Kira Kosnick

Decolonizing Migration Studies? Thinking about Migration Studies from the Margins

Abstract

Against the background of calls to ›decolonize knowledge‹ in migration studies as in different academic fields, this article addresses the conditions under which knowledge on migration is produced at German universities. Noting that refugee scholars and those with migration backgrounds from outside Western Europe or North America face specific difficulties in pursuing academic careers, a ›coloniality of migration‹ framework is employed to examine how different groups are differentially integrated into the German academic system. Suggesting a self-reflexive focus on the conditions for academic research at higher education institutions, it is argued that the conditions under which a heterogeneous ›we‹ performs the work of migration studies are differentially implicated in the governmental curtailment and management of migration and (post)migrant subjects, and in global unequal forms of hegemonic knowledge production.

Keywords

Refugee scholars, coloniality of migration, academic career paths, global economies of knowledge, racism in universities, academic capital

Migrationsforschung dekolonialisieren? Überlegungen zur Migrationsforschung und ihren Rändern

Vor dem Hintergrund von Forderungen nach einer ›Dekolonisierung des Wissens‹ in der Migrationsforschung, aber auch in anderen wissenschaftlichen Feldern thematisiert dieser Beitrag die Bedingungen, unter denen Wissensproduktion zu Migration an deutschen Universitäten stattfindet. Ange-

Kira Kosnick, PhD., Professorin für Vergleichende Kultur- und Sozialanthropologie, Kulturwissenschaftliche Fakultät, Europa-Universität Viadrina, Frankfurt (Oder)

sichts der besonderen Schwierigkeiten, mit denen geflüchtete Wissenschaft-ler*innen, aber auch jene mit Migrationshintergründen aus Ländern jenseits von Westeuropa oder Nordamerika auf ihrem akademischen Karriereweg konfrontiert sind, wird der ›coloniality of migration‹-Ansatz genutzt, um die differenzielle Integration verschiedener Gruppen in das deutsche Wissen-schaftssystem zu untersuchen. Im Zuge einer selbstreflexiven Thematisie-rung der Produktionsbedingungen von Forschung an Hochschulen wird argumentiert, dass die Bedingungen, unter denen ein heterogenes ›Wir‹ die Arbeit der Migrationsforschung betreibt, mit der gouvernementalen Regulie-rung von Migration und (post)migrantischen Subjekten verknüpft sind sowie mit global ungleichen Formen hegemonialer Wissensproduktion.

Schlagwörter

Geflüchtete Wissenschaftler*innen, Kolonialität der Migration, akademische Karrierewege, globale Wissensökonomien, Rassismus an Universitäten, aka-demisches Kapital

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Introduction

In these times of the Covid 19-induced crisis of planetary solidarity, with much cross-border migration suspended and both healthcare and other means of survival being unequally distributed between (as well as within) populations of the Global North and South, it seems necessary to mobilize and strengthen the potential of migration studies in their critique of both humanitarian and governmental regulatory frameworks.[1] Germany-based scholars of migration and borders have contributed significantly to the cri-tique of governmentalities, and have attempted to be attentive to the plight and agency of migrants and racialized subjects in their analysis of national and European border regimes.[2] Expanding critical approaches, post- and decolonial perspectives and calls for a ›provincializing‹ of Europe have re-cently gained ground, in order to account for ›global entanglements‹ that are produced through the continuing legacy of colonial, unequal interdependen-cies (Adam et al. 2019; Chakrabarti 2008; Conrad and Randeria 2002).

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2 A comprehensive list would be too long to mention, but see for example Forschungs-gruppe Transit Migration 2007; Hess and Kasparek 2010.

As necessary and productive many of these interventions are, what I find notable across a range of different critical approaches is that despite the strong focus on critiques of hegemonic knowledge production or power/knowledge nexuses, the conditions under which ›we‹ ourselves are engaged in academic knowledge production in German universities are rarely addressed. While this was put on the agenda of critical migration research in German contexts some years ago (Redaktion *movements* 2015), actual attempts to address them are still relatively few and far between when it comes to a self-reflexive focus on academic research and higher education institutions (but see the special issue of *movements* vol. 4 (1); Hatton 2018; Pagano et al. 2018; Fiedler et al. 2017; Hoppe et al. 2018). In the context of a new journal being launched that will serve as a Germany-based platform for scholarship in both German and English, I thus take the occasion of being invited to write a text on migration studies and politics as an opportunity to reflect upon the conditions that shape and limit the doing of critical migration research in the context of German academia in the early 21st century. I proceed from the assumption that the conditions under which research is and can be carried out have an impact on the production of knowledge on migration, diversity and border regimes, and on who can contribute to it.

