Wilson and Yellow Bird (2005: 2) stress that colonisation has been reproduced through both formal and informal methods that maintain and extend the status quo of subjugation and exploitation of land and resources and which have an extensive presence in the daily lives of the colonised. Imposed social structures forced indigenous communities to split from their political and spiritual structures, ways of thinking, feelings, relationship structures and natural

spaces (Gray/Lauderdale 2007: 221), which are, however, important for living their own conceptions of peace and the practice of their community-based methods of conflict transformation. Added to the externally caused violence, an intensifying dimension of violence was thereby experienced, as community conflicts could no longer be addressed autonomously by their own means and at their sacred places.

How indigenous communities are living and understanding peace is related to their system of knowledge. Consequently, within discourse on indigenous and decolonial perspectives in Peace Studies, North American indigenous scholars (Yellow Bird 2005: 16; Walker 2004: 530, among many others) criticise the hegemony of modern/Western¹ epistemologies and ontologies as one of the most profound aspects of the colonial process, because they contribute to marginalising indigenous knowledge systems and philosophy and to silencing the voices of indigenous peoples. As peace scholar Polly O. Walker (2015: 160) emphasises, academia is seen by indigenous people as a 'site' that violently reshapes and suppresses their own indigenous ways of knowing and living. These Western ways of knowing, such as anthropocentrism and a linear understanding of time, have been established in modern academic knowledge as well as in the literature of Peace Studies (Kovach 2021: 64).

Thus, Peace Studies is called to address its inherent logic of violence and the exclusion of non-hegemonic knowledge, as well as epistemic critiques of power and counter-hegemonic resistance. However, by often failing to do so, Peace Studies contributes to the perpetuation of colonial oppression and coloniality – understood as existing hierarchies of power and knowledge – as a violent legacy of colonialism. This includes one's own role as a peace researcher. As a Western European 'white' female researcher, I am on the one hand part of this discipline that exists within the coloniality of power and is therefore also embedded and entangled in the coloniality of knowledge (Brunner 2018: 31). On the other hand, my academic approach is also shaped by my humanity and my (privileged) position in the social world, which is influenced by a Eurocentric self, other, and world perspective (Zöhrer 2022: 50). Based on my entanglement in the colonial power-knowledge relation, I am in a potentially violent position throughout the process of research by (re)producing Eurocentric norms, attributions, and dichotomies.

Therefore, indigenous researchers address their critique directly to non-indigenous, Western-oriented researchers, with the claim that they have to become aware of their own colonial entanglements and ways of thinking and use their privileges in order to dismantle existing power hierarchies within research. This is also based on a relational perspective, as Margaret Kovach (2021: 242) explains: “From an Indigenous point of view, research is relationship”. Activist-scholar Sandy Grande (2010: 204f.) further calls, in her Red pedagogy approach², for spaces for a kind of engagement in which indigenous and non-indigenous scholars and activists work together to overcome the destruction of colonial and hierarchical encounter and jointly transform knowledge beyond dominant structures. It is therefore a necessary but only a first step to use my privileged position according to a “Hegemonie(selbst)kritik”³ (Dietze 2008) in support of oppressed and marginalised perspectives and, from there, to question disciplinary and personal premises. The second step is the need to transform underlying research paradigms, including the role of the researcher.

The aim of this paper is to explore the potential for and obstacles to this outlined transformational space for an UnDoing of epistemic and ontological violence within Peace Studies from the perspective of a European peace scholar. Considering the area of tension of my own colonial entanglement and the risk of representation, appropriation, and inadequate understanding of indigenous knowledge, I discuss how my role as a researcher changes when relating to indigenous peace knowledge by exploring the research approach of ‘self-in-relation’. These reflections are based on qualitative research with Dakota and Lakota indigenous communities in South Dakota (Pine Ridge Reservation) and Minnesota in the summer of 2018 and winter of 2019. The findings of this paper advance the understanding of peace knowledge from a region that has received little attention in European academia, although, due to the relational paradigm, it could make a significant contribution to the decolonisation of Western-dominated Peace Studies.

The paper is divided into five sections. Following this introduction, I discuss the epistemic and ontological violence of the hegemonic paradigms of Peace Studies as well as the specific decolonial element of indigenous peace research. In Section 3, I introduce concepts of research paradigms of

North American indigenous scholars by contrasting the diversity of indigenous knowledge with the power dimensions of 'objective' knowledge and by discussing how the role of the researcher changes as a result of relational approaches. The defining characteristics of self-in-relation, cycles, and relationships lead into Section 4, on indigenous understandings of peace. These understandings are the basis for the discussion of the potential and limitations of decolonising the role and attitude of the researcher's self. The conclusion illustrates the paper's findings for an UnDoing of epistemic and ontological violence.

2. The colonial entanglement of Peace Studies

2.1 Indigenous counter-hegemonic positions

Despite its global reach, the discipline is largely dominated by the West, with origins in European intellectual history, theories and research conducted by researchers at institutions in those areas, and dominant modes of knowledge production and epistemic practices in the academic community that contribute to the further invisibilities of other voices (Tripathi/Roepstorff 2020: 81, 95).⁴ However, it is also the academic processes as such that reinforce Westernisation, with currently dominant research paradigms often acting as a barrier to understanding other knowledge systems and thus contributing to their invisibility.

