

Decolonizing the Global North university: Host-guest dynamics and the limits of hospitality

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Abstract

This article critically assesses the hospitality premise on which the project-practice of decolonizing the curriculum rests, investigating the texture and limitations of the hospitality that Global North universities seem willing to offer their many Others, including students, staff, and stakeholders, particularly in the form of knowledges and pedagogies. It investigates how the guests-strangers are treated within the Global North Universities, their knowledges posited as a separate category within the epistemic system rather than integrated into being a part of the system; guests relegated to unpaid servants when obliged to shoulder the lion's share of the work in addressing the unfair, racist systems which devalue them and their knowledges. Embedding the discourse of decolonizing the university in and with postcolonial concepts, the article highlights the profoundly unequal power relationships between hosts and guests that continue to inform even the best-intentioned Global North higher education institutions, self-declaredly dedicated to decolonization efforts. It argues for pressing need on the part of the Global North universities to deepen their awareness of the historical legacies of coloniality and its matrix of power, and consequently reflect on the treatment of Global South guests and knowledges. This long, hard look at their role of host is necessary for a true commitment to decolonising the university spaces and rendering them genuinely hospitable, and to transforming the unequal power dynamics and the impacts on guests-stranger Others.

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Introduction

Decolonizing the university is a project-practice: a project of epistemic justice and a radically contextualized pedagogical practice. The last decade has seen the push towards decolonizing the university sweeping through higher education institutions across countries and continents, from South Africa to the UK, from Europe and North America to Asia, building on the momentum of protest movements such as Black Lives Matter and student-led initiatives like Rhodes Must Fall and Why is My Curriculum White. Among the many strategies for decolonizing the university put forward by scholars (for example, Arday et al., 2021; Bhambra et al., 2018; Bhambra et al., 2020; Hendricks, 2018; Mignolo, 2009; Mbembe, 2016; Tuck and Yang, 2012), there have been repeated calls for Global North researchers to share resources and space with Global South scholars. These calls have been for establishing genuine, equitable partnerships – meaningful collaborations which are not imperialist, i.e., extractivist or exploitative – and for the involvement of Global South knowledge partners at all levels of research projects, from design to credit apportioning.

At the same time, as Moosavi (2020) warns, we should resist the temptation to embrace all other knowledges simply because they are Other, Southern knowledges, rather than on their academic merit (though how merit and value is judged is usually already steeped in Global North proclivities). As he phrases it, ‘decolonial scholarship may make the mistake of glorifying Southern scholarship or scholars just because they are from the Global South’ (2020: 347). His warning echoes Ahmed’s observation from two decades before about ‘textual fetishism,’ i.e., ‘where one invests meaning in a text by cutting it off from the history of its production and consumption’ (2000: 15). The problem, as Ahmed identifies so perceptively, is that ‘The stranger is produced as a category within knowledge, rather than coming into being in an absence of knowledge’ (2000: 55). In inviting Global South scholars to the banqueting table of knowledge production and dissemination, the Global North university may once again be creating the *categories and parameters* of new knowledges, designating, validating, and authorizing these Other knowledges by the power of the dominant, Northern-centric knowledges, while positioned as gatekeeper to allow or bar entry.

This article investigates the hospitality premise on which these decolonizing calls rest because, as worthy and vital as these calls are, the Global North university problematically continues to occupy a host position, thereby relegating all others, by default, into being guests who must rely on the gatekeeper-host to grant and facilitate access. The analysis draws attention to the structural and systemic logics of coloniality on which Global North universities are built and the profoundly unequal power relationships between hosts and guests that continue to inform even the best-intentioned institutions, self-declaredly dedicated to decolonization efforts. In other words, this article critically assesses and unpacks the thorny issue of what kind of hospitality Global North universities, which are

essentially in host positions, are prepared (and possibly willing) to offer their many Others, including their students, staff, and stakeholders, other knowledges, and other pedagogies, as they formally respond to decolonizing calls.

For this critical assessment, we draw primarily from Ahmed's (2000, 2007, 2012, 2014) extensive critique of Othering in postcoloniality and institutional whiteness. We build on her discussion of hospitality as not just being about welcoming others into one's space, but also about recognizing and engaging with the power dynamics that shape encounters between people (in particular, the historical legacies of coloniality) and committing to challenge and transform those dynamics of inequity. Hospitality, for Ahmed, involves an awareness of one's positionality and the ways in which it impacts one's interactions with others; to be hospitable means being willing to listen to and learn from others, and to be transformed by encounters with others, and being open to the unexpected and the unfamiliar, rather than trying to control or manage those encounters.

