

**THE VALUE OF DE SOUSA SANTOS' CONCEPTS OF EPISTEMICIDE,
UNIVERSITY KNOWLEDGE, AND PLURIVERSALITY TO THE DECOLONIAL
DISCOURSE IN/ON SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES**



by

ZENON NDAYISENGA

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degree of

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Supervisor: Prof Sphiwe Dube

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DECLARATION

I, Zenon Ndayisenga, declare that this doctoral thesis titled '*The Value of De Sousa Santos' Concepts of Epistemicide, University Knowledge, and Pluriversality to the Decolonial Discourse in/on South African Universities*', is my own work. It is being submitted for the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy** to the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for degree purposes or examination at any other university.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis deploys Boaventura de Sousa Santos' tridimensional concepts of epistemicide, university knowledge, and pluriversity knowledge to comprehend how South African universities can genuinely be decolonised. Specifically, the thesis is concerned with the pervasive epistemicide associated with the colonality of university knowledge and argues for pluriversity knowledge, which speaks to the necessity of diversity, multiplicity, and ecologies of knowledges on South African campuses. Many scholars and student movements have identified epistemic colonisation as a key problem that has persisted in South African universities since the transition from apartheid colonialism to liberal democracy in 1994. However, none have consistently and systematically used Santos' concepts and theories based on the epistemologies of the South to make sense of the challenges facing South African higher education. Instead, many have turned to the concepts of power, being, and knowledge from the Latin American decoloniality school. However, this has resulted in Santos' distinctive concepts being conflated with the concepts of colonality and decoloniality. Santos has made many contributions to academia, including the concepts of abyssal thinking, sociology of emergences, sociology of absences, intercultural translations, and post-abyssal methodologies. In this thesis, three concepts are underpinned—epistemicide, university knowledge, and pluriversity knowledge—because they are most applicable to higher education. The concept of epistemicide allows for a thorough analysis of the damage inflicted on higher education in South Africa by apartheid, colonialism, and neoliberalism. The concept of university knowledge assists in critically analysing epistemologies, scholarship, curriculum, and pedagogy. Finally, pluriversity knowledge allows for the projection into a future genuinely decolonised university—a university that has the potential to prevent the repetition of protests such as the RhodesMustFall and FeesMustFall movements that happened in 2015 and 2016, respectively.

Keywords: *South African universities, westernised universities, colonality, university knowledge, epistemicide, epistemic crisis, Boaventura de Sousa Santos, epistemologies of the South, pluriversity knowledge, decoloniality, decolonising universities, epistemic freedom.*

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to all students from the Global South who are daily facing/experiencing the perpetual negative impacts of epistemicide and coloniality of knowledge. It is specially dedicated to the South African students who demonstrated their courage in attempting to genuinely decolonise universities in South Africa.

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1. *Frantz Fanon's Intellectual Justification of Counter-violence*. (Full book manuscript of 200 pages submitted in November 2024 and now under review [Routledge] in the United Kingdom, expected to be published in 2025).

2. *Albert Luthuli's Political Thought on 'The Road to Freedom Is Via the Cross: An Inevitable for the Unborn Genuine Freedom in South Africa.* (Book proposal submitted in January 2025 to HSRC Press).

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CHAPTER 1

RESEARCH OVERVIEW

1.1 Introduction

In this thesis, I consider South African universities as a unit for discourse analysis within the context of decolonial politics. While the main traditional purpose of any university is to produce knowledge, I argue that in the South African context, universities remain beholden to a particular type of knowledge production – i.e. a westernised and colonial type of university knowledge. The problem of coloniality of university knowledge and epistemicide in South Africa necessitates decolonisation towards pluriversity knowledge, as has been highlighted by different scholars from different loci of enunciation. Chinweizu (1987) demonstrated the need for decolonisation of the African mind in African higher education. Wa Thiong'o (1981) popularised the idea of decolonising the mind in Africa concerning literature and language. Mudimbe (1988) protested the way the invention of Africa by colonialists constituted the killing/erasure and silencing of African epistemologies. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018) illuminated the need for epistemic freedom from the western cognitive empire in Africa. Most canonically, Grosfoguel (2013) described the structure of knowledge in the university as a colonial and racist structure of knowledge that needs to be undone.

This introductory chapter is structured into nine sections. The first section introduces the study. The second section provides the background and context of the thesis. The third section is the research problem. The fourth section provides the research questions. While the fifth section is about the objectives of the study, the sixth section presents the research argument. The seventh section is concerned with the justification and motivation of the study. Before the outline of the thesis, the chapter summarises the research methodology—how the research was conducted.

1.2 Background and Context of the Study

This thesis participates in the critique of the South African university as the site of epistemicide and coloniality of knowledge. Epistemicide and coloniality of university knowledge are justified by the undeniable hegemony of western epistemologies that daily advance Eurocentric thought in South African universities. Walsh (2007, p. 225) argues that “[t]o speak of the geopolitics of knowledge and geopolitical locations of critical thought is to recognise the

persistence of a western hegemony that positions Eurocentric thought as ‘universal’, while localising other forms of thought as at best folklore”. With a focus on South Africa, this thesis uses epistemicide, university knowledge, and pluriversity knowledge as tools to why South African universities remain connoted as westernised universities. I maintain that pluriversity knowledge can only be successful in South African universities once it uses and applies decoloniality’s principles.