The hegemony of Western understandings of peace and conflict management derived from these thus limits self-determined and indigenous ways of living peace (Walker 2004: 538). This grievance is mostly evident in criticism of so-called 'liberal peace' (Cruz 2021; Exo 2017), as modern-liberal concepts of peace have been applied as a structuring instrument of power to secure domination in the colonial period and continuing relations of dominance (Cruz 2021; Hokowhitu/Page 2011).

The disregard of indigenous peace knowledge leads to far-reaching limitations and biases. Besides the presence of epistemic violence in Peace Studies (Brunner 2020) – by which dominant and normalised knowledge can be understood, which in turn delegitimises other forms of knowledge that also deviate from academia itself – Walker (2004: 527, 546) emphasises

ontological violence. This term describes the violent suppression of one worldview by a dominant other. This must be addressed by giving equal recognition and consideration, especially in research, to how indigenous communities experience and conceptualise the world. This ontological dimension – the theory of being that conceptualises how the world is made and created and how we understand it and our human existence in it – has received little attention in Peace Studies. Ontological assumptions about reality, existence and being, however, influence how we think about and perceive peace; thus, for example, according to the Cartesian heritage as it being unsituated, individualistic and rational, or by combining mind and body, including a spatio-temporal point of view, as recognised in indigenous, decolonial and feminist discourses, among others (Grosfoguel 2013: 76). These are closely related to the epistemological dimension, involving assumptions about the production and validity of knowledge and the relationship between existence, knowledge and researchers and the question of what perspective on peace is accepted as knowledge, as illustrated in more detail by indigenous paradigms in the following section.

Consequently, indigenous scholars' critique of prevailing peace and conflict concepts in peace studies is directed against the worldviews underlying these concepts. These include divergent assumptions from indigenous conceptions about what it means to be human, how human relationships are structured, how conflicts are handled, and which actors are considered in the process (Walker 2004: 531). Many indigenous nations of North America, much like other indigenous communities around the world, incorporate relationships with nature into their ideas and perceptions of peace. In contrast to the anthropocentric perspectives of European modernity, which see humans (as omniscient) at the centre of the world, indigenous communities do not view the environment separately, but as a kind of shared world. Moreover, according to indigenous perspectives, all living beings are seen as complementary, in contrast to Western thought patterns that assume a separation between humans and other living beings (Brigg/Walker 2016). Animals, ancestors, ecological, and spiritual factors often play a central role in daily life and in conflict transformation. This relationality and interdependence are exemplified by *mitakuye oyasin* (Eng.: 'everything relates to everything'), a well-known Lakota expression (Lauderdale 2008: 1836f.).

2.2 Contrasting the decolonial in indigenous counter-hegemonic knowledge

Indigenous knowledge – understood as knowledge systems that have emerged from specific indigenous communities – can not be integrated into existing approaches, but needs to be recognised as an independent knowledge system (Chilisa 2020: 27). According to Antoine Asma-na-hi et al. (2018: 1), the term indigenous “comes from the Latin word *indigena*, which means ‘sprung from the land; native’” and includes a variety of heterogeneous groups.

The term decolonial is therefore not to be used synonymously with the term indigenous but rather refers to a specific process in the recognition of indigenous knowledge. Accordingly, referring to the work of North American scholars, decolonisation takes place on two levels: the deconstruction of dominant discourses and the associated structural dismantling of power hierarchies of modern thinking, as well as an academic equivalence and revival of indigenous knowledge (Asma-na-hi Antoine et al. 2018: 6; Battiste 2009). The processes of decolonising research are widely interpreted not only as liberating a colonised mindset and way of thinking (Chilisa 2020: 90, 93), but also as a way of working through colonising discourses of hegemony through reconciliation (Wilson et al. 2019) and renewal of community relations (Wilson 2008). The recognition associated with decolonisation is seen as a way to make colonisers aware of their responsibilities regarding the traumas they caused. Thus, decolonising scholarship is also political and transformative (Denzin/Giardina 2007; Mutua/Swadener 2004).

Indigenous peace research implies a counter-hegemonic claim. Moreover, reviving indigenous knowledge is a decolonial project, involving a “process of conducting research in such a way that the worldviews of those who have suffered a long history of oppression and marginalisation are given space to communicate from their frames of reference” (Chilisa 2020: 11). Western academia is understood as one specific – out of many possible – systems of knowledge that emerged from the experiences of a few people and established a violent system of thought.

Interestingly, beyond academia, the concept of decolonisation – according to my research insights – is less known within some indigenous

communities. Further, many people in the Pine Ridge Reservation express a sense of resignation that there is no chance of success for a decolonisation process, due to the multiple instances of violence and oppression. The emancipatory aspect of decolonisation is discussed under the term self-empowerment, implying the strengthening of sovereignty and identity, of indigenous concepts of education and language, and personal and social self-empowerment.