There is an underside to hospitality, Ahmed observes, as the epistemic production of the discourse connecting the stranger with danger or fear has always been instrumental in reproducing exclusion and xenophobia; that discourse works by identifying the stranger as the 'origin of danger' as it positions the embodied stranger as the 'origin of difference' (2000: 4). If we posit Other or alternative knowledges as strangers to the Self (in this case, to dominant knowledges), we immediately find resistance to including the unknown Other as the stranger. Just as Ahmed reminds us that '*we may not be able to read the bodies of others*' (2000: 8, emphasis in the original), so too dominant knowledges may not find it easy to make a space or devise strategies for inclusion when they are not conversant with the shape, size, language, and types of Other knowledges they may (want to) be engaging with. It is not a meeting of equals if the Global South, even as an invited and welcomed guest, is expected to move onto the epistemically privileged grounds previously long occupied by the Global North, and to take its place – or even to be permitted to exist – in pre-structured spaces and systems on the terms prescribed by the host. Ahmed underscores the power asymmetry in such a relationship: 'The face-to-face meeting is not between two subjects who are equal and in harmony; the meeting is antagonistic' (2000: 8). Building on Derrida (2000), she expands on the conditional hospitality offered by the 'multicultural nation' (the integration model of the UK) to argue that 'the figure of the willful guest might be understood as spectre that haunts hospitality, *the menace that threatens the loss of a good relation*' (2014: 53, emphasis in the original).

The liminality of hospitality is constitutive of hospitality's conceptual instability: hostility is hospitality's counterpart. This ambivalence within the concept of hospitality helps us understand how decolonizing efforts can often be undermined from their very outset in Global North universities, where the threat of the stranger and the wariness of the unfamiliar are felt. Ultimately, this highlights the question of privilege, in terms of which individuals and institutions retain the upper hand in host-guest relationships grounded on power divides. Building on this theoretical premise, this article investigates the tensions within the Global North university when decolonizing the curriculum initiatives attempt to (and seemingly) open the doors more widely and welcome strangers not just as guests but as equal partners and co-creators of knowledge. When we ask how hospitable the Global North universities are in their decolonizing activity; we are questioning if these

institutions, in host positions, practice *genuine* hospitality to the Other: to guests, strangers, outsiders, and foreigners of all kinds, and to other knowledges, other epistemes, other ways of knowing and learning. The following sections outline the many ways decolonizing in Global North universities is complex, given that those occupying the structural position of the host can often be ungenerous, even grudging, a host in name only, or playing the role of host to tick corporate boxes. This means decolonizing efforts might be significantly hampered by the ambivalence within hospitality dynamics, even in institutions formally pledged to decolonizing. Consequently, there can be a lack of genuine hospitality in the decolonizing project-practice of knowledge construction and power sharing in Global North universities.

Along with identifying these sites of tension and negotiation, this article also aims to invest and embed the discourse of decolonizing the university in and with postcolonial concepts and ideas, such as ‘the stranger’ as Other and ‘hospitality’ towards the stranger, as key analysis tools. As Rao and Wasserman argue, ‘The strength of postcolonial theory is that it provides us with a critical framework that validates the local epistemologies necessary for the formulation of global ethics, and acknowledges the unequal power relationships in which various cultures and nations are historically positioned’ (2007: 34). However, some have been less convinced that the theoretical toolkit of postcolonial studies is adequate for the decolonizing project-practice. This article is partly intended to address this critique by advancing an extension of postcolonial theory via applying hospitality theory to decolonizing the university.

Global North universities as hosts

In 2020, a *Guardian* article reported that only 24 of 128 UK universities had committed themselves to decolonizing the curriculum (Batty, 2020), even though universities are under increasing pressure to act due to the attainment gap between white students and BAME (Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic) students. Misra argues that UK university campuses are ‘overtly and covertly hostile places for students and staff of colour’ (2020: 37), and are far from being spaces of colour-blind meritocracy. Indeed, decolonizing research scholarship has yet to find Global North universities serving as exceptionally gracious hosts to the Other. Some of the grounds for this inhospitality are ‘around the disagreement about who is being marginalised (“Can we identify who is excluded? Who are we talking about?”), or the argument that “demands” for decolonisation “disfigure” European intellectual history’ (Last, 2018: 212–213). Arday et al. (2021) highlight the power dynamics within higher education institutions that give rise to racism and inequality, resulting in the perpetuation of systemic racism within these institutions. Begum and Saini indict the Russell Group institutions and Oxbridge as often the ‘worst culprits of attempting to whitewash the academy’s historic role in intellectualising and justifying racism’ (2019: 198).¹

Not only are Global North universities spaces that generate and reproduce systemic racism, but they are also spaces that consecrate and legitimize particular knowledges *as* knowledge, thus producing and reproducing ‘epistemic coloniality’ (a concept introduced by Quijano in the 1990s). As Mbembe explains, this concept involves ‘the endless

production of theories that are based on European traditions,' theories and knowledge systems which 'are produced nearly always by Europeans or Euro-American men who are the only ones accepted as capable of reaching universality' (2016: 37). This is an extension of the coloniality of power, described by Quijano as the imposition of specific Western-centric knowledges as 'universal rationality' that is, in fact, the enforcing of 'provincialism as universalism' (2010: 31). Put differently, it is predominantly the invited 'Europeans and Euro-American men' that Mbembe mentions (2016: 37), with their ways of thinking and understanding the world, who have permanent seats at the high table of academia. Epistemic coloniality is not purely a historical phenomenon coinciding with European colonialism because it continues to shape contemporary knowledge production and dissemination. The dominance of Western knowledge systems in academia still reinforces the marginalization and erasure of non-Western ways of knowing, subjugating non-Western cultures to Western epistemologies, perpetuating colonial power relations and reinforcing social inequalities.