According to Santos (2014, p. 238), a westernised university is mostly characterised by “dominant epistemologies that have resulted in a massive waste of social experience and marginalisation of the histories, knowledges, and languages of the indigenous people of the Global South. This destruction is called *epistemicide*”. Based on Santos’s understanding, the daily occurrence of the epistemicide in South African universities should be described as the arbitrary destruction of native knowledges and their replacement by the dominant western epistemologies. Remaining in the same context, epistemicide in universities in South Africa is concerned with destruction of indigenous knowledges on the one hand and elevation of colonial knowledge on the other. Epistemicide is not only a concern for South Africa, but also for the Global South, where South Africa belongs. In this thesis, the concept of epistemicide is analysed generally and discussed specifically in the South African context. It is from this view that Masaka (2017) concurs with Santos’s observation that “epistemicide *is* the foundational problem that must be reversed to establish parity between the global North and the global South” (p. 3).

The epistemicide that Santos (2014) describes refers to “the murder of knowledge” (p. 92) that happened when colonial and imperial systems sought to consolidate their political, economic, and cultural domination. From 2015 onwards, starting with the University of Cape Town, South African students conducted massive protests against the colonial and westernised higher education system in the country. Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Zondi (2016) observe that “South African students had become impatient with a university system that treated their history and knowledges as Africans as myths and superstition” (p. 28). The students demanded that African languages, histories, and knowledges be included in university curricula alongside western knowledge that has been imposed as the only legitimate knowledge. Western and colonial knowledge and languages have been allowed to monopolise South African universities at the expense of knowledges from locals. Indigenous African and South African knowledge has been relegated from the mainstream higher education system and have been denied, abandoned, and

rejected. There has been an epistemic discrimination against the local communities and indigenous people of South Africa, as their knowledge and languages were and still are ignored or taken away. As a typical example, students trained as future diplomats (those registered in International Politics in the Department of Political Sciences at the University of South Africa); are obliged to choose either French, Portuguese or Mandarin, seeming like the university only prepares them to represent South Africa overseas and not in Africa. Here, I mean that the university should also consider Swahili as an African language which students can freely choose too, because South Africa has a good relationship with Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Yes, both countries use French as official language, but for instance South African diplomats sent to Burundi, Tanzania, DRC, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, to mention but a few should have learned Swahili than the colonial French or (English) language. Similarly, it is sad that most teachings are still done in English in South Africa, preventing local members promoting their own knowledge. Some programmes such as Life Orientation, Geography, Biology, should have been taught in the mother tongue rather than the colonial language, a gap in South Africa.

The destruction and distortion of African knowledge in the westernised university in Africa is so serious that we now must ask whether African knowledge existed in the first place (Mudimbe, 1988, p. ix). What is unfortunate, according to Mudimbe (1988), is that “the fact of the matter is that, until now, western interpreters, and African analysts, have been using categories and conceptual systems which depend on a western epistemological order” (p. x) sometimes even when dealing with local or regional contexts. Epistemologies that originate from outside the western epistemological order are not easily welcomed as valid epistemologies. Wa Thiong’o avers:

As in the political and economic fields, Africa has been a player in the production of knowledge. The increase in the number of universities and research centres, though with often shrinking resources, has shaped great African producers of knowledge in all fields, such that brilliant sons and daughters of Africa are to be found in all the universities in the world. The constellation of thinkers and researchers around the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODERSRIA) is a testament to this. So why the raw deal for Africa, even in the consumption of knowledge produced by her sons and daughters? (Wa Thiong’o, 2016, p. 68)

Wa Thiong'o calls African intellectuals and scholars to always and continuously re-examine their relationship with the European memory in the organisation of knowledge. From an African perspective, "Since our very mandate as African producers of knowledge is to connect with the continent, it behoves us to continually re-examine our entire colonial heritage, which includes the languages and knowledge imposed on us by colonialism" (Wa Thiong'o, 2016, p. 69). In a similar way, Chinweizu (1985) argues that epistemic colonisation has left African literature "as a literature with no tradition of its own to build upon, no models of its own to imitate, no audience or constituency separate and apart from the European, and above all, no norms of its own" (p. 3). Chinweizu's concern is that African knowledge has been completely replaced by European knowledge.

As both Chinweizu and Mudimbe said, this study observes that African intellectuals and scholars must depart from European concepts and epistemologies when explaining their concerns and those of the African continent. This includes South Africa, as South Africa can hardly escape such an epistemic colonisation scandal. Asante (2018) elaborates by declaring that "to fight the beast of colonisation of ideas, we had to change terminology and create concepts that spoke to African agency" (p. 11). Like Chinweizu and Wa Thiong'o, Asante also observes the lack of address or agency of African scholars due to the endless coloniality of knowledge and cultural imperialism that now characterises South African universities. To the end of pursuing such agency, a certain cohort of students and academics in South Africa have turned to the discourse of decoloniality.