In their critique of modern academic knowledge, indigenous researchers refer to the well-known decolonial theoretical concepts of Latin American scholars. Decolonial theories analyse how modernity, entangled with the conquest of the Americas beginning in the 15th century, produced an ongoing pattern of power and hierarchy. Based on the analytical concept of coloniality of power by Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano (2012), this has been elaborated into three interrelated dimensions: coloniality of power, of knowledge, and of being. According to Walter Dignolo (2018: 108), all people are currently situated in a colonial 'matrix', as they are socially and epistemically classified. Decolonial critique goes beyond the critique of modernity to overcome colonial hierarchies of difference and knowledge structures in favour of decoloniality in the sense of 'detachment' (Maldonado-Torres 2016: 10). With regard to indigenous research paradigms, a significant difference becomes apparent. While sharing the political claims of decolonial perspectives of Latin American discourse – to overcome a Eurocentrically-understood modernity and existing relations of domination, signifying a socio-political, system-changing process at the level of knowledge – indigenous researchers demand the transformation of the researcher and her role due to the category of relationality, as described in the following section.

3. Self-in-relation: researching within Indigenous Knowledge Systems

Over the past four decades, indigenous researchers from the North American area have developed academic paradigms based on their existing philosophies and ways of knowing. Terms and concepts such as indigenous theory or indigenous methodology have emerged and are emerging

through critical engagement with Western research paradigms (Cajete 2015: 122; Kovach 2021: 20). Indigenous knowledge is dynamic derived from one's ecological environment, the place-specific content and meanings that derive from that place, and the relationships associated with that place. It has evolved through experiences of observation and relationships with the surrounding material world as well as the spiritual world. Through languages, stories and art, cultural and ritual traditions and socialisation, this knowledge is embedded in the community and passed on to following generations (Battiste 2007: 111, 116f.). Indigenous knowledge, moreover, does not strive for universalisation, but is also methodologically bound to a particular place, as Kovach (2021: 74) emphasises: “[O]ur knowledges cannot be universalized because they arise from our unique experience with our places”.

The central argument of indigenous perspectives on academia is that research is always based on a cultural orientation, including conceptualisations such as time, space and subjectivity (Smith 1999: 2). Nevertheless, many North American indigenous philosophies share extensive commonalities that allow for a common grounding of indigenous paradigms. According to Joe L. Kincheloe and Shirley R. Steinberg (2008: 136, 144, 151), indigenous knowledge systems differ from Western-based paradigms in the way they define life. Many indigenous communities view life as interwoven and do not differentiate in binary categories of organic living and non-living. Related to this is a cosmology and spirituality based on a genealogical connection to the earth and its ways of life. Relationships to the land can also be interpreted trans-generationally, through which indigenous communities also see themselves as connected to their ancestors and future generations (Wilson 2008: 80).

Key characteristics of indigenous research paradigms are relationality, cyclical dynamics and relationships. These paradigms assume a relational knowledge that goes beyond individual knowledge, and are based on community relationships and a socially and spatially situated individual who can be defined as a ‘self-in-relation’ (Kovach 2021: 46f.), a web of relationships including family, community, ancestors, animals and plants, earth and land, and cosmos. The cyclical perspective is reflected in the notion of time, which is understood as constant, dynamic movement, and in which past, present, and future are conceptualised as a unity (Walker

2001: 47). It is part of a constant flow and differs from the modern Western thinking of time in terms of linearity with a definite beginning and end. These cycles show up as consistent patterns such as seasons and animal migrations, and patterns of the cosmos. Territory is also seen as a connection to the earth, which, as the creator of life, is not separate from the being of indigenous peoples (Battiste 2007: 111; Grande 2015: 9). Accordingly, all entities are ensouled and equal, imbued with spirit and knowledge, in constant and perpetual motion, and are interconnected. The cyclical and relational perspective leads to a process- and event-oriented way of thinking. Instead of categorical subject and object relationships of single, separate individuals, they are understood as part of the whole system of life. Existence in the world encompasses the whole personality, with experiences and perceptions of mind, emotions, body, and spirit interconnected rather than understood as separate systems within a person (Duran/Duran 2009: 90ff.).

These characteristics are evident in the translation of indigenous paradigms into the meta-theoretical dimensions of ontology, epistemology, methodology, and ethics of knowledge production: indigenous ontologies are not described as univocal, objective realities, but as social realities of relational systems and networks of connections and relationship to living and non-living beings, the community and the shared world, the land, the earth, and the cosmos. Individual objects are therefore less relevant than their specific relationships and context (Wilson 2008: 73, 89). Building on this, indigenous epistemology is based on relationship and relationality, and is drawn from these relationships of the self with self, with others, and with the world. Four interrelated dimensions, which are considered equivalent, are knowledge: the cognitive, spiritual, emotional, and bodily (Asma-na-hi Antoine et al. 2018: 17f.; Kovach 2021: 74; Wilson 2008: 74). Indigenous methodology is based on indigenous epistemology and is characterised by participatory and transformative approaches. The methods are locally situated and are understood as “performative practices that represent and make visible indigenous life” (Denzin et al. 2008: 22). Indigenous ethics emphasise the responsibility of researchers to participants throughout the research process, and is linked to the researcher’s positioning within existing power relations. It requires a particular sensitivity to the multiple experiences of violent knowledge appropriation and hegemonic knowledge production to which indigenous communities have in many cases been subject (Chilisa 2020: 11, 23, 25).