Challenging epistemic coloniality requires decentering Global North epistemologies and cultivating an intellectual humility that acknowledges the limits and biases of dominant knowledge systems. It entails that the Global North university creates, in its capacity as host, new spaces for recognizing and promoting diverse ways of knowing. Getting a seat at the high table of academia is possible for the Global South, but entry does not guarantee welcome, nor does an invitation warrant that the different needs of the guests are met or even acknowledged. Ahmed, writing about 'social willing' and exemplifying it within the dynamics of hospitality, explains how the relationship between a host and guest necessarily involves the host welcoming the guest into their home or inviting them to join them; this necessarily means that the host has ownership or control over the space they are welcoming the guest into, and the guest is sited as not yet a part of the host's group:

The host not only was already here, or here before, but the 'here' belongs in some way to the host. The host welcomes or receives the guest into the home, opens up the home. The guest can come *in* insofar as the guest comes *after*. Or perhaps hospitality can take the form of a simple address, given without the security of residence: would you like to come along with us? To accept the invitation you go along with this coming along. [...] But in being welcomed the 'you' is positioned as not part of the 'us,' or should we say not yet part. (2014: 53)

The dependence on the part of the guest to be accepted or rejected by the host, to be invited to a 'here' which 'belongs in some way to the host,' raises questions about the power dynamics involved in hospitality and highlights its liminality – this hospitality is not genuine hospitality but instead conditional hospitality. Clement explains that to be able to hope for an invitation to the high table of Global North academia, i.e., to gain legitimacy and recognition, the Other would be 'expected to adopt western epistemologies, concepts, categorizations, worldviews, and mainstream disciplinary codes,' the very imposition of which would then entail 'the simultaneous erasure of the very Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing that are supposed to be studied' (2019: 278). Global North universities' practice of epistemic coloniality – which inflicts epistemic

violence on other knowledges (Spivak, 1988) – shows these institutions as unwilling, even hostile, hosts to those regarded as guests and/or strangers.

A lack of inclusivity and openness to different ways of knowing may only sometimes result from intentional (sometimes even virulent) hostility. Instead, it may be due to a need for more awareness of the potential contribution of the guest-stranger, a lack of understanding and appreciation of the Other and the possibilities contained therein. However, this obliviousness, which amounts to inhospitality as much as hostility does, obliges would-be guest-strangers to try to ‘qualify’ for entry and acceptance by functioning on the hosts’ terms. Icaza and Vazquez describe this stance encountered by movements to decolonize the curriculum as a form of ‘arrogant ignorance [...] produced by a system of knowledge that is Eurocentric, heteronormative and anthropocentric’ (2018: 112). The expression ‘arrogant ignorance’ is particularly apt to refer to a kind of epistemology that presents itself as all-encompassing and universal while at the same time ignoring the diverse ways of knowing in the world. This epistemology operates from a position of arrogance because it assumes that one way of knowing is superior to all others and can be applied universally without considering the specific cultural, historical, or contextual factors that shape knowledge production.

It is worth flagging that this ‘arrogant ignorance’ is akin to and constitutive of the ‘sanctioned ignorance’ of white privilege, which can remain oblivious to racism because it is protected from the same. It also speaks to the center versus periphery position of Orientalism, where, as Said (1978) pointed out, an asymmetry of knowledge exists. In the power dynamics of the asymmetry of knowledge described by Said, the center can afford not to need to know about the periphery, whereas the periphery perforce has to use the center as a reference point and yardstick. Decades later, Sullivan and Tuana write about an ‘epistemology of ignorance,’ a system of knowledge production and reproduction characterized by the deliberate exclusion or neglect of certain forms of knowledge, manifesting in several different forms of ‘unknowledge,’ which are occasionally ‘consciously produced, while at other times they are unconsciously generated and supported’ (2007: 1–2). Likewise, Sundberg notes that a ‘sanctioned ignorance’ that comes with Eurocentric epistemologies ‘allows colonial violence to continue’ (2014: 34, 39). This sanctioned ignorance and epistemology of ignorance can manifest in several forms of ‘unknowledge,’ such as marginalizing or excluding Other knowledges as irrelevant to a particular way of knowing the world or lacking interest in understanding Other knowledges. The situations described by Icaza and Vazquez, and by Sullivan and Tuana, are problematic because they perpetuate epistemic coloniality, reinforcing power inequities by privileging certain forms of knowledge over others, leading to epistemic injustice (Fricker 2007).

On top of encountering what can be characterized as ‘arrogant ignorance’ or the ‘unknowledge’ produced by an ‘epistemology of ignorance,’ the project-practice of decolonizing – whether it be of the university, research or the curriculum – has had many other challenges. Shain et al. warn: ‘Strategic advancement of decolonising may have provided some resource and institutional backing for grassroots networks but has come with costs, not least of which is institutional taming of the radical message of decolonisation’ (2021: 933). Gebrial cautions against the danger of decolonizing energy ‘being

turned into a series of bureaucratic welfare measures, administered in isolation of the broader structure and social relations in and around the university' (Bhambra et al., 2020: 6). She is not alone in this concern; Nişancıoğlu also voices the worry that decolonizing will be driven by neoliberal managers who regard this project-practice merely as a market opportunity 'to refashion the brand of institutions and restructure its teaching practices in ways that put more bums on seats and more fees in pockets' (Bhambra et al., 2020: 3). Hendricks likewise opines: 'The decolonisation project has been captured by the university management, who has produced a technical response to a political issue' (2018: 32).