In fact, since 2015, decoloniality and decolonial thinking has become popular among protesting students in South Africa. In the South African context, "decoloniality is mobilised to revisit the silences and epistemological violence, an epistemicide that resulted in the globalisation of Euro-American knowledge and the displacement of other knowledge" (Sithole, 2016, p. 108). In this thesis, I hold that students in various South African universities were confronted by what Freire (1993) described as alienating pedagogy and education that makes students strangers in their own native land. Such alienation built on colonial education promotes foreign knowledge on the one hand while demoting local knowledge on the other hand. What current students in South African universities are facing is like the 1970s students' struggles. Led by the Black Consciousness Movement, South African students from the 1970s protested racism, sexism, and cultural imperialism in the university and demanded the recognition, integrity, and

legitimacy of Black people and their knowledge. In fact, the epistemic injustice in South African universities has been an unresolved matter for a long time.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Zondi (2016) note correctly that “at the centre of the demand for cognitive justice is the problem of epistemicide and colonisation of the minds” (p. 3). In the South African university context, cognitive justice is the justice demanded by those who feel that their bodies and knowledges have been erased, silenced, or marginalised. As for Santos:

The university knowledge, that is, the scientific knowledge produced in universities or institutions separate from the universities, but which retain a similar university *ethos*, was, for the whole 20th century, a predominantly disciplinary knowledge whose autonomy imposed a relatively decontextualised process of production about the day-to-day pressures of the societies. (Santos, 2021, p. 201)

It means that the university's knowledge must adopt the principles of pluriversity knowledge, which hold that university knowledge must be a pluriversal scientific knowledge. Pluriversity knowledge challenges the cognitive injustice and monopoly of space and dominance of western knowledge over indigenous knowledge.

Protesting South African students do not demand that European languages and knowledge be banned but that indigenous knowledge be included; therefore, pluriversity. According to Santos (2018), a pluriversity knowledge is produced from a diversity of knowledge from different scholars, as it allows them to thrive together in competition and complementarity. It is from this angle that he observes that:

Pluriversity [knowledge] will emerge as a positive response to two main tensions, those created by university capitalism and by university colonialism. The tension created by university capitalism derives from the increasing polarisation between knowledge with market value and knowledge without market value. (Santos, 2018, p. 278)

Pluriversity knowledge is understood by Santos to be the potential solution that may allow the diversity of knowledge in the Global South, and particularly in South African universities. Pluriversity knowledge is therefore a potential solution to the continuing epistemicide and university knowledge production monopoly, as through decoloniality it accommodates rejected knowledge and condemns the negative impacts of epistemicide. Santos (2018, p. 278) notes that “pluriversity knowledge is most likely to emerge from the alliances and accommodations

among those defenders of the pursuit of knowledge without market value who are also defenders of post-abysal science”. Relevantly, the application or adoption at South African universities of “Pluriversity knowledge gives dignity back to natives of the Global South in their universities” (Santos, 2021, p. 203). Pluriversity knowledge emerges from a pluriversity of different views where each person is allowed to contribute to knowledge production regardless of his/her locus of enunciation. However, as I will explain in detail in Chapter 4, pluriversity knowledge becomes effective only once it embraces decoloniality—in other words, coloniality renders pluriversity knowledge impossible. The next section engages with the research problem.

1.3 Research Problem

Epistemic decolonial protests at South African universities, such as the 2015 FeesMustFall and RhodesMustFall movements reached the point where students refused to resume learning programmes that they did not desire. The major roots of these protests are the epistemicide and coloniality of universities prevalent in South African universities. Wits University researcher and senior lecturer Professor Achille Mbembe is very concerned about the coloniality of university knowledge and the westernisation of South African universities. Here, as a point of evidence, he justifies that, “We agree that part of what is wrong with our institutions of higher learning is that they are ‘westernised’” (Mbembe, 2015, p. 9).

It is problematic that South African universities repeatedly experience epistemic injustice, for which there has not been an adequate solution. This is informed by the fact that, “In the past 40 years, however, for different but convergent reasons, in various parts of the world the university has become, rather than a solution for societal problems, an additional problem” (Santos, 2021, p. 255). Epistemicide in South African universities is, therefore, a problem that needs an emergent solution. The undoing of epistemicide in South African universities calls for what Gordon terms as the “shifting of the geography of reason” (2020, p. 1), which strives for the introduction and acceptance of pluriversity knowledge. This thesis deploys Santos’ tridimensional concepts of epistemicide, university knowledge, and pluriversity knowledge as tools to expose westernisation, Eurocentrism, and coloniality of knowledge in South African universities. I argue that for pluriversity knowledge to be realisable in South African universities, decoloniality must be a reality in these universities. The next subsection provides the research question.

1.4 Research Question

The research question of this study is:

- Why and in what ways are Boaventura de Sousa Santos's tridimensional concepts of epistemicide, university knowledge, and pluriversity knowledge imperative in response to the renewed calls for epistemic decolonisation in South African universities?

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are directly related to the question of the study. Therefore, the study's three objectives are:

- To demonstrate that Boaventura de Sousa Santos's tri-dimensional concepts of epistemicide, university knowledge, and pluriversity knowledge shed light on how to combat epistemicide and coloniality of knowledge in South African universities.
- To unveil why South African universities must be decolonised epistemically.
- To illuminate how Boaventura de Sousa Santos's concept of pluriversity knowledge should be considered as the adequate solution to the western monopoly of knowledge production in South African universities.

1.6 Research Arguments

1.6.1 Main Argument

In this study, I argue :

- The epistemicide and coloniality of university knowledge promotes the dominance of western science in South African universities, and this reveals why there are renewed student protests that call for genuine epistemic decolonisation.

1.6.2 Research Sub-arguments

Sub-arguments emerge from the main argument and are complementary in attempting to cover all important aspects of the study. The three sub-arguments of this thesis are:

- Santos' tridimensional concepts of epistemicide, university knowledge, and pluriversity knowledge are inseparable from the decolonial discourse in South African universities.

- Santos's conception of pluriversity knowledge is the ultimate solution to the coloniality of knowledge in South African universities: it strives for the accommodation of knowledge from different people and different loci of enunciations.
- The dominance of western science in South African universities justifies epistemic injustice in them.