It is noteworthy that as social scientists concerned with the study of social and cultural phenomena, we spend little time thinking about the conditions of academic production and the institutional landscape within which we carry out our work. As scholars employed in German higher education, we tend to be aware of such conditions of our academic labor, but often relate to them merely as obstacles to be overcome – getting funding, attaining job security, finding time for research etc. In the daily grind of academic productivity as it has been institutionalized at German universities, the structural and institutional conditions of knowledge production are rarely reflected upon with regard to their impact on how and what we think, research and publish. Yet, the ›we‹ that is engaged in this kind of work is conditioned in particular ways, shaped by the curious mix of feudal elements (Van Dyk and Reitz 2017), civil service privilege for the few, and neoliberal forms of academic productivity that characterize German institutions of higher education today. It is those scholars who have the most trouble accessing the academy and finding a permanent place in it who are most likely to critically examine the rules, and to connect them to questions of access and content. In this sense, there is no collective ›we‹: Hierarchies of gender, class and race configure different social positions within the academy and influence who will enter and exit, flourish or founder.

I have been made aware of the unequal constitution of this ›we‹ quite regularly since I started teaching as a white, German-citizen, tenured profes-

sor in the German academy who was able to draw on her cultural capital of having studied and worked in both the USA and Great Britain upon her return. However, I began thinking about it more systematically through my collaboration with refugee scholars, in particular the Academics for Peace Germany network and my colleague and Philipp-Schwartz-Initiative (PSI) fellow Latife Akyüz, who worked at Goethe University Frankfurt for three years. The Academics for Peace network consists mainly of scholars from Turkey who signed a peace petition in 2016 to protest against state violence and were subsequently dismissed from their universities and prosecuted under alleged terrorism offences in Turkish courts (Tutkal 2020). Many of them had to flee Turkey, with Germany being one of the main destinations of exile, where the PSI has offered temporary fellowships for threatened scholars among others to facilitate integration into the German higher education landscape. Their insights and critique regarding German academic institutions have prompted me to reflect more systematically upon the conditions for academic labor in Germany, its institutional anchoring and the questions of who can engage in it and how.

1 Refugee Scholars and the Devaluation of Academic Capital

While it is the expressed aim of the PSI to integrate threatened scholars into the German academic job market[3], many of the fellowship holders and threatened immigrant scholars I have met have expressed strong reservations regarding their short-term reception and long-term prospects in the German higher education sector. Several spoke of having confronted an unwillingness to learn from both their academic expertise and experiences (Sertdemir Özdemir 2019). Refugee and threatened migrant scholars also had and have to confront the structures of the German academic system in which only full professors escape the uncertainties of having temporary contracts – a fact that in the German context is rationalized as keeping the lines of qualification for junior scholars on their way to becoming full professors ›open‹, despite the fact that there is an increasing mismatch of numbers between formally qualified candidates and professorial positions (Statistisches Bundesamt 2019). Conversely, the German system tends to define every academic staff member who does not hold a permanent professorial post as a ›junior scholar‹ – and thus both infantilizes and misrecognizes a group of academic staff out of which only a rather small minority has a chance of reaching such a perma-

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3 https://www.humboldt-foundation.de/web/philipp-schwartz-initiative.html#s0. Accessed: 13.7.2020.

nent post, given the lack of professorial positions (Ohm 2016). The average age of candidates obtaining tenured professorships in the German social sciences is currently between 41 and 42 years (Statistisches Bundesamt 2019). Regardless of their age and prior tenured positions at universities abroad, those holding positions such as PSI fellowships are structurally inserted into the German ›Mittelbau‹, the category of non-professorial staff usually deemed to be ›junior‹. Giving the relative lack of tenured jobs, few can win the competition with other non-tenured academics for postdoctoral and professorial positions. While it is the explicit aim of initiatives such as the PSI to achieve the integration of threatened scholars into German academia, the long-term odds are clearly stacked against them, as they also face a devaluation of their academic and cultural capital.

This devaluation is connected to several factors: to the global epistemic hierarchies that dominate academic knowledge production, to the both feudal and neoliberal elements of a hierarchical academic national landscape, but also to the racism that manifests itself in daily interactions even within German universities that have made explicit pledges to ›diversity‹. In order to make sense of these factors in connection with the specific forms of integration or non-integration of refugee scholars, but also of others who represent ›ethnic diversity‹ in the academy, I draw on a theoretical framework that introduces a particular decolonial perspective into migration studies, and apply it to an examination of devaluation, and of the ›we‹ that does the doing of migration research and teaching in German higher education. I will try to combine this perspective with political economy analyses of higher education that help to illuminate the contemporary neoliberal environment for academic labor and understandings of academic excellence.