Scholars underscore that decolonizing the university must not be about public relations or neoliberal management trends and box-ticking; the focus must remain on the power imbalances and injustices in curriculum construction and knowledge production within the higher education institution. As Hendricks stresses, 'To decolonise these institutions will require a complete overhaul of the structure, ideology, and functioning of the universities' (2018: 17). As these scholars conclude, decolonizing Global North universities is challenging and fraught with potential failure. One of the primary challenges is that the original hosts are often entrenched in the existing power structures that perpetuate epistemic coloniality and hold power and authority to issue invitations to the Other, whether to other individuals, other pedagogies, or other forms of knowledge. Ultimately, it is the Global North universities' prerogative to make decisions about decolonizing their organizational framework, beliefs, and systems.

The guests are doing all the work! BAME staff overload

Institutional spaces are complex and hierarchical social environments. It is essential to recognize that these spaces are never neutral or purely meritocratic; they are constructed and maintained by the cultural norms, practices, and values of the individuals and groups who inhabit them. Most Global North university spaces are essentially white spaces and often unwelcoming of BAME staff and students, who may experience marginalization, ranging from subtle microaggressions to more overt forms of discrimination (Harbin et al., 2019: 6; Waring and Bordoloi, 2012), and lack of representation in leadership and decision-making roles.

Scholars have extensively discussed the reasons behind the disproportionate valuation of white, middle-class forms of capital, cultural knowledge, and skills. One such example is the work of Begum and Saini, who have highlighted this issue in their research and argued that the insidious and systematic prioritizing of dominant forms of capital, knowledge, and skills 'deliberately undervalue [s] the sorts of knowledge and critical reflexivities academics within marginal spaces can bring to the table' (2019: 198). The underrepresentation of BAME academics in universities in the Global North is a systemic issue that has been widely documented. It is a problem particularly pronounced at higher levels of the academic hierarchy, where the proportion of BAME academics dwindles further, thereby perpetuating the cycle of inequality. The problem with this historical and ongoing privileging of white, middle-class cultural standards and epistemologies, and conversely, of a devaluation of other standards and epistemologies, especially when these

valuation/devaluation and inclusion/exclusion processes are ingrained in the upper echelons of the university structures, is that there will be, as Hendricks puts it, a 'continued determination of what is knowledge and what is not, and therefore what the curricula will consist of, who will get master's and doctoral degrees, who will be recognised and promoted, and so forth' (2018: 24).

The initiatives aimed at decolonizing the university, which have spread globally, have highlighted the pressing need to address the structural inequalities within the higher education system, including a more equitable representation of BAME individuals at all levels of the academic hierarchy. Bhopal (2022) summarizes some of the challenges faced by BAME academics in elite universities in the UK and the USA: they may feel a lack of belonging and a sense of being an outsider, which can lead to feelings of isolation; they may also experience a lack of support and mentoring for their research in an environment where their contributions are often devalued or seen as self-serving; additionally, they may face the expectation of taking on more service work than their white colleagues and being expected to have a keen interest in Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) issues. As a result of these challenges, BAME academics may have to work harder to achieve the same level of success as their white colleagues, yet they may still be overlooked for promotion. This can be an ongoing source of frustration and result in feeling undervalued and not fully recognized for their contributions because, as Bhopal points out, they operate within a 'White normative framework' (2022: 2135).

There is a double burden placed on the BAME staff and students since there is an onus to assimilate, to blend in, to prove themselves strangers who can almost pass as natives of the 'White normative framework' (Bhopal 2022: 2134) for the convenience of the host and to elicit sustained hospitality. The consequences of having to operate in this framework, Doharty et al. contend, are that '[a]cademics of colour too often experience high levels of stress, anxiety, fatigue and discomfort' (2021: 235). Hendricks flags that students of colour who can gain access to predominantly white educational environments are still often subject to marginalization and are viewed as inferior within these spaces (2018: 31). And so, for these students, having the opportunity to enter these spaces could even mean feeling that they need to constantly navigate and negotiate their identity to fit in; or, as Hendricks phrases it, 'the negation of the self is what has to transpire in order to succeed' (Hendricks, 2018: 31). Put differently, the largely unwanted guest-strangers must assimilate to the extent that they compromise or lose self-hood to become practically indistinguishable from the residents.