1.7 Justification and Motivation of the Study

In 2015 and 2016, “South Africa underwent a resurgence in student protests, with students agitating for free, decolonised education” (Benyera & Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017, p. 1). In South Africa and throughout the world, universities are at a crossroads in determining how to achieve genuine epistemic freedom. Coloniality of knowledge is the *raison d'être* for epistemicide in South African universities. In the African context, university knowledge should not be separated from the local language spoken around its location. It is regrettable that “we collect intellectual items and put them in European-language museums and archives. Africa's global visibility through European languages has meant Africa's invisibility in African languages. Our knowledge of Africa is largely filtered through European languages and their vocabulary” (Wa Thiong'o, 2016, p. 71).

According to Mamdani (1998), “Universities are about the pursuit of excellence, the reason why universities like to recognise, honour and encourage expertise” (p. 7). In this recognition of experts and expertise, African scholars and African knowledge and languages are not legitimated or recognised. Relevantly, this thesis participates in the unmasking of epistemicides and the coloniality of knowledge that have caused epistemic injustice in South African universities.

This study is relevant because decolonisation challenges epistemicide and coloniality of university knowledge and promotes the idea that Santos's concept of pluriversity knowledge must be realised in South African universities. This is the knowledge that all members of society are welcome to contribute to. Thus, the pluriversity knowledge that Santos advocates is a kind of knowledge for all, a gap in South African universities. What motivated me to engage with this study is that missing such knowledge perpetuates epistemic injustice. It is in this context that this study strongly motivates the acceptance of pluriversity knowledge in South African universities. Based on Santos's thought, the thesis shows that the pluriversity

of knowledge allows epistemic freedom in South African universities. Importantly, this study designs a plan on how to reach true epistemic decolonisation.

Before I engage with methodology, I emphasise that the coloniality of knowledge aims to “control minds and bodies of indigenous people of Africa indefinitely” (Biko [1978] 2017, p. 79). The thesis states that the decolonisation of the university towards pluriversity is a relevant and justified study in the contested and contentious South African context. Therefore, this is a unique study that calls for epistemic justice for South African students and staff who are affected by epistemicide and the coloniality of university knowledge. The next section is about the research methodology.

1.8 Research Methodology

This research relied on Boaventura de Sousa Santos as the object of the study. Santos’s concepts of epistemicide, university knowledge, and pluriversity knowledge are selected as elements that intervene while attempting to respond to the problem of the colonial university. Thus, this research uses these concepts to explain how South African universities should genuinely be decolonised. According to Kai (2011), “Conceptual research is arguably less time-consuming (the lengthier engagement with literature notwithstanding): there is no data collection involved, nor any data analysis” (p. 1). In this study, Santos’s three texts were found as major sources of information: *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against Epistemicide* (2014), *The End of the Cognitive Empire: The Coming of Age of Epistemologies of the South* (2018), and *Decolonising the University: The Challenges of Deep Cognitive Justice* (2021). The discourse analysis of the concepts from these three texts assisted me in attempting to respond to the research question: Why are Boaventura de Sousa Santos’ tridimensional concepts of epistemicide, university knowledge, and pluriversity knowledge imperative in response to the renewed calls for epistemic decolonisation in South African universities?

Santos’s concept of pluriversity knowledge assisted me in systematically explaining how epistemicide and coloniality of university knowledge in South African universities can be challenged by decoloniality. In the first book, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against Epistemicide* (2014), Santos provides a strong epistemological message:

Today, people are becoming more aware of the multiple dimensions of injustice, whether social, political, cultural, sexual, ethnic, religious, historical, or ecological. Rarely acknowledged is *cognitive injustice*, the failure to recognise the different ways of

knowing by which people across the globe provide meaning to their existence. This book shows why cognitive injustice underlies all other dimensions; global social justice is not possible without global cognitive justice. (Santos, 2021, n.p.)

The concept of cognitive injustice reveals the presence of coloniality of university knowledge, which later generates epistemicide. Santos's *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against Epistemicide* (2014) was very relevant while conducting the research. From such a relevant, unavoidable, imperative, and informative book, I understood Santos's conception of epistemicide, which is central to this study. In this thesis, the concern is that South African universities are considered terrains where the practice of western cognitive injustice is executed. Thus, this book helped me not only to collect needed information related to 'epistemicide' but also that of the 'coloniality of university knowledge'. It, above all, illuminated how cognitive injustice is happening in various universities in the Global South and particularly in South Africa.

From the same book, I derived Santos's epistemologies of the South. Imperative to the conceptual interpretation while doing this study, Santos's book "is a brilliant testimony about today's tensions within our inter- and transcultural spaces" (Mudimbe, 2021, n.p.). These epistemologies were incredibly helpful in this thesis to challenge the dominance of western science in South African universities. The thesis shows that Santos's epistemologies of the South welcome Asante's (2009) conception of Afrocentricity. In fact, "Afrocentricity is a paradigm based on the idea that African people should reassert a sense of agency to achieve sanity" (Asante, 2009, p.1), and decolonising South African universities cannot be separated from the search for African agency.

Santos's second book, *The End of the Cognitive Empire: The Coming of Age of Epistemologies of the South* (2018), was significant for cognitive justice and pluriversity knowledge. Concepts from this book helped to assess how the epistemic injustice in South African universities is still being caused by the unending cognitive empire. It allowed me to understand why western epistemologies are built and justified by the cognitive empire. In contrast, "The epistemologies of the South concern the production and validation of knowledges anchored in the experiences of resistance of all those social groups that have systematically suffered injustice, oppression, and destruction caused by capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy" (Santos, 2018, p. 1).