2 Theoretical Framing – the Coloniality of Migration

In an article published in 2014 in the journal *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, Ramon Grosfoguel, Laura Oso and Anastasia Christou have attempted to frame their theoretical reflections on racism, intersectionality and migration studies by applying Quijano's (2007) coloniality of power perspective to migration studies (Grosfoguel et al. 2014). Migrants who move to metropolitan locations, they argue, arrive in spaces already constituted by coloniality:

> »Migrants do not arrive in an empty or neutral space, but in metropolitan spaces that are already ›polluted‹ by racial power relations with a long colonial history, colonial imaginary, colonial knowledge, and racial/ethnic hierarchies linking to a history of empire« (Grosfoguel et al. 2014, p. 7).

Claiming that there is no neutral space of migrant incorporation, they draw on Grosfoguel's (2003) earlier work to distinguish between three types of (post)migrants who face very different conditions of incorporation. The first type are colonial/racial subjects of empire who do not newly arrive, but are »inside the empire as the result of a long colonial history« as domestic minorities (Grosfoguel et al. 2014, p. 8). Employing Frantz Fanon's concept of zones of being and non-being, Grosfoguel, Oso and Christou argue that colonial/racial subjects of empire often exist »in the ›zone of non-being‹ at the bottom of the urban racial/ethnic hierarchies« even if having formal citizenship rights (Grosfoguel et al. 2014, p. 8). By contrast, ›immigrants‹ constitute a second type of migrant, namely those who upon arrival from elsewhere »are racialized as ›white‹ in the metropolitan ›zones of being‹ and who experience upward social mobility in the first or second generation« (Grosfoguel et al. 2014, p. 8). Finally, ›colonial immigrants‹ are migrants from peripheral locations who find themselves racialized »in similar ways to the ›colonial/racial subjects of empire‹ who were already there«, thus sharing zones of non-being in metropolitan centers (Grosfoguel et al. 2014, p. 8).

This typology can of course be criticized as imprecise as it sits uneasily with specific forms of post-war migration to both East and West Germany, with colonial history in Central Europe, with racist anti-semitic persecution under National Socialism and racialization in the second half of the 20th century. Racialization has taken different historical and geopolitical forms (Omi and Winant 2014; Hall 1992), and has affected both non-migrants and migrants from different locations and their descendants in German-speaking countries in different ways. Interdisciplinary scholarship has drawn attention to both the role and relevance of Central Europe and Prussia in the early modern Atlantic World and to German colonial continuities (Adam et al. 2019; Eggers et al. 2005; Wimmler and Weber 2020). Kien Nghi Ha (2003) has drawn attention to the ›internal colonialism‹ and exploitation of labor power directed by Prussian governments at Polish seasonal laborers, thus already linking exlusionary citizenship and migration policies with labor market needs and the production of a racialized underclass of migrant subjects (see also Herbert 2001). Recognition of the continued importance of European colonialism for German-speaking countries, however, does not render Grosfoguel et al.'s typology a precise fit.

What it allows me to do, for the purposes of this article, is to focus simultaneously and comparatively on three different groups of academic workers that tend to be either partially lumped together, not connected at all, or invisibilized in studies that examine the nexus of German academia, migration and/or racism. In order to do so, I will draw tentative parallels between colonial/racial subjects of empire and those subjects with a family migration his-

tory that places them into racialized ethnic minorities who are disadvantaged in the German educational system, even if counting as educational ›natives‹. Similarly, the category of ›immigrant‹ can provisionally refer to those migrant academics coming with the kind of academic capital that is perceived as valuable in the German context, often tied to degrees from North American or Western and Northern European countries. Finally, the ›colonial migrant‹ academic workers are those arriving from peripheral locations that are seen as marginal to transnational academic knowledge production, which is the case for many refugee scholars. While the latter two groups surface in statistics and debates tied to the internationalization of German universities, the former group tends to find mentioning in relation to educational inequalities and their reproduction in the German educational system as a whole.

3 The Pitfalls of Internationalization

Internationalization has become a key term in higher education policy and management strategies of German universities.[4] In the increased competition between countries as well as universities, the term is linked to the visibility and thus prestige of the institution and its scientists, to knowledge exchange but also the ability to attract ›the best minds‹ from abroad. Yet, internationalization does not mean that all foreign ›sending‹ contexts are equal, that all kinds of international visibility for scholarly work is equally valued, or that all those who claim and/or are racially ascribed migration backgrounds can all benefit from the trend. In fact, while internationalization has turned from a buzzword to a programmatic and performative declaration and recipe that directly informs professorial hiring decisions, ›excellence initiatives‹ and performance evaluations at German universities, ›migrants‹ as so broadly defined by Grosfoguel et al. above are still not strongly represented in professorial positions in German migration studies, nor in other social science fields. Let me be clear that by mixing here the debates on internationalization and ethnic diversity at German universities, I do not want to argue that they are the same. Rather, in an academic system that with regard to diversity tends not to differentiate between ›imported‹ diversity and the inclusion of racialized groups of educational natives, it is important to trace the visibilities and invisibilities that are produced in these debates. Internationalization in academic contexts is of course generally not discussed as a matter of social justice and equal representation, but rather as an indicator of competitiveness: Being able to recruit researchers from abroad is presented as a proven ability to attract ›the best brains‹ in the international competition for science