Based on the assumption that everyone and everything is in relation in this paradigm, the researcher is also part of the web of relationships, which implies far-reaching consequences for relationships with research participants, knowledge and the research process. By transforming and rethinking the researcher's role through the approach of self-in-relation, implications for research with indigenous communities emerge, particularly based on the three introduced characteristics of relationality, cycles, and relationships. I reflect these three characteristics along the understandings of peace that are introduced in the following section.

4. Self-in-relation along indigenous peaces

4.1 Indigenous understandings of peace in rupture

As outlined, significant peace knowledge has been destroyed and lost through colonisation and continued coloniality. Even today, indigenous nations describe an implicit and systematic pressure within the existing system of governance, which makes it difficult to sustain indigenous peaces. Thus, today's indigenous peaces are shaped by the experienced confrontation of pre-colonial perspectives with violent realities, by the contact with the colonisers and their descendants, as well as by their resistance to the violent ruptures, both past and present. Many indigenous initiatives encourage communities to revitalise peace practices in order to re-connect with their own collective knowledge.⁵

As indigenous peaces are based on context, place, and experience, the understandings discussed within indigenous discourses are heterogeneous and diverse. In this section, I refer to those understandings of peace that were shared with me in qualitative interviews and conversations in two research stays with participants⁶ from Dakota and Lakota indigenous communities in South Dakota and Minnesota in 2018 and 2019. The following paragraphs can provide only a short summary of these conversations. The text is written by me as author of this article and is enriched by original quotes from the interviews. In line with my accountability and responsibility as author and researcher, the following synthesis and the quotations used were shared with participants for feedback in advance of the publication via a widespread social media platform, the context of the use of the text was made transparent, and critical comments were incorpo-

rated. As a European researcher, I am not aiming for a representative presentation of these peaces; instead, in the following section I question how I can decolonise substantial aspects of my peace knowledge and my role as a peace researcher in relation to these understandings.

Within the research encounters, the participants describe peaces as deeply felt states of being that affect procedurally and reciprocally within a comprehensive, inclusive web of relationships. Peaces are experienced and attained within the self, and from there passed on and emanate into other spheres. According to the Lakota saying “mitakuye oyasin” – all are connected – this includes ‘all that is’. This means that the feeling of a deep connection with the world also includes non-indigenous nations and transcends human beings. This goes hand in hand with strong identities as spiritual beings and results in a special connection to the earth, the universe, and one’s own homeland, for which people feel a strong responsibility. This is seen, for example, in protests against oil pipelines and for the protection of water; as a student explains, “we dream of our lands being green. Because we are only here in existence because of the land. We are supposed to be the keepers of our land. And that has been taken from us. And then we have been pushed to the side and trampled on while we watched them desecrate our mother earth.”

The relevance of balancing in relationships further expresses the symbol of the circle, which represents the uniting of all beings. So-called circle talks derive from this symbol and belong to the most common form of reviving indigenous approaches to peace. The circle focuses upon consensus and is open to everyone. This goes back to the idea that individuals cannot know all aspects of a conflict or a topic until other points of view are heard. The special role of each person involved also arises from the interwoven web of relationships among the participants. Each person exists in her and his own web of relationships, and everyone brings something to the circle from her or his position. Indigenous peace work strongly rejects the assumption that someone is in a position where she or he knows better than the participants what is best for them.

Multiple experiences of violence, ongoing physical violence, experiences of oppression, racism and discrimination are experienced, as well as the resulting traumatisation and fragility of identities which run counter

to the experience of peace. On an intra-community level, people perceive powerless due to the repression and failure of the U.S.A. to take responsibility for their actions. Moreover, many people feel that, as indigenous nations, they are not seen and are abandoned by 'the world'. Identity-forming relationships with the fellow world were and are destroyed through spatial, colonial penetration. Territorial space and with it the connection to sacred places and to nature were and are taken away by land appropriation. The prohibition of spiritual and cultural practices further interrupted the exercise of socially integrative aspects of peace; as an elder explains, "we don't have the culture we were supposed to."

Traumatisation as a result of the experiences of violence affects the body and consciousness and can lead to ruptures in relationships. Mental assimilation is among the most painful effects: a degradation of and shame about indigenous identity to an internalisation of external relations of domination through an internalised oppression and a 'breaking' of the community. On an individual level, many participants perceive this fracturing as a hybrid 'between worlds', a state of suspension between an enforced, non-compatible U.S. system and a fragile, traditional system.

In the context of the multiple experiences of violence, an intense consideration of healing and reconciliation is a dimension of peace. The issue of healing is closely linked for many to the expressed desire to understand and heal trauma due to their own and/or intergenerational family experiences. The process of healing refers to fellow human beings and to the Creator and the Earth in a relational way – such as in an understanding of healing that involves specific indigenous tasks (such as supporting the Earth in global challenges). Healing is described as cyclical and is experienced in phases. A transgenerational consciousness perceives connection and identification with ancestors and subsequent generations. Connected to this transgenerational perspective is a desire and self-commitment for the redemption of ancestors, their experiences, and experiences of violence. The perception of the essence of time has a healing effect and opposes a linear understanding of time. It is not the progression of time that enables healing but the depth of processing and transformation. Many participants describe the process of dealing with healing as often overwhelming, due to experiences of violence and the daily struggle for survival.