Ultimately, there is a triple burden on BAME staff. Besides being relegated to outsiders and having to learn to codeswitch to be tolerated – like migrant workers who, in exchange for hospitality, take on the most undesirable jobs with which the host country citizens do not want to burden themselves (Rosello, 2001) – the work of decolonizing the curriculum all too often falls disproportionately on BAME staff and scholars. In particular, as Arday et al. observe, BAME women 'have historically and unfairly carried this burden often without acknowledgement, professional progression or remuneration' (2021: 312). *The guests are being turned into unpaid servants.* BAME staff, who have historically been marginalized, are now playing an active role in diversifying and decolonizing the curriculum by taking ownership of the canon (Arday et al., 2021: 299). Doharty et al.

describe BAME scholars as 'working themselves into the ground by sitting on and contributing to a disproportionate number of Equality and Diversity committees, BAME student support initiatives, Race Equality Staff networks, and Race Equality launches' (2021: 243). It seems BAME staff have ended up complicit in supporting the neoliberal management agenda of box-ticking promulgated by the invisible but everyday whiteness of the space and structure. *The guests are shouldering the brunt of the work to change the unjust structures and racist systems which have oppressed and disadvantaged them. As Diversi and Finley put it, how can BAME staff avoid becoming 'poverty pimps in the academy'?* (2010: 15).

Ironically, these not-much-welcomed (even if much-needed) guests, BAME staff and students, are being used as evidence that institutional whiteness is a thing of the past. Ahmed argues:

Our talk about racism is read as a form of stubbornness, paranoia, or even melancholia, as if we are holding onto something (whiteness) that our arrival shows has already gone. Our talk about whiteness is read as a sign of ingratitude, of failing to be grateful for the hospitality we have received by virtue of our arrival. It is this very structural position of being the guest, or the stranger, the one who receives hospitality, which keeps us in certain places, even when you move up. (2007: 164)

She warns that when appointments and promotions are regarded as signs of commitment to equality and diversity, there is trouble because it will be taken as a happy sign that racism has been overcome. Her research on diversity has led her to encounter 'a desire to hear "happy stories of diversity" rather than unhappy stories of racism' (2007: 164). Ahmed notes:

When diversity becomes a form of hospitality, perhaps the organization is the host who receives as guests those who embody diversity. Whiteness is produced as host, as that which is already in place or at home. To be welcomed is to be positioned as the one who is not at home. Conditional hospitality is when you are welcomed on condition that you give something back in return. (2012: 43)

To be given conditional hospitality means that not only do less-than-welcomed guests have to try to assimilate to make themselves more acceptable, but they are also required to perform emotional labour² by appearing contented so as not to upset the host rather than bringing up the problems they encounter, often problems created by the host. The presence of these guest-strangers, necessary and even mandated for equality/equity, inclusivity, and diversity checklists, is circumscribed and begrudged – a demonstration that they are being granted conditional hospitality only.

Hostile rules for guests: Metrics and 'world-class' research

Funding in academia is increasingly a stress point, and many universities feel pressured to justify their maintenance (and even existence), which they do by

attempting to measure and quantify achievements and successes. Such measuring and quantifying can become an end unto itself for universities striving to be 'world-class.' In this respect, Mbembe (2016) points out the mania for assessment and a focus on numbers, which he calls obsessive, and which permeates every facet of the university's functioning:

Methods of evaluation of faculty include the compilation of extensive files demonstrating, preferably in statistical terms, his or her productivity – numbers of publications, number of conference papers presented, numbers of committees served on, numbers of courses taught, numbers of students processed in those courses, numbers of advisees, quantitative measures of teaching excellence etc., student evaluations of teaching measured by a series of scaled questions concerning various facets of teaching, an overall set of numerical scores, which serve as a summary statistical measure of the faculty member's alleged teaching ability, with excellence in teaching reduced to statistical accountancy. (2016: 31)

The effect of such endless and obsessive assessing, Mbembe warns, is to turn students into customers and consumers, less interested in studying for the pursuit of knowledge and more focused on the material payoff of their degrees: 'the student becomes the consumer of vendible educational commodities, primarily courses credits, certifications and degrees' (2016: 31).

Universities are required to adhere to a set of established standards and evaluation criteria that are systemically embedded – such as, in the UK, the Research Excellence Framework (REF) and the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), which ensure that institutions are meeting specific benchmarks. Besides, universities are expected to be competitive on a global scale. They cannot afford to be oblivious to power relations that exist within the global higher education system or stand apart from the Global University Rankings (GURs), which are also imperialistic in setting out criteria of what it means to be a 'world-class' higher education institution, regardless of the diverse needs and values of different institutions. Mbembe (2016) points out that these criteria originated in Anglo-American academia but are now adopted in many parts of the world, especially Asia, which is trying to emulate the Global North 'world-class' model in restructuring their higher education systems.

Yet, as Shahjahan and Edwards note, those criteria are underpinned by narrow notions of excellence derived from particular and white geographies, privileging 'predominantly White metropolitan centers of knowledge' (2022: 758). Cruz and Luke (2020) review how globally, social sciences – and, we may add, other areas of knowledge – are concentrated in the hands of a very few countries in the Global North, 'with the rest of the world rendered dependent upon them in terms of ranked publications, journal subscriptions, academic conferences, and so forth'; this socio-historical dependence amounts to academic colonialism, as well as creating exclusions and inclusions (2020: 162), rendering the universities in the Global South 'in a dependent position vis-à-vis the universities of the GN [Global North]' (2020: 158). These studies point to the importance for universities to engage with these assessment criteria and rankings, but also to the fact that they must strive to develop unique missions that align with their local contexts.