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4 https://www.bmbf.de/de/internationalisierung-der-hochschulen-924.html. Accessed: 19.7.2020.

talent (Gemeinsame Wissenschaftskonferenz 2013). ›The best brains‹ have usually shown their potential elsewhere, though, while racialized students with migration experience or backgrounds in the German school system leading up to higher education tend to be disadvantaged compared to those without. The latter, diverse with regard to citizenship status, disappear as a distinct group when internationalization is measured in terms of citizenship. Studies that examine only the citizenship status of academic workers at German universities render invisible the differences between educational natives and educational foreigners within the category of academics holding foreign passports.

Grosfoguel, Oso and Christou's widening of the migrant classification allows to identify those who are formally incorporated as racialized domestic minorities, those who might or might not partake formally in the legal rights associated with citizenship but count as educational natives who are negatively affected by the structural, institutional and everyday forms of racism in metropolitan locations. This allows to productively bring into conversation the demands for internationalization with the realities of German universities and academic fields as predominantly white, non-migrant spaces.

4 Migrant Career Paths in German Higher Education

For the purpose of linking Grosfoguel et al.'s typology to studies of migrant professional incorporation into German higher education, it can be assumed that ›colonial/racial‹ subjects or domestic minorities are partially represented in the prevalent category of ›people with migration background‹, which is defined by the Federal Statistical Office (FSO) as a) having migrated to the Federal Republic after 1949, b) having been born there as a foreign citizen, c) having at least one parent having migrated or d) born with foreign citizenship (Will 2019). While the discursive ascription of a migration background is a widespread form of ethnic racialization in Germany, the statistical use of this category does not cover Black and People of Color (BPoC) subjects who are born into a family where both parents hold German citizenship (Elrick and Schwartzmann 2015). Nevertheless, studies that differentiate between migrant backgrounds as defined in or similar to FSO statistics among academic staff at German universities still yield interesting results. Several studies over the past years have examined how academics with different kinds of migration backgrounds and experiences fare in the German higher education sector (König and Rokitte 2012; Lind and Löther 2008; Neusel et al. 2014), with the main indicators and classificatory instruments being that of citizenship, place of birth, and place as well as level of educational qualification/degree.

The growth of foreign PhD students and staff in German universities is mainly due to the influx of foreign citizens who have received their PhDs abroad, several studies state (König and Rokitte 2012; Lind and Löther 2008). Neusel et al. (2014) also found significant differences regarding ›types of mobility‹ when asking what type of higher education institution professors with migration backgrounds were affiliated with: those born in Germany, those who migrated with their parents as children but also those who came as PhD students were significantly more likely to work at a university of applied sciences, whereas those who came as postdoctoral researchers or were recruited from professorial positions abroad were overrepresented at ›regular‹ universities.[5] This highlights again the differences between educational natives and those who acquired their academic credentials abroad.

Gutiérrez Rodríguez (2018) has drawn attention to the consequences of unequal national migration and visa policies for the career opportunities, recruitment and retention of foreign scientists in Germany and the UK. Depending on their country of citizenship and personal financial resources, navigating an academic employment landscape that is characterized by the steep rise in temporary contracts is particularly perilous for those whose country of origin, related visa status and personal means do not afford them the safety of being able to weather periods of unemployment. Here, the term ›colonial migrants‹ can be fruitfully employed to refer to those migrant academics who carry the greatest risk of losing their residence permit in periods of being between jobs or unemployed, as visa regulations are particularly restrictive for the citizens of countries from the peripheries and semi-peripheries of the world system, whose marginal positions tend to be related to histories of colonialism.