The confrontation with healing, (self-)forgiveness and reconciliation with one's own parts takes place in the awareness that one carries the trauma caused by colonialism and the consequences of assimilation processes within oneself; as a lecturer explains: "something that our grandmothers and our grandfathers went through, and we might not even understand fully what it was, but we carry that inside us." However, this 'something' should not guide oneself and contribute to the continuation of violence, as several participants agree. Rather, the cycle of violence must be broken.

How to process the experiences of violence and how to heal and reconcile both within the communities and outwardly in contact with the descendants of the colonialists are issues that are widely discussed by the participants. Being clear about who you are, why you exist, and standing by your identity supports a processing, as a young man points out: "I think that the part of reconciliation is being able to learn each other's identities. So, we can be in peace with ourselves first. Because I think so many times people are trying to reconcile, but you can't reconcile with somebody else if you are at war with yourself."

Many participants describe the process of reconciliation as painful and hurtful, as well as involving hard emotional and mental work that requires extensive personal and temporal resources. This process has not only an individual effect: rather, everyone can be a 'pebble' and initiate reconciliation. With this metaphor of a pebble as a ripple effect of the individual, an understanding of relationality is also expressed in reconciliation. According to conceptions of peace, the self is the starting point that affects the community and ultimately the complex relationship with the descendants of immigrant colonisers. The relationship with those particular U.S. citizens is characterised by pain and anger, due to colonial and contemporary experiences of violence. Nevertheless, some participants argue for compassion, and an understanding of the context of violence helps them to recognise the need for reprocessing and healing on the part of 'white' U.S. citizens. "That was really changed my heart, realising that the people who did this were more lost than we were", a rider explains. However, this articulated attitude, which arises from a spiritual and cosmological perspective and identity, carries the danger of passive acquiescence with violence.

4.2 Self-in-relation as decolonising practice

In this section, I consider my own potential contribution as well as limitations to decolonisation as a European peace scholar, based on the peace perspectives outlined above. My reflections are based on the three introduced characteristics of relationality, relationships, and cycles.

Relationality leads to a transition from an individual, singular subject of knowledge to a relational collective of knowledge which is interconnected, and to thinking and researching in relationships. Within the approach of a self-in-relation, the researcher herself becomes one source of knowledge. Using the circle as a symbol, the knowledge of the self begins with oneself and encompasses the transgenerational relationship to the community, shared world, land, and cosmos. From the researcher's perspective, this results in three levels of analysis that are thought together to acquire knowledge. Relationality requires a relationship to the research topic, to all participants, and to the experiences of shared and knowledge production in the research process. The central category of relationality demands a deep engagement in the process of encounter. In the context of de/colonial entanglement, this requires engaging with the levels of processing and transformation that indigenous communities themselves consider essential.

Based on the above results, a clear, universalistic definition of peace must be abandoned in favour of a relational and dynamic peace, one arising from involvement in a relational process and which is based on the specific contexts of place, land, experience, and lifeworld. According to this conception of peace, each person contributes to peace. Inner peace can only be realised through a 'ripple effect' within a reciprocal and dynamic network of relationships to the outside. The principle 'everything is relationship' leads to a necessary shift of cognition in understandings of peace. There are moments in the process and, therefore, only relational and processual approaches involving lifeworld and context – the 'what is?' moves to a 'how do people relate to peace relationally?' A relational research approach allows peace to be understood as participants' worlds of meaning within their systems of reference and knowledge, encompassing lifeworld aspects such as experiences, perceptions, knowledge and relationships. In this frame of reference, cognitive, emotional, bodily and spiritual components

also operate and must be acknowledged. An unfinished, dynamic peace requires the researcher to set aside cognitive, definitional approaches and instead situate herself in the processual approach as a corporeal human being with multiple accesses to knowledge. This includes, according to the circle metaphor, accepting the researcher position as one equal perspective in the relational network and not seeing oneself as being neutral and on the sidelines. Moreover, it is essential to continuously perceive and reflect the self-in-relation with the research participants, as well as transgenerational and all living beings. The conflictual and violent ruptures experienced in the process must be processed as must one's own colonial entanglement – on a personal and academic level.

This process has deeper implications for the researcher. As presented, healing and reconciliation are important aspects of peace that engage with the effects of colonial violence and ongoing coloniality. This also involves the researcher, as a person, to seek the required transformation, since the demands to heal from colonial wounds do not remain with those affected. Rather, the engagement of all involved also emerges from relationality. Healing targets the human aspects of the researcher – including the mental, spiritual, emotional, and bodily levels – in which a transformation of colonial continuities, the relationship to the research paradigms, and the entire living cosmos is initiated.

The cyclical perspective is reflected in the notion of time, which, in indigenous knowledge systems, is understood as dynamic movement. This cyclical understanding of time, understood as a process without a clear end, runs completely counter to a Western understanding of academia and courses of research. Reconciliation must not be a catchword that may lead to a simple purification. According to the cyclical understanding of time and the metaphor of the pebble as a wave effect, this process is incomplete and requires a continuous processing.