The narrow, accepted criteria for excellence extend to how research is ranked. A publishing game of 'high impact' and 'internationally recognized' output is often career-determining (Gahman and Thongs, 2020). However, this publishing game hobbles scholars of the Global South, who are:

systemically compromised by, inter alia, a lack of access to or distanced proximity from: billion-dollar funding pools, networking opportunities, flagship conference-goings, professional connections, seminar invitations, and informal paper-reviews with colleagues who are editors or on editorial boards of the discipline's most 'prestigious' journals [...] that are predominantly managed by corporations and scholars in the Global North. (Gahman and Thongs, 2020: 766)

The global publishing industry has been known to place scholars from the Global South at a disadvantage due to several systemic factors. The effects of these disparities are far-reaching and profound. First, scholars from the Global South may face significant challenges in obtaining funding for their research and building the professional networks necessary to advance their careers; this lack of resources can impede their ability to conduct research and disseminate their findings to a broader audience. In addition, the lack of access to flagship conferences can limit the visibility and impact of the work of these scholars, making it even more difficult for them to gain recognition within their fields. Furthermore, the fact that these disparities are perpetuated by corporations and scholars in the Global North raises questions about the extent to which the global publishing industry is (or can ever be) genuinely equitable and inclusive, and about the ways in which power and privilege are distributed within academia.

Gahman and Thongs indict the Global North for its 'illegitimate' and 'unearned' command over and 'gluttonous space-taking up' of knowledge production, which disadvantages the Global South scholars (2020: 766). In fact, as Moosavi notes, 'Southern scholars are often forgotten, unknown or may not adhere to Northern disciplinary boundaries' (2020: 342). In this pressure-cooker environment, international and BAME academics who have to come onto academic spaces and grounds (Global North grants and journals and impact rankings) are again posited as strangers at the gates, '*already recognised as not belonging*, as being out of place' (Ahmed, 2000: 21–22, emphasis in the original). The need for the host's acknowledgement and acceptance of the guest-stranger is deeply ingrained in a 'discourse of survival' (Ahmed, 2000: 22). In an environment where the hosts feel squeezed by tight scrutiny and the need to exact 'world-class' and 'excellence' standards, themselves forced to play the ratings and rankings game in survival mode, hospitality is likely less generous and forthcoming, and more conditional.

Extractivism under the guise of hospitality

In many Global North universities, 'collaboration' has become a buzzword in research projects, particularly in promoting partnerships with the Global South. For example, the Global Challenges Research Fund explicitly states that proposed projects must, among other aims, promote international collaboration between researchers in the UK and those

in key partner countries, and must build research capacity in developing countries. These are praiseworthy aims, but achieving true partnership and equality between Global North and Global South scholars remains a critical challenge (Connell, 2007; Mignolo, 2009). To succeed in decolonizing means centring the voices and experiences of marginalized communities in the curriculum, as highlighted by hooks (1994) and Freire (1970). The resources, networks, and systems established within the Global North university continue to hold significant power and influence in shaping the discourse and determining what is considered valuable knowledge. It does not seem possible yet for the Global South, and particularly for knowledge partners from Indigenous communities, to come to the table where academic knowledge is shared and disseminated as equals with Global North academics, as that table is still firmly situated on Global North grounds and terms, in Western-centric spaces and systems.

It is dangerous to detach knowledge from geo-historical-political relations because that would serve 'a neo-colonial process of academic extractivism' (Cruz and Luke, 2020: 154).³ Moreover, not only are there issues around how knowledge is used and to whose benefit, but the very production of that knowledge is also problematic given its links to imperialism and epistemic coloniality. As Tuhiwai Smith (2021) argues regarding Indigenous knowledges, the production of knowledge is conducted within an ideological framework that reinforces colonial power structures, relying on the use of Western research methods and epistemologies ill-suited to understanding the diverse ways of knowing and being in the world: 'it is surely difficult to discuss *research methodology* and *Indigenous peoples* together, in the same breath, without having an analysis of imperialism, without understanding the complex ways in which the pursuit of knowledge is deeply embedded in the multiple layers of imperial and colonial practices' (2021: 2, emphasis in the original).

Sharing power and extending unconditional hospitality to Other knowledge systems is essential to decolonize universities. As Tuhiwai Smith (2021) discusses, this means recognizing the authority of Indigenous knowledge systems and valuing them as legitimate forms of knowledge. Yet, a framework of Western epistemologies, characterized by a set of assumptions and values that center the perspectives and experiences of the colonizer while marginalizing or erasing those of the colonized, continues to be dominant within the academy. Even in best-case scenarios, where the Global North partner takes great pains to ensure that the native informant⁴ is a co-author, to render the ownership plural and give credit for the research output, or to acknowledge the debt to the informant, as in ethnographical research, yet still 'the narrative of overcoming the relations of authorisation in traditional ethnography constitutes another form of authorisation' (Ahmed, 2000: 64). Ahmed posits the native informant as the stranger, to whom the anthropological debt is owed because 'it knows only through them, and through the transformation of their being into knowledge' (2000: 63) – anthropology can only produce knowledge through them and by translating their lived experiences into knowledge. However, it is essential to emphasize that the colonizing practice of transferring knowledge from the margins to the centers is still normalized (Clement, 2019: 287). Instead of being invited to take a place at the academy's table, the Global South, particularly the Indigenous communities, are still regarded as beggars waiting for

leftovers from the feast. The onus must surely be on the host – the Western academy – to extend a more genuine, inclusive, equitable invitation to its Other knowledge counterparts.