The qualitative study undertaken by Pichler and Prontera (2012) tried to disaggregate the category of scientist with migration background with the aim of analyzing patterns of inclusion and exclusion through examining the differential distribution and valuation of cultural and social capital. Investigating the career paths and experiences of postdoctoral employees in the humanities (*Geisteswissenschaften*) at Berlin universities, they highlight the multiple difficulties faced by informants whose family backgrounds tie them to the so-called guestworker migration, and who had to make their way through the German school system. Those who did manage to beat the statistical odds experienced negative evaluations of their cultural capital, Pichler

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5 It is maybe not by accident that much of the critical research potential and work done by ›colonial/racial‹ scholars on racism and migration happens in the German context at universities of applied science (*Fachhochschulen*) that have different employment criteria, but also make it much harder for their staff to find time for research and publications given their extremely high teaching load.

and Prontera conclude, associating it with ›prejudices‹ and ›stereotypes‹ rather than naming them as racism (Pichler and Prontera 2012, p. 97). Importantly, some of the respondents working in other fields experienced an ethnicization and dismissal of their incorporated cultural capital that even academic degrees obtained in Germany could not override, while others were able to benefit from the positive valuation of their cultural capital obtained ›in two cultures‹ (Pichler and Prontera 2012, p. 96). Pichler and Prontera do not attempt to systematically compare between the specific migration backgrounds of their sample that could tie these differences to the global hierarchies of academic knowledge production. However, they do note more beneficial situations for respondents from Western European or Anglo-American contexts compared to those with migration histories from elsewhere.

The quantitative study of Löther (2012) similarly finds that scientists with migration backgrounds find themselves more often in temporary contract situations than those without. This difference is compounded by gender (binary), and related to status positions in the German university system: Women and those with migration backgrounds are underrepresented in the tenured professorial status group, with gender and migration background showing cumulative dis/advantages. The chances of getting a tenured professorial position are higher for those who had obtained their PhDs abroad, yet still lower if compared to scientists without migration backgrounds (Löther 2012, p. 48f.). Löther regrets that her data did not allow for an analysis that could differentiate between countries of origin, but concludes that professors from Western European countries were overrepresented, those from Eastern Europe underrepresented in tenured professorial positions (Löther 2012, p. 47). König and Rokitte echo this finding in their study and identify among their unanswered questions: »How is it that scientists from some countries have better chances than their colleagues from others?« (König and Rokitte 2012, p. 10). To this we might add: How is it that those with migration backgrounds who made their way through the German education system fare even worse? Both of these findings need to be explained with reference to wider inequalities, hierarchies and dynamics that shape German academic institutions and academic knowledge production on a global scale.

5 D/evaluations of Cultural Capital

It is a well-known fact that the highly differentiated four-tier[6] German school system tends to reproduce class positions across generations to a larger ex-

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6 The four-tier school system consists of special schools for the handicapped (their numbers lessening due to efforts to achieve more inclusive schooling of children with special needs),

tent than in many other OECD countries.[7] It particularly disadvantages children with migration backgrounds whose parents and often grandparents have already found themselves at the bottom of socio-economic hierarchies in the country in the context of labor migration.[8] Racism in the German school system and ›ethnic discrimination‹ is a much-debated topic, with evidence that the educational background of parents or language difficulties can only partially explain the lesser educational success of the latter (Broden and Mecheril 2010; Diehl and Flick 2016; Gomolla and Radtke 2009; Karakaşoğlu 2012; Karakayali and Zur Nieden 2013; Neumann and Schneider 2011). Once they do manage to arrive at German universities, students with migration backgrounds have higher drop-out rates, and their representation declines even further with each step upwards in the academic professional hierarchy, particularly in the professorial status group (Lind and Löther 2008).

Neither the statistical definition of migration background nor the concept of international scientist can adequately explain how German academic institutions value or devalue the cultural capital of different kinds of (post)migrant subjects. Neither can they account for an institutional racism that differentially affects two groups, those covered by the international scientist definition and those racialized BPoC students, researchers and faculty that are symbolically othered as having come from elsewhere despite not falling into migration background categories. Grosfoguel et al.'s categorization of migrant subjects can offer a helpful differentiation between scholars of different migration backgrounds and racialized statuses in the German higher education landscape, as it takes as its starting point the global inequalities between different countries and regions with which migrant subjects in the EU are affiliated, some of them ascriptively against their will and/or personal and professional history. It is only by examining reported figures and academic experiences against the background of colonial entanglements, racism and contemporary global inequalities that a clearer picture of the devaluation and valuation of academic cultural capitals begins to emerge.

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the Hauptschule, Realschule and Gymnasium, the latter constituting the main road for university entrance qualification in most of Germany's federal states. The Gesamtschule as an integrated school type has gained ground, but tends to have to compete with Gymnasium schools for the best students.

7 https://www.oecd.org/pisa/Equity-in-Education-country-note-Germany.pdf. Accessed: 16.11.2020.

8 https://www.oecd.org/berlin/publikationen/Catching-Up_Germany.pdf. Accessed: 16.11.2020.