Thus, research with a decolonial claim is therefore only credible if relationships with those involved do not cease after the end of a so-called field phase, writing phase, or publication. Rather, it must also be recognised in terms of research ethics that research lasts continuously and works in relationship, in one's own being and cognitive process. Relational experiences can evolve a transformation process on a deep level that unfolds its own dynamics and rhythm, independent of the researcher's daily routine.

Resulting from my stays, an invitation to join a group of indigenous participants, as well as indigenous and non-indigenous supporters of the ride, has emerged. In regular exchanges, topics that are at the centre of this article are discussed and lead, for example, to the support of specific initiatives. Within the group I am allowed to bring up sensitive questions about potentials and limitations from my position as a European researcher, that are essential for my accountability.

In summary, this practice of self-in-relation requires the willingness of researchers to enter the decolonial space of encounter proposed by Sandy Grande (2010: 204f.), which enables relationship and cyclical, non-linear thinking. For people such as I who have been socialised in a Western-influenced knowledge system, researching in relationship is a challenge that is not to be underestimated, as it disrupts habitual patterns of thinking and conceptions of time.

5. Conclusion: potentials and obstacles of UnDoing epistemic and ontological violence

These reflections seek to contribute to an UnDoing (Brunner 2020) and a reduction of epistemic and ontological violence in which Western-oriented research paradigms and associated categories and figures of thought give way in favour of an engagement with indigenous research paradigms and peaces. This is not meant as an appropriation of indigenous knowledge; rather, in the encounter the researcher herself is challenged to abandon supposedly safe academic premises in exchange for process-oriented uncertainties.

Nevertheless, as Claudia Brunner (2020: 299) points out, critical perspectives, even within their commitment to decolonising engagements, remain in a contradiction because of their deep entanglement in colonality and their work on the potential reduction in violence of the UnDoing. Clearly, this problem cannot be overcome in this reflection either. First, my privileged position as a researcher, equipped with financial resources and a European Union passport, enabled this reflection within a research process. Second, I can – at least partly – understand peace experiences based on my own approaches and locate my position within the relational

paradigm and begin the process of decolonisation as a human being and as a researcher. When it comes to the topics of healing and reconciliation, however, it is apparent: because of my secure life, I cannot comprehend the experiences of multiple violence, traumatisedness, oppression and discrimination to the extent that threatens one's very existence and identity. This requires, on the one hand, to deal with the issues raised with the necessary seriousness demanded by my counterpart, and to make a corresponding contribution, which in the encounter can also go beyond the epistemic and ontological; on the other hand, to acknowledge and respect the limitations and contradictions – such as accepting a necessary withdrawal as a researcher from sensitive areas, which may also lead to ending of conducting a research process.

Despite and due to the complexity of decolonial research, the self-in-relation approach could be a contribution to an un/doing of epistemic and ontological violence in peace research. Based on an indigenous understanding of peace as a relational process in motion, connections can be strengthened that also oscillate between the colonial past and the present of decolonial resistance. This is done under the recognition of necessary material transformations – such as that a real decolonisation in the context of the U.S. involves the “repatriation of Indigenous land and life” (Tuck/Yang 2012: 1). This relation is more than evident in the importance of the land and sacred places to the experience of peaces.

UnDoing epistemic and ontological violence requires sensitively acting in the field of tension of one's own colonial entanglements, and an engagement with counter-hegemonic, critical spaces for the construction of equal relationships and integrative knowledge. As my understanding as a researcher is largely determined by my perceptions, experiences, and knowledge, relationality means acknowledging self-reflexivity and positionality as a starting point, but going beyond that, so that research should shape a space in which communicating from all lifeworld dimensions and the life of indigenous being-in-the-world is ensured. Only then is the minimal requirement for Grande's (2004) space fulfilled, in which indigenous and non-indigenous scholars can possibly work together to dismantle colonial continuities, connecting worlds of knowledge and creating a space for exchange.

In this paper, I have argued from a European, ‘white’, female researcher position for the potential of self-in-relation as an approach for UnDoing. Accordingly, relations can be viewed as a multidimensional cross-connection between the theoretical effects of colonial rule and coloniality, academia and the knowledge system, and all participants in the research. The relational claim of transforming colonial continuities, which include the transformation of the researcher, is as evident in indigenous conceptions of peace as it is in indigenous paradigms of knowledge. The researcher herself is addressed so as to contribute to the overcoming of existing hierarchical power relations in research, under the condition of a fundamental transformation of the applied research paradigms and the commitment of personal resources. The metaphor of the individual as pebble and so as ripple effect articulated by a participant, may be both encouraging as well as a constant critical reminder of the limits and threats of one’s own actions in the context of UnDoing epistemic violence.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers and the guest editor Claudia Brunner and editors for their valuable comments and suggestions. I am grateful to the Peace Academy Rhineland-Palatinate for the generous funding of the two field research stays. My deep gratitude goes to all Lakota and Dakota people I was privileged to encounter during my research.