The End of the Cognitive Empire is significant insofar as it “offers an alternative that steers political analysis away from the usual alternatives *such as Eurocentricism and coloniality of knowledge*” (De la Cadena, 2018, n.p. [Emphasis added]). It allowed me to collect promising information that helped review the literature. The thesis was inspired by the promise that, “The objective of the epistemologies of the South is to allow the oppressed social groups to represent the world as their own and on their own terms, for only thus will they be able to change it according to their own aspirations” (Santos, 2018, p. 1). In consideration of this, my locus of enunciation (thinking and acting from where I am, who I am, and as I want) played a basic role in understanding how Santos’s conception of decolonising the university could be realised. Relevantly, writing ‘from where I am’ was invoked by Biko’s ([1978] 2017) book, *I Write What I Like*, and the Kenyan poet Mugo’s oeuvre, *I Write as I Want* (cited in McFaden, 2016). Both audacious authors are given as typical examples of people who fearlessly challenged the western cognitive empire. Furthermore, as the author of *Writing and Speaking from the Heart of my Mind: Selected Essays and Speeches* (2012), Mugo is still considered the pioneer, a fearless woman who dared to challenge the dominant western epistemologies. These are only some of the many African works that have informed the logic of this thesis.

Concerning Santos’s third book, *Decolonising the University: The Challenges of Deep Cognitive Justice* (2021), Santos stated: “This book explores the nature and the dynamics of the transformation that the university is undergoing today” (Santos, 2021, n.p.). This book informed the formulation of this study’s title, research questions, research argument, literature review, and critical analysis. The exceptional relevance of this book was that:

This text provides arguments supplemented by footnotes and anecdotes, offering the reader examples of the epistemology of the social sciences and enlightening proposals about the future of the university. References to social scientists offer a unique understanding to students and educators interested in critical thinking and decolonisation. (Takrimi, 2021, n.p.)

This was an extremely helpful book in that it provides insight into how African political thought challenges the western cognitive empire. Collected information on cognitive justice, such as pluriversity knowledge, was needed to challenge the colonial epistemic injustice in South African universities.

1.9 Definitions, Contextual Denotations, and Clarity of Key Concepts

An anticipated comprehension of the study's main key concepts is imperative for the reader to understand how each concept is contextually denoted and used in the study, since concepts may differ greatly depending on the nature of each study. The conceptual clarity allows one to understand where the concept originates from and how each concept is used contextually in a particular study. This means that in a scientific work, conceptual clarity not helps one to understand the origin of the concept itself but also provides a general definition and contextual denotation. This is because the same concept may be used differently depending on the context of the study.

Arranged in alphabetical order, this study provides contextual definitions, which are non-exclusive, of the following key concepts: colonialism, coloniality, decoloniality, decolonial epistemic perspective, dehumanisation, epistemicide, epistemic violence, locus of enunciation, pluriversity knowledge, university knowledge, and westernised university.

Colonialism

Memmi ([1974] 2003) criticises that colonialism as a project affects the educational system in the colonised countries. He for instance explains in the following terms:

By what else is the heritage of a people handed down? By education which it gives to its children, and by language, that wonderful reservoir constantly enriched with experiences. Traditions and acquirements, habits and conquests, deeds and acts of previous generations are thus bequeathed and recorded in history. However, the very great majority of colonised children are in the streets. And he who has the wonderful good luck to be accepted in a school will not be saved nationally. The memory which is assigned him is certainly not of that of his people. The history which is taught him is not his own. (Memmi [1974] 2003, pp. 148-149)

Colonialism is the umbrella of epistemicide that happens daily in colonised countries. Students from colonised countries are forced to learn programmes that do not correlate with their lived experiences. Memmi ([1974] 2003, p. 135) criticises that “The most serious blow suffered by the colonised is being removed from history and from the community”. Colonisation usurps any free role in either war or peace, every decision contributing to his destiny and that of the world, and all cultural and social responsibility (Memmi [1974] 2003, p. 135).

According to Maldonado-Torres, “colonialism denotes a political and economic relation in which the sovereignty of a nation or a people rests on the power of another nation, which makes

such nation an empire” (2007, p. 3). Whereas, according to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013c), “Colonialism is an encapsulation of political and economic relations in which the sovereignty of a nation or a people rests on the power of another nation which then proceeds to set up direct colonial administration over these people” (p. 128). In this thesis, colonialism is understood to be the system of conquest, domination, and exploitation of a country by settler colonialists who go on to impose their race and knowledge as superior over the conquered natives and indigenous people.

Coloniality

As early as 1965, Nkwame Nkrumah criticised coloniality referring to it as neo-colonialism. He explained:

Faced with the militant peoples of the ex-colonial territories in Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America, imperialism simply switches tactics. Without a qualm it dispenses with its flags, and even with certain of its more hated expatriate officials. This means, so it claims, that it is giving independence to its former subjects, to be followed by aid for their development. Under cover of such phrases, however, it devises innumerable ways to accomplish objectives formerly achieved naked colonialism. It is this sum total of these modern attempts to perpetuate colonialism while simultaneously talking about freedom, which has come to be known as neo-colonialism. (Nkrumah, 1965, p. 239).

From Nkrumah’s understanding, the current concept of coloniality is used synonymously with neo-colonialism.