6 Racism in German Higher Education

Beyond the realm of migration research, decolonial and feminist intersectional perspectives have been at the forefront of developing critiques of racism and diversity politics in German higher education institutions (Thompson and Zablotsky 2016; Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2018; Kuria 2015; Laufenberg et al. 2018). They engage with the important questions of not only how research and teaching is done, but who does it – with the hierarchies and dynamics that structure the academic field in which the collective ›we‹ of academic researchers is unequally constituted. It is relatively recent that critiques of racism in higher education have become more visible in the German context, with BPoC student activism and more recently academic conferences, panels and academia attempting to raise awareness and debate (Kuria 2015; Thompson and Vorbrugg 2018). Debates and texts tend to draw on postcolonial and decolonial perspectives, on the work of Ahmed (2012) but also Puwar's (2004) concept of ›space invaders‹ to understand how Black and PoC bodies are made to feel as matter out of place when attempting to claim space – to study, to work, to lead – within university institutions. They also draw on local German BPoC critiques of racism as for example developed by Eggers et al. (2005), Dhawan and Castro Varela (2010), Kuria (2015) or Ha (2016) in Germany. Much of this work takes an intersectional approach to the critique of racism, linking it to hierarchies of gender, sexuality and class at German universities (Laufenberg et al. 2018; Gutiérrez Rodríguez et al. 2016).

In his critique of ›white parallel societies‹ and institutional racism at German universities, Ha (2016) notes that the internationalization strategies of the latter veil their structural problem of racism particularly with regard to racialized ›educational natives‹ socialized in the country. Other critics of institutional racism problematize a different kind of veiling through what they call with Ahmed (2012) the »non-performativity of anti-discrimination proclamations« in the context of diversity politics at German universities (Hoppe et al. 2018; Thompson and Vorbrugg 2018; Thompson and Zablotsky 2016), where a discursive commitment to diversity is seen to not only obfuscate the realities of institutional racism, but as in fact reproducing institutional whiteness. What goes unnoted despite or because of the non-performativity, Thompson and Zablotsky argue, are not only forms of racism in daily interactions as part of the cultural climate of the German university but also institutional access barriers, epistemic racisms in knowledge production that are coupled with continuities of colonial knowledges, and a disarticulation of local anti-racist and intersectional critiques through an almost exclusive focus on international figures when it comes to recognizing work on racism and intersectionality (Thompson and Zablotsky 2016). With Eggers, they high-

light that certain forms of difference remain excluded from the celebration of diversity, and that the subjects who represent this difference – the »Others of diversity« (Eggers 2011) – are often not only devalued in their contributions to academic excellence, but even seen as threatening and/or bodies out of place. With Grosfoguel et al.'s intervention, it is possible to name the ›Others of diversity‹ in terms of their connection to the coloniality of power and the global inequalities that differentially impact ›colonial immigrants‹ and ›racial/colonial subjects of empire‹ in the German university context.

7 Neoliberal Transformations

This context has transformed drastically over the past twenty years, during which the overall number of students has risen dramatically, without a proportionate rise in professorial positions or public funding for universities. German universities have been brought quite comprehensively into a global network of academic knowledge production that is structured unequally and organized as a competition for ›excellence‹, funding, international reputation and economically relevant outputs (Connell 2007; Mountz et al. 2015; Müller-Böling 2000; Shore 2010). By focusing on unequal global hegemonies of competitive knowledge production and linking them to the concrete pressures to prove academic ›excellence‹ through publications and grants, it is possible to identify how structurally and institutionally, the odds are stacked against both groups of ›colonial‹ scholars from abroad and ›racial/colonial‹ scholars from within. Given the space constraints for this article and the context in which it will appear, I will focus on publishing rather than third-stream funding. But the unequal structures of global knowledge production have to firstly be situated in the context of center-periphery relations in order to explain the hegemony of particular locations, epistemic perspectives and academic subjects.

8 The Center-Periphery Divide in Knowledge Production

In the discipline of sociology, the past twenty years have seen a growing debate on the inequalities of knowledge production on a world-wide scale (Burawoy 2015). Whether employing the distinctions of a hegemonic Global North dominating the Global South (Connell 2007), or center-periphery distinctions drawing on world systems theory (Connell and Wood 2002; Collyer 2014; Rahbari and Perlatto 2015), scholars have drawn attention to dynamics that have prompted many to speak of academic imperialism (Alatas, S.H. 2000) and dependency in a global division of labor (Alatas, S.F. 2003). They draw upon different but connected bodies of evidence to substantiate their

arguments: the legacy of colonialism in the curricula of educational institutions of peripheral countries despite political independence, the wider ›epistemicide‹ in the eradication of pre- and anti-colonial local knowledges (de Sousa Santos 2014; Grosfoguel 2013), the geopolitically unequal production and circulation of sociological theories, the support and funding for research and teaching facilities, the dominance of specific journals and publishers, and the ›brain drain‹ that directs researchers from the peripheries to the core countries of academic dominance (Rahbari and Perlatto 2015). The hierarchies of global knowledge production are related both to the geopolitical dominance of particular states over others, and to the uneven increasing commodification of academic labor and of higher education sectors (Ball 2012; Naidoo 2003) that prompt a concentration of what is deemed academic excellence in specific locations and within increasingly oligarchic structures (Münch 2006). Connell (2007) in particular has drawn attention to the unequal landscapes of publishing that merit a closer look.