- 1 By ‘Western’ I continuously understand the ideas, perspectives, and concepts produced from European and Euro-American tradition and context of thinking.
- 2 Grande (2015: 8) employs “the term as historical referent to such empowering metaphors as ‘Red Power’ and ‘The Great Red Road’, reappropriating the signifier ‘Red’ as a contemporary metaphor for the ongoing struggles of indigenous peoples to retain sovereignty and establish self-determination.” In her approach, she argues for new ways along the tensions and intersections between critical educational theory and American Indian education. Through dialogic contestation, she aims to expand disciplinary boundaries and intellectual borders that strengthen indigenous approaches and develop analytical frameworks that expose power and domination inherent in existing hegemonic approaches (ibid. 1ff.).

- 3 With this notion (Eng.: hegemony(self)critique) Dietze (2008: 40) argues for a de-hierarchization of privileged and hegemonic positions through the concept of intersectionality and by including the authors' positioning. Moreover, the challenging of personal premises and privileges of authors of the Global North do not remain on the level of the self-reflexive and intersectional situating of the subject of knowledge but are instead oriented towards oppressed knowledge (see Brunner 2017: 200f.).
- 4 From a class-conscious perspective, it is worth noting that intra-European voices such as those of feminism, peace and the labor movement have also been marginalized for similar reasons.
- 5 The Indigenous Peacemaking Initiative of the Native American Rights Fund is one of those programs. See <https://peacemaking.narf.org/about-us/>
- 6 Half of them are participants of the 'Dakota 38+2' ride that I was blessed to join in 2019. The ride is dedicated to those 38 Dakota who were hanged in the largest mass execution in United States history on December 26, 1862, as to two Dakota who fled to Canada and were hanged at a later date. They had resisted the removal of their community from Minnesota toward the Great Plains, which became known as the 'U.S.-Dakota War' in the hegemonic historical narrative. Their descendants rode 330 miles to the execution site in the small town of Mankato every December from 2005-2022. It is a ceremonial journey that is also dedicated to themes of peace, healing and reconciliation.

References

- Asma-na-hi, Antoine/Mason, Rachel/Mason, Roberta/Palahicky, Sophia/ Rodriguez de France, Carmen (2018): *Pulling Together: A Guide for Curriculum Developers*. Victoria, BC: BCCampus.
- Battiste, Marie (2007): Research Ethics for Protecting Indigenous Knowledge and Heritage. Institutional and Researcher Responsibilities. In: Denzin, Norman K. (ed.): *Ethical futures in qualitative research. Decolonizing the politics of knowledge*. Walnut Creek, Calif.: Left Coast Press, 111–132.
- Brigg, Morgan/Walker, Polly O. (2016): Indigeneity and Peace. In: Richmond, Oliver P./Pogodda, Sandra/Ramović, Jasmin (eds.): *The Palgrave Handbook of Disciplinary and Regional Approaches to Peace*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 259–271. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-40761-0_20
- Brunner, Claudia (2017): Von Selbstreflexion zu Hegemonieselbstkritik. In: *Sicherheit und Frieden* 35 (4), 196–201. <https://doi.org/10.5771/0175-274X-2017-4-196>
- Brunner, Claudia (2018): Epistemische Gewalt. Konturierung eines Begriffs für die Friedens- und Konfliktforschung. In: Dittmer, Cordula (ed.): *Dekoloniale und Postkoloniale Perspektiven in der Friedens- und Konfliktforschung. Verortungen in einem ambivalenten Diskursraum*. Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft (Sonderband der ZeFKO), 25–59. <https://doi.org/10.5771/9783845291307-26>

- Brunner, Claudia (2020): Epistemische Gewalt. Wissen und Herrschaft in der kolonialen Moderne. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783839451311>
- Cajete, Gregory A. (2015): Where there is no name for Science. Response 1. In: Grande, Sandy (ed.): Red pedagogy. Native American social and political thought. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 121–128.
- Chilisa, Bagele (2020): Indigenous research methodologies. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore, Washington DC, Melbourne: Sage.
- Cruz, Juan Daniel (2021): Colonial power and decolonial peace. In: Peacebuilding 9 (3), 274–288. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2021.1906516>
- Denzin, Norman K./Lincoln, Yvonna S./Smith, Linda Tuhiwai (2008): Locating the field: Performing Theories of Decolonizing Inquiry. In: Denzin, Norman K./Lincoln, Yvonna S./Smith, Linda Tuhiwai (eds.): Handbook of critical and indigenous methodologies. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore: Sage, 21–29.
- Dietze, Gabriele (2008): Intersektionalität und Hegemonie(selbst)kritik. In: Kleinau, Elke/ Götte, Petra/Gippert, Wolfgang (eds): Transkulturalität. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 27–44. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783839409794-001>
- Dunbar-Ortiz, Roxanne (2014): An indigenous peoples' history of the United States. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Duran, Bonnie/Duran, Eduardo (2009): Applied Postcolonial Clinical and Research Strategies. In: Battiste, Marie (ed.): Reclaiming indigenous voice and vision. Vancouver: UBC Press, 86–100.
- Exo, Mechthild (2017): Das übergangene Wissen. Eine dekoloniale Kritik des liberalen Peacebuilding durch basispolitische Organisationen in Afghanistan. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783839438725>
- Grande, Sandy (2010): Chapter 21: Red Pedagogy. In: Counterpoints 356, 199–207.
- Grande, Sandy (2015): Introduction. In: Grande, Sandy (ed.): Red pedagogy. Native American social and political thought. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1–14.
- Gray, Barbara/Lauderdale, Pat (2007): The Great Circle of Justice: North American Indigenous Justice and Contemporary Restoration Programs. In: Contemporary Justice Review 10 (2), 215–225. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10282580701372137>
- Grosfoguel, Ramón (2013): The Structure of Knowledge in Westernized Universities: Epistemic Racism/Sexism and the Four Genocides/Epistemicides of the Long 16th Century. In: Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge XI (1), 73–90.
- Hokowhitu, Brendan/Page, Tiffany (2011): Postcolonial peace. In: Junctions (14, 13–25), 12–25.
- Kincheloe, Joe L./Steinberg, Shirley R. (2008): Indigenous Knowledges in Education: Complexities, Dangers, and Profound Benefits. In: Denzin, Norman K./Lincoln, Yvonna S./ Smith, Linda Tuhiwai (ed.): Handbook of critical and indigenous methodologies. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore: Sage, 135–156. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483385686.n7>
- Kovach, Margaret (2021): Indigenous methodologies. Characteristics, conversations, and contexts. Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press.