While decolonization is an urgent and necessary process, it is complex and challenging. It can be a fraught response because the same discourses of ‘plurality,’ ‘multiculturalism,’ ‘hybridity,’ ‘diversity,’ and ‘inclusion’ – often used to promote decolonization – may themselves perpetuate epistemic coloniality and reinforce subalternization. According to Cusicanqui, these discourses may be ‘essentialist and historicist interpretations of the indigenous question’ (2012: 101). For deep-reaching and sustainable decolonizing, merely increasing ‘diversity’ and ‘plurality’ of representations and voices is insufficient – even epistemically violent – and not conducive to genuine, unconditional hospitality. As Ahmed writes,

The multicultural nation functions this way: the nation offers hospitality and even love to would-be citizens as long as they return this hospitality by integrating, or by identifying with the nation [...]. People of color in white organizations are treated as guests, temporary residents in someone else’s home. People of color are welcomed *on condition* they return that hospitality by integrating into a common organizational culture, or by “being” diverse, and allowing institutions to celebrate their diversity. (2012: 43).

As hinted by Ahmed, the project-practice of decolonization is at risk of being co-opted by Global North institutions that seek to appropriate and adapt it to their own needs. Tuck and Yang warn that the ‘easy absorption, adoption, and transposing of decolonization is yet another form of settler appropriation’ (2012: 3), and can perpetuate the very unequal structures of power that decolonization seeks to dismantle. To truly achieve decolonization, the process must be led and defined by those marginalized by coloniality. As Esson et al. note in their call for decolonizing the discipline of Geography, debates about decolonization must be ‘determined by those on the margins’ (2017: 385), those who have been racialized as non-white by coloniality. This means that the traditional host-guest relationship, where the hosts define the terms of engagement, must be upended. Instead, the guests must lead in defining their relationship with the host society and its institutions. Moreover, critically examining and reimagining the discourses of ‘plurality,’ ‘multiculturalism,’ ‘hybridity,’ ‘diversity,’ and ‘inclusion’ must be ongoing in decolonizing project-practices.

Using hospitality theory and decolonization of the curriculum to set higher education inequalities to right

Worlding is therefore not something we do, as though graciously inviting the world in to dine at our table. This would circumscribe the radical thrust of worlding by adding a little more diversity to our dinner party while leaving the house intact. Worlding is rather better understood as opening up to the world’s alterity and its inherent potential to reveal itself to us.

[...] [This process] might entail that our house is not left standing after the world has passed through. (Muller, 2021: 1455)

Decolonizing the curriculum theory, grounded-theory or practice-led research, and collective action movements have worked hard to ensure that decolonizing is seen neither as merely anti-racism work, nor as an attempt at greater 'diversity' in educational settings but as a vital epistemological issue. As Mbembe (2015) highlights, decolonization is not about reversing power relations but about overturning universalism by creating new forms of knowledge grounded in the local context that challenge the universal claims of Western knowledge. As Said (1978) argued, Western knowledge production has often relied on Orientalist discourses that exoticize, essentialize, and romanticize the non-Western Other. As such, precautions need to be taken when incorporating non-Western knowledges into Western universities to avoid mishearing, misrepresenting, exploiting, and decontextualizing them (Spiegel et al., 2017).

Therefore, welcoming non-Western knowledges into a decolonized curriculum at Global North universities must be achieved in a way that respects their original context and acknowledges their complexities, as highlighted by Chakrabarty (2000) and Spivak (1988). The questions arise: What kind of hospitality can Global North universities offer towards new forms of knowledge? How can Global North universities share power and extend hospitality as part of a genuinely inclusive and non-imperialistic decolonization? What kind of hospitality can be expected towards international and BAME academics? The answers must not be tokenistic, as that approach would be a disservice to all. The too-easy glorification of scholars or scholarship from the Global South, regardless of merit or quality, would only amount to what Moosavi describes as "nativist decolonisation", which may exaggerate or unwarrantedly flatter that from the Global South even when expected standards are not yet met' (2020: 342). Diversity for the sake of diversity would also be singularly unhelpful, as 'the exhibition of diversity is another form of exclusion' (Icaza and Vazquez, 2018: 120).

Many higher education institutions striving to decolonize the curriculum regard students as co-creators. Similarly, stranger-guests should be seen as knowledge co-creators to be engaged in meaningful dialogue with the hosts. Encounters should involve surprise, as Ahmed writes, and the Global North institution should not seek to interact with stranger-guests in ways where the outcomes are already prescribed: 'the encounter is premised on the absence of a knowledge that would allow one to control the encounter, or predict its outcome' (2000: 8). That absence of pre-knowledge and abstinence from overall control requires both courage and humility from the host, a new openness to engaging in a relation of co-creation that 'provide [s] a conduit for transforming one's epistemological foundation' (Lipscombe et al., 2021: 7). Without this humility and desire to not only teach but to learn, to not only grant inclusion but to be meaningfully inclusive, there cannot be productive encounters where Global North universities are able to decolonize minds and universities, and subsequently research and curricula.