9 Publications

Getting one's texts published in academic journals should depend only on their scientific quality, ideally evaluated in double-blind peer-review processes. The trend toward quality criteria that rely on statistical figures to measure the impact and importance of publications has come under criticism for not only inflating the numbers of scientific publications, but also for strengthening a mainstreaming of content, as the likelihood of getting published increases when addressing already established topics (Fleck 2013; Münch 2006). What is more, the ›top journals‹ that are ranked as most influential tend to remain in top positions in part because of the clear incentives for researchers to publish in them, thus making it difficult for new journals to carve out a space in the academic publishing landscape. For the social sciences, Fleck has concluded that publications in languages other than English generally cannot compete in terms of possible citations with those published in hegemonic English-language journals (Fleck 2013, p. 641).

Rankings can easily be checked for journals listed in the Social Science Citation Index, an interdisciplinary database that measures and ranks the impact of journals internationally and has become an important point of reference when examining the publication records of candidates for professorial positions in many German hiring committees. The current leading journals focusing on migration studies are all published in either the US or the UK. Among them is the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* (JEMS), published by Routledge on behalf of the Centre for Migration Studies at the Uni-

versity of Sussex, UK[9]. *International Migration* is published by Wiley-Blackwell in the United States on behalf of the International Organization for Migration, which as an intergovernmental organization has its roots in the EU. The *International Migration Review* is published by Sage on behalf of the Center for Migration Studies in New York, while the *Journal of Refugee Studies* is published by Oxford University Press on behalf of the Refugee Studies Centre at Oxford University. *Migration Studies* as a relatively new online journal with a high impact factor is similarly published by the latter.

The privileging of English as a language of globalized academic production has profound consequences. Mastery of academic English globally is – depending on the geopolitical context – both racialized and class-stratified, particularly in countries outside of direct Anglo-American influence and colonial legacy where the language is spoken more widely. This can therefore negatively impact the academic career chances in migration studies of those who stem from lower class backgrounds, in the German context a category that is both ›migratized‹ and racialized, as was discussed above. When it comes to filling professorial positions, the now ubiquitous requirement for candidates to have ›international visibility‹ can thus paradoxically backfire for those racial/colonial subjects of empire and domestic minorities who might already have learnt German as a second language, and/or whose families' labor migration histories have given them less access to educational resources and English language learning.[10] Growing up bilingual as part of the racialized postmigrant working classes is not the same as being able to publish in English, or having spent time abroad at prestigious universities either as students or researchers. Paradoxically, then, the consequences of having a migration background of the wrong kind can translate into a lack of international visibility, and thus ultimately diminished chances in professorial hiring processes at German universities, as I have repeatedly witnessed as a hiring committee chair and member.

This also impacts refugee scholars. As many refugee scholars who have managed to come to Germany from countries such as Turkey and Syria are currently finding out, having published in reputed journals in Turkish or Arabic also does not count as international visibility in the context of professorial hiring committees. As colleagues from Turkey have reported, class can be an important factor as to whether someone receives training in English, is

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9 I am aware of the efforts of the journal to encourage submissions by authors from the Global South, in an important effort to achieve a more balanced mix of perspectives and arguments.

10 This is also true for East German scholars who gained their university entrance examinations in the former GDR, and thus almost inevitably had to take Russian as a foreign language rather than English.

able to spend time abroad or even get a degree from a top university abroad, which increases the chances to obtain a professorial position not just in Turkey but in many semi- and peripheral countries. This in turn can increase the chances of getting international support as a threatened scholar: To qualify for Philipp-Schwartz-Initiative funding in Germany, threatened scholars need to »possess potential to be integrated into the (research related) job market«[11], and have language skills to carry out their proposed research – which for obvious reasons cannot be carried out in the country where the threat has materialized. In order to put together an application, threatened scholars need to both be able to communicate with international support organizations and, in the case of the German PSI, cooperate with a potential mentor to put together a viable application. The dominance of English as a hegemonic language of international academic exchange and collaboration thus on the one hand facilitates academic cross-border movement, but on the other reinforces hierarchies of social inequality transnationally and devalues the academic capital of those who mainly or exclusively think, research and publish in less widely-spread languages. This fact is exacerbated by the prevailing institutional discourse of compassionate humanitarianism that has, as many exiled academics have argued, ›robbed‹ them of their academic qualifications and has turned them into victims devoid of political agency and academic expertise (Sertdemir Özdemir 2019).