- Lauderdale, Pat (2008): Indigenous Peoples in the Face of Globalization. In: *American Behavioral Scientist* 51 (12), 1836–1843. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764208318934>
- Maldonado-Torres, Nelson (2016): Outline of Ten Theses on Coloniality and Decoloniality. Online: Fondation Frantz Fanon (ed.).
- Mignolo, Walter D. (2018): What does it mean to decolonize? In: Mignolo, Walter D./Walsh, Catherine E. (ed.): *On decoloniality. Concepts, analytics, praxis*. Durham, London: Duke University Press, 105–134. <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822371779-007>
- Quijano, Aníbal (2012): *Kolonialität der Macht, Eurozentrismus und Lateinamerika*. Wien, Berlin: Turia + Kant.
- Smith, Linda Tuhiwai (1999): *Decolonizing methodologies. Research and indigenous peoples*. London, New York, Dunedin, N.Z.: Zed Books, University of Otago Press.
- Tripathi, Siddharth/Roepstorff, Kristina (2020): Decentering Peace and Conflict Studies: Conceptualisations of Peace in India. In: *ZeFKo* 9 (1), 79–99. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42597-019-00014-z>
- Tuck, Eve/Yang, K. Wayne (2012): Decolonization is not a metaphor. In: *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education and Society* 1 (1), 1–40.
- Walker, Polly O. (2001): *Mending the web. Conflict transformation between Aboriginal and non-Indigenous Australians*. PhD Thesis, School of Social Work and Applied Human Sciences, The University of Queensland.
- Walker, Polly O. (2004): *Decolonizing Conflict Resolution: Addressing the Ontological Violence of Westernization*. In: *The American Indian Quarterly* 28 (3), 527–549. <https://doi.org/10.1353/aiq.2004.0108>
- Walker, Polly O. (2015): *Indigenous Paradigm Research*. In: *Methodologies in Peace Psychology*, 159–175. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-18395-4_8
- Wilson, Shawn (2008): *Research is ceremony. Indigenous research methods*. Halifax, Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing.
- Wilson, Waziyatawin Angela/Yellow Bird, Michael (2005): *Beginning Decolonization*. In: Wilson, Waziyatawin Angela /Yellow Bird, Michael (ed.): *For indigenous eyes only. A decolonization handbook*. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research, 1–7.
- Yellow Bird, Michael (2005): *Tribal Critical Thinking Centers*. In: Wilson, Waziyatawin Angela /Yellow Bird, Michael (ed.): *For indigenous eyes only. A decolonization handbook*. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research, 9–29.
- Zöhrer, Michala (2022): *Schablonen im Kopf. Koloniale Kontinuitäten im Wahrnehmen, Denken und Handeln*. In: *Wissenschaft und Frieden* 2022 (2), 50–52.

ABSTRACT *Indigene Wissenschaftler*innen kritisieren die Hegemonie westlicher Epistemologien und Ontologien als tiefgreifende Aspekte des Kolonialprozesses, innerhalb dessen indigenes Wissen marginalisiert und vernichtet wurde. Auf der Grundlage von Forschungserfahrungen im Bereich der Friedensforschung mit indigenen Gemeinschaften in Nordamerika diskutiere ich den Transformationsanspruch indigener relationaler Forschungsparadigmen, die weitreichende Änderungen der Positionierung und der Rolle der Forscherin erfordern. Auf der Basis des Self-in-Relation-Ansatzes reflektiere ich die Möglichkeiten und Grenzen, um aus der Perspektive einer europäischen Forscherin epistemische und ontologische Gewalt in der Friedensforschung zu reduzieren.*

Melanie Hussak

Friedensinstitut, Evangelische Hochschule Freiburg

melanie.hussak@eh-freiburg.de