Decolonizing knowledges is about 'exposing the ontological violence authorized by Eurocentric epistemologies both in scholarship and everyday life' (Sundberg, 2014: 34), revealing the colonality of higher education spaces, and then dismantling, replacing, and restructuring them for a more socially just education. Dennis proposes as a pedagogical

approach to decolonizing education the creation of a safe space in higher education institutions where individuals can freely and openly discuss decolonization without fear of discrimination; such a space may require a departure from traditional settings that are readily available, possibly 'necessitating the deliberate cultivation of an undercommons, or an otherwise space' (2018: 202). Harney and Moten (2013) advance the more radical notion of an undercommons, a space that operates outside of the conventional structures of academia and is not subject to the same hierarchies and power dynamics, as a possible way out of the 'entrepreneurial university' and as a refusal to recognize the authority of the host (the West, the neoliberal university, whiteness). This strategy entails regarding the university as a resource to be taken: 'one can only sneak into the university and steal what one can. To abuse its hospitality, to spite its mission, to join its refugee colony, its gypsy encampment, *to be in but not of*' (2013: 26). For Harney and Moten, only if 'we' steal from the university is it possible to create and cultivate an *otherwise space*, what they describe as the underground of the university, '*the undercommons of enlightenment*,' a place of dissension where 'fugitivity' (the opposite of neoliberal professionalization) is produced (2013: 26). These fugitive spaces are designed to be in constant flux, ever constructed and deconstructed, to the extent of being perhaps better envisaged as portals and, therefore, quite the opposite of colonizing spaces; this has to be the state of play in these fugitive spaces, where there will be no hosts. All who occupy the space of the university are guests in the undercommons, enabling a fully-fledged decolonizing of universities.

Conclusion

Decolonization is a complex and multifaceted process, as it involves recognizing and undoing the colonial structures that still exist in knowledge production, dissemination, and acquisition (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018). This article approached the issue of epistemic coloniality in the Global North university by connecting postcolonial hospitality theory with the project-practice of decolonizing the curriculum. This approach argues for the need to foster genuine hospitality between Global North and Global South higher educational institutions, extend unconditional hospitality towards BAME academics and students, and challenge and dismantle ongoing epistemic coloniality. This aim involves probing whiteness and 'diversity-talk' in academia through the lens of hospitality theory: observing whites as occupying the structural position of hosts, granting hospitality, letting the BAME guest-strangers in, sometimes to tick boxes in diversity checklists. In this postcolonial hospitality framework, which we argue is a generative framework for analyzing the relational and epistemic inequalities of global academia, we may need to rethink the traditional paradigm of the Global North as a *generous* host to the Global South, *accommodating* Other knowledges, because this will forever position the latter as a stranger, supplicant, and ultimately, a beggar at the door. As Ahmed observes, this paradigm assumes that welcoming the stranger means accepting the unassimilable, but it fails to acknowledge 'how that very act of welcoming already assimilates others into an economy of difference' (2000: 150–151).

Is the Other necessarily oppositional to the self or part of its overall constitution? This article suggests that the hospitable answer to the stranger lies in *openness to making the*

self a stranger, relinquishing privilege, and standing on the margins rather than in the center. In unconditional hospitality, it has been suggested that the host and guest switch places. For the time being however, the Global North Universities regard their Global South guests (both people and epistemologies) as (somewhat begrudged) strangers and supplicants in their own knowledge category rather than assimilated into mainstream, authorised knowledge. This seems to indicate that Global North universities still have not fully come to the realization that decolonising is not just in the interests of the Global South, but in the interests of the Global North hosts themselves. By adopting this shift in paradigm and perspective, Global North higher education institutions can promote genuine hospitality to the Global South, create a more equitable and inclusive learning environment, and genuinely contribute to the project-practice of decolonization.

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Notes

1. Yet, it is not just Global North universities that are found to be sites of systemic racism and reluctant to address epistemic inequities but also those that seemingly aspire to emulate them. In this respect, Hendricks writes of African universities as 'rigged spaces' because of their 'foundational alignment to the norms, values, cultures and epistemologies of the West' (2018: 17).
2. The idea of emotional labour, first defined by Arlie Russell Hochschild in 1983 as a means of regulating or managing emotional expressions with others as part of one's professional work role, is typically expected of those lower on the social hierarchy and seemingly part of an unwritten contract, but largely non-optional as their continued guest status is often contingent on the continuation of the performance of this emotional labour.
3. Cruz and Luke (2020) clarify that extractivism is when the Global North harvests data from the Global South that is used to the disproportionate benefit of the Global North, often in a knowledge production meta-frame of zero-point epistemology.
4. Spivak borrows the expression 'native informant' from anthropology: 'In that discipline, the native informant, although denied autobiography as it is understood in the Northwestern European tradition (codename "West"), is taken with utmost seriousness. He (and occasionally she) is a blank, though generative of a text of cultural identity that only the West (or a Western-model discipline) could inscribe' (1999: 6, emphasis in the original).

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