Another crucial factor in determining career pathways and measuring academic ›excellence‹ is of course success or failure in obtaining third-stream funding, a topic that cannot be adequately addressed within the space constraints of this text. While academic freedom is enshrined in the German constitution, political agendas do seep into research in multiple ways, most importantly through pressures to obtain external funding which is often tied to policy and/or economic interests of funding organizations. The role of migration research as envisioned in most governmental funding initiatives is mostly restricted to modeling and predicting and thus enhancing governmental capacities to regulate migration, to measuring social acceptance or indicators of integration.[12] Hatton (2018) has written a scathing paper criticizing the close links between migration and refugee research institutes and migration control policy in the UK, highlighting the pressures to obtain funding as the main reason for research aligning with political interests. As the ability to obtain third-stream funding has become a central condition for

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11 https://www.humboldt-foundation.de/web/philipp-schwartz-initiative-en.html#s0. Accessed: 16.11.2020.
12 See for example the BMBF funding initiative ›migration and social change‹, https://www.bmbf.de/foerderungen/bekanntmachung-1272.html. Accessed: 19.10.2020.

professorial hires and competitive salaries, the incentives for gearing one's research toward governmental research questions and objectives are clear – as is the competitive disadvantage of researchers who question them. Today's ›junior‹ scientists, competing with each other for a small number of professorial openings, are under massive pressure to generate third-stream funding from whatever source available (Krauß et al. 2015). There is of course no automatic connection between being positioned as a ›colonial‹ or ›racial/colonial‹ scholar in German universities and the content orientation of one's research interests. But if we ask who has articulated the most critical and trenchant analyses of Western epistemic dominance, curricula and hegemonic research agendas, if we ask who draws on theory from the Global South and formulates research questions that challenge governmental and economic priorities, we find that these two groups of scholars are overrepresented among them. Taking into account the pressures outlined above, and the lesser overall likelihood of critical research to obtain funding, we might begin to suspect that apparently neutral indicators of excellence such as grant proposal success and amounts of third-stream funding not only favor certain research orientations over others, but thereby also weaken the competitive position of those who challenge these orientations and aim for a critical knowledge production that is associated with calls to decolonize higher education.[13]

10 Decolonizing Migration Studies and Provincializing Europe?

What I have addressed above is intended as a necessary if preliminary reflection not just on the field of migration studies, but on approaches that call for a wider decolonization of Western academic knowledge production and a decentering or provincializing of Europe (Adam et al. 2019). The complex field of migration studies in Europe, with its interdisciplinary and diversity of methods and perspectives, faces particular difficulties to develop and incorporate or even to draw on extra-European knowledge and perspectives. As much of the research in the field is policy-driven, European national or EU interests tend to shape funding calls in Eurocentric and governance-oriented ways – we need to address this fact when attempting to strengthen critical perspectives and to decolonize knowledge production in migration

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13 It is instructive to look at European funding initiatives and their historical development – the current Horizon 2020 programme links migration research primarily to questions of security and leaves less room for critical perspectives than earlier framework programmes, I would argue.

studies. All too often, the latter project is presented as a mere matter of argumentation, of taking on board insights from especially extra-European postcolonial and decolonial critics to produce an epistemic turn, without considering the impact of the structures and institutions within which this knowledge production can take place, gets funded and earns the stamp of academic excellence, and without considering who exactly is producing it.

Beyond the issues of toppling statues on university campuses – and *Rhodes must fall*[14] for sure – decolonizing curricula and decentering Europe in epistemic terms, ›we‹ must also reflect upon our own professional practice. As has been argued above, this requires asking under what conditions what kinds of people do or do not get access to academic training – consider the #FeesMustFall movement[15] –, academic jobs and academic authority. We must also ask how the conditions under which a heterogeneous ›we‹ performs the work of migration studies are differentially implicated in the curtailment and management of migration and (post)migrant subjects, and in global relations of inequality not only but also in relation to hegemonic knowledge production. In this article, I have attempted to provide – in imperfect fashion – some very preliminary answers to these questions which hopefully can be substantiated or challenged in further debates and research. Failure to consider the shifting conditions of academic knowledge production threatens to transform the decolonial turn into an idealist enlightenment exercise that can backfire to veil both the structural mechanisms of exclusion and the hegemonic research agendas that are enforced via major funding initiatives, neoliberal academic capitalism and the feudal elements of a predominantly white middle-class academic elite in countries belonging to the center of the contemporary world system.

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14 https://rmfoxford.wordpress.com/. Accessed: 16.11.2020.
15 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/FeesMustFall. Accessed: 16.11.2020.

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