By definition and comparatively, “Coloniality is a reference to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism and continues to define culture, labour, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production, well beyond the strict limits of colonial administration” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013c, p. 128). Thus, this study defines coloniality as the absence-presence of colonialism as it continues to drive colonialism even in its absence. Coloniality, therefore, guarantees long-running colonialism in the present, which renders colonialism existential and self-running. In fact, “Coloniality has survived colonialism *and* is kept alive in old and current books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the image of peoples, and aspirations and perception of self” (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 243; [Emphasis added]).

In the context of this study, coloniality and coloniality of knowledge are viewed as indisputable facts that remain perpetual. To provide more clarification, Maldonado-Torres (2007) further states that:

Coloniality, I am suggesting here, can be understood as the radicalisation and naturalisation of the non-ethics of war. These non-ethical practices included the practices of eliminating and enslaving certain subjects – e.g., indigenous and Black – as part of the enterprise of colonisation. The hyperbolic expression of coloniality includes genocide, which is the paroxysm of the ego cogito – a world in which the ego cogito exists alone. War, however, is not only about killing or enslaving. Coloniality is an order of things that put people of colour under the murderous and rapist sight of a vigilant ego. (p. 247)

In the statement above, Maldonado-Torres explains coloniality as an existential war that targets colonised people. Maldonado-Torres warns that war is not only about killing or enslaving but also about living under the pressure and rules of coloniality. Coloniality ensures that colonialism is saving its maximum benefits by using capitalism and corporations that are controlled by Euro-North America. For further understanding, “Coloniality is the underlying logic of western expansion hidden from view by the fictional narratives of modernity” (Interview, Mignolo, 2017, p. 46). While Mignolo’s concern is that coloniality should be observed as a twin concept of modernity, Maldonado-Torres (2007) alerts that “Coloniality, instead refers to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labour, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations” (p. 243).

The problem of coloniality compels the thinking about the solution of decoloniality and decolonisation. Coloniality reveals its darker side and opens up decolonial avenues for thinking, living, and acting there is *singular modernity* (that singularity is not just modernity but *modernity/coloniality*), and that singular modernity is formed by variegated histories of imperial/colonial relations (Mignolo, 2008, p. 19). This means that the modern and so-called postcolonial world of which South Africa is part, reflects an era of coloniality. While in some other arguments, modernity should denote the good, coloniality, despite being considered a twin of modernity, should denote the perpetuity of colonialism.

Essentially, concurring with the point of view above, we are reminded that “coloniality does not appear in the rhetoric of modernity as its necessary counterpart, but rather as something that emanates from it” (Mignolo, 2011, p. 3). In his view, decoloniality originates within

coloniality as both a reaction and a solution to coloniality. However, criticism arises when in another sense it is argued that “while we may critique, disobey, defy, disrupt, and de-link from coloniality, coloniality cannot be removed or globally overcome. To assume so is to negate its ongoing hydra-like nature and force” (Walsh, 2020, p. 31). Here, Walsh insists on how difficult it is to live currently without being touched by the impact of coloniality.

Central to coloniality is the logic that produces the other and the institutions that uphold it, including institutions that reproduce modern conceptions of being, power, and knowledge (Hlabangane, 2021, p. 166). Hlabangane (2021) asserts that “Coloniality has proved to be more enduring than colonialism” (p. 167). On the same point, Nyere (2020) concurs with Hlabangane that “coloniality is the rationale that gives rise to and justifies colonialism” (p. 54). Nyere’s (2020) concern is that coloniality must be considered the source and summit of colonialism. Therefore, in the absence of physical colonialism, there is abstract coloniality that allows colonialism to remain perpetual and that justifies the argument which advances that “coloniality is the software of colonialism; the latter being the physical and violent conquering of a people/civilisation by another, arising from the former” (Nyere, 2020, p. 54). Nyere’s assertion that coloniality is the software of colonialism is linked to the fact that in contemporary days, colonialism relies more on coloniality than on any other form covered by colonialism.

Furthermore, Hlabangane (2021) warns that coloniality is the relations of domination that continued even after colonialism had ceased. Hlabangane further illuminates that:

While colonialism had physical structures that perpetuated its existence, such as Christian missionary schools, trading enclaves, and manufacturing plants, and government structures, wholly run by colonists, coloniality is ubiquitous; its footprints are found in every aspect of life and are not dependent on the physical presence of the colonial administration. (Hlabangane, 2021, pp. 166–167)

Therefore, in this study, coloniality is seen as an invisible but powerful enemy of indigenous knowledge. It should require more tactics and plans to determine where the problem caused by coloniality is being manifested. Dealing with coloniality equals dealing with an invisible problem that is almost beyond control because it has been normalised and is systemic in its nature and operations. Dey (2018) argues that “as the physically visible empires of colonialism receded, the metaphysical, invisible empires of coloniality gradually came to the forefront and ideally replaced their predecessors” (p. 15). It is due to its invisibility and power that coloniality should be unmasked using decoloniality as a theoretical framework. Coloniality uses different

colonial apparatuses that not only allow it to hide itself but also confuse colonised subjects who are tied up by existential colonial rules and principles. The impact of coloniality is therefore not to the same extreme in the colonised world. As a typical example, based on Mpfu's observation that in the African context, it should be kept in mind that:

Coloniality is a toxic power that is embedded in the African imagination and knowledge production that, with the knowledge climate of western modernity, continues to influence views on African knowledge and disrupt even what on the outside might appear to be liberated and liberating African discourses. (Mpfu, 2013, p. 3)

As there are growing decolonial movements, likewise, universities are also waking up and promoting courses built on the principles of decoloniality.

Coloniality empowers the Euro-North America to maintain its ongoing agenda of epistemic colonisation. This, therefore, testifies that "coloniality [i]s a power that remains after colonialism and seeks to perpetuate global imperial designs of dominating Africa and siphoning her natural resources by the Euro-American Empire" (Mpfu, 2013, p. 11). It means that coloniality remains after colonialism has physically disappeared. In this study, I argue that coloniality is what has managed to remain mobile in the absence of physical colonialism and to justify modernity. However, "Beyond violence and oppression, modernity is not only fundamentally based on the colonial domination of vast territories, the appropriation of their wealth, and exploitation of their labour force, it is also only thinkable because of its constitutive exteriority: coloniality" (Restrepo, 2018, p. 2). The coloniality of university knowledge goes hand in hand with modernity, and both promote the westernisation of university in the Global South generally and South Africa particularly.

Coloniality of Power

According to Quijano (2000), "coloniality is a constituent and a specific element of the pattern of capitalist power" (p. 342). Coloniality of power organised people into the homogeneity of the nation-state, with the main goal being to effect and exercise authority in all spheres of a human being's life (Quijano, 2000). Likewise, Restrepo (2018, p.1) argues that the coloniality of power operates from the racialisation of relations across social and geocultural identities. It legitimised the Eurocentred character of the pattern of world power, thereby naturalising relations of domination. In amplification, it should be noted that "coloniality of power has been the cornerstone in the configuration of a group of authors who have developed a particular

perspective called modernity/coloniality” (Restrepo, 2018, p. 2). This study observes that, among other issues, the coloniality of power works hand in hand with the coloniality of knowledge and even produces the latter because epistemicides are driven by power. Power is deployed by excluding indigenous and native languages and knowledges in the westernised universities in Africa, generally and particularly in South Africa.

Thus, coloniality of power cannot be separated from the colonial racial problem considering that “At the centre of coloniality was and is a race that formed the foundation of the codification and institutionalisation of differences between conquerors (white races) and the conquered ‘Black races’” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013c, p. 129). The way people of the Global South were conquered militarily and economically by their colonisers is how coloniality of power operates by conquest and domination from the physical and material level to the psychological and epistemic.

Because of coloniality of power, “the Black people share the experience of having been abused and exploited” (Manganyi, 1973, p. 19). Coloniality of power certifies the Euro-North American domination of power in the rest of the world. In fact, “this planetary articulation of western domination is the historical legacy of colonialism and operates through contemporary civilisational apparatuses, such as the discourses and technologies of development or globalisation” (Restrepo, 2018, p. 3). As I have argued elsewhere, “[colonial] violence is used as the major tool of conquest, acquisition, and maintenance of power by the coloniser” (Ndayisenga, 2022, p. 2). Meaning that coloniality of power does not care about the blood of innocent enslaved people considering that the master values political dominance over conquered subjects.

Therefore, it means that coloniality of power permits the perpetration of colonial forms of domination, as Grosfoguel reveals, he notes that:

Coloniality allows us to understand the continuity of colonial forms of domination after the end of colonial administrations, produced by colonial cultures and structures in the modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world system. ‘Coloniality of power’ refers to a crucial structuring process in the modern/colonial world system that articulates peripheral locations in the international labour division with the global racial/ethnic hierarchy and Third World migrants’ inscription in the racial/ethnic hierarchy of metropolitan global cities. In this sense, there is a periphery outside and inside the core zones, and there is a core inside and outside the peripheral regions. (Grosfoguel, 2007, pp. 219–220)

The coloniality of power cannot be separated from the coloniality of being, as power is displayed and exercised over the colonised human beings.

Coloniality of Being

Protected and covered by the project of colonialism, the coloniality of being is concerned with the “ontological dimension of the coloniality of power—that is, lived experience of modern/colonial world system in which colonised and dominated populations are rendered inferior, partially or fully less than human, while others are presented as the expression of humanity” (Maldonado-Torres, 2004). Those considered fully human are conquerors or beneficiaries of conquest. With the coloniality of being, colonised subjects are robbed of their humanity through daily exposure to dehumanisation. Wynter (2003) argues that western thought excessively emphasises biological factors in defining humanity, overlooking the role of symbolic creations and language in shaping what it means to be human. When she coined the concept of “genres of being human,” she states that definitions of humans are diverse, evolving, and contested, leading to varying interpretations of “the human” (Wynter, 2003). For Wynter, coloniality of being is marked by the construction of Othered beings. She holds that “The New World peoples had to be seen and constructed, increasingly by all Europeans, in neo-Sepúlvedan terms as forms of human Otherness, if to varying degrees, to a now secularising West’s own” (Wynter, 2003, p. 44).

With the coloniality of being, colonised subjects’ inner humanity is rendered empty and converted into another being—a western being. From there, colonised subjects remain as people without inner bodies who deserve to be (to exist) in the world. Coloniality of being, therefore, “refers to the fact that the condemned other does not possess any human worth” (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 253). The vision of coloniality of being is to ensure that colonised subjects’ humanity is taken away and to recharge the pseudo-humanity that facilitates the coloniser to control and dictate the colonised, who from now on must follow blindly, as he/she is no longer in possession of his/her original humanity.

In the African context, “The concept of ‘coloniality of being’ locates the roots of violence against Africans and other colonised people within the expansion of western modernity” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013c, p. 132). Those people whose being is questioned, inferiorised, and marginalised are victims of the coloniality of being. It is from this concern that some unavoidable ontological questions arise, “because it is the systematised negation of the other,

a frenzied determination to deny the other any attribute of humanity, colonialism forces the colonised to constantly ask the questions: ‘Who am I in reality?’” (Fanon, [1961] 2017, p. 243). In the anti-Black world, “the Black [person] has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man” (Fanon, [1952] 2008, p. 90). The lack of ontological resistance emerges from the fact that the colonised subject carries the pseudo-inner and body that he/she was not to have, and he/she can no longer have the ontological resistance against the white master.

According to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013c), “Coloniality of being can be summarised as a state of human exception from the order of normal being as represented by the coloniser” (p. 133). In this study, I hold that coloniality of being focuses more on the control of the mind and the consciousness of the colonised subjects. The study observes that with the coloniality of being, the humanity of the colonised subject is arbitrarily taken away, which leaves him/her as an object that does not have any ontological thinking. This is the reason why this thesis maintains that the “‘Coloniality of being’ captures the central question of effects of coloniality on lived experiences of colonised people that were mediated by the master-slave and coloniser-colonised dialectic where violence was naturalised and routinised as a key feature of colonial government” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013c, p. 132). Critically, Murunga (2004) denies the global “deceitful slogans of peaceful globalisation or an accommodating multiculturalism in that African identities are allegedly equally paired with other identities globally” (p. 27). Meaning that, there is no such proof that African identities are equal to those of Euro-North America due to the western man who continues daily to dehumanise other subjects located in the Global South, including South Africa.

In the scheme of the coloniality of being, the conquered subject’s humanity is questioned or dismissed. Coloniality of being mainly targets ontological destruction and “what emerges then is the question of the non-human” (Sithole, 2021, p. 131). The non-human is only applicable to the conquered subjects, while the coloniser is highly estimated and elevated to the altar of being—being human. The coloniality of being is linked to the coloniality of power that allowed the success of conquest and colonisation and affects the existential being of the colonised subjects. Negative impact of coloniality of being for colonised subjects is innumerable, with the main impact being the destruction of the inner of the colonised body. Removing or deleting this inner is equal the success of coloniality of being as the colonised body is left as a denied body or a carcass that cannot be questioned anymore because when Fanon ([1961] 2017) looks at man in European lifestyles and technology, he sees a constant denial of Black human being,

an avalanche of murders. In Fanon's view, the denial of a Black person by a white master is pure coloniality of being favoured by the ongoing dehumanisation in the anti-Black world.

According to Restrepo (2018), "the coloniality of being not only affects those who are cast as inferior and dehumanised but also those who imagine themselves as superior and as embodying the paradigm (with their racialised articulations)" (p. 3). It means that the white master also indirectly loses his/her humanity as he/she confers himself/herself a dominium ontological position, and this becomes questionable in the society lived by colonised subjects. Coloniality of being takes away all the human attributes and values of colonised people. The ontological question that arises here is concerned with what it means to be a human in this anti-Black world. The sad reality is that "the *longue-durée* project of colonialism is built and sustained by the continual deaths of colonised subjects who are daily exposed to the human being butchery, hence they are not recognised as full human beings" (Ndayisenga, 2022, p. 7). "It is therefore in the name of the spirit of Europe that Europe justified its crimes and legitimised the slavery in which it held four-fifths of humanity" (Fanon, [1961] 2017, p. 298). The coloniality of being, therefore, decorates all visions and tendencies for different crimes against Black humanity. It is critical that "In the white world, the man [/woman] of colour encounters difficulties in elaborating his body schema. The image of one's body is solely negating" (Fanon, [1952] 2008, p. 90). Such a negation of one's body justifies the ongoing and organised dehumanisation that colonised subjects experience daily. In the same circle, it means that denying one's humanity equals denying one's knowledge. The next concept to be discussed is the coloniality of knowledge.

Coloniality of Knowledge

Due to coloniality of knowledge, indigenous knowledge from the colonised world is neglected and disregarded. Coloniality of knowledge, therefore, is created and maintained by the Eurocentric episteme that recognises only one side (line) to produce what it calls true knowledge while, simultaneously, rejecting the knowledge that is produced daily in the colonised worlds. The coloniality of knowledge facilitates Euro-North Americans to violate and appropriate the knowledge of the colonised. The coloniality of knowledge denies another knowledge produced outside of the western canon. Consequently, such denied knowledge remains unrecognised in the world of knowledge production. "Coloniality of knowledge, therefore, has to the domination, marginalisation, distortion, and or violation of the knowledge of the other" (Mignolo, 2007, p. 162). This means that with the coloniality of knowledge in

effect, knowledge produced in the local and traditional places is suppressed arbitrarily. In this study, coloniality of knowledge denotes coloniality of university knowledge in South African universities. For this reason, Mignolo observes that:

What matters is not economics, politics, or history, but knowledge. Better yet, what matters is history, economics, race, gender, and sexuality, but it is above all the knowledge that is intertwined in all these practical spheres that entangle us to the point of making us believe that it is not knowledge that matters, but history, economy, politics, etc. Ontology is made of epistemology. (Mignolo, 2018, p. 134)

For Mignolo, what first matters is knowledge—without knowledge, nothing else is possible. He places knowledge at the centre of everything. It is at the centre of all other sectors of human development because some studies, including economics, politics, history, geography, physics, and biology, first require the application of knowledge before engaging with them. This thesis observes that coloniality of knowledge is the root cause of epistemic injustice being manifested in South African universities. Coloniality of knowledge silences other (indigenous) knowledges because:

The coloniality of knowledge is constituted by a pattern of global classification and hierarchisation of knowledge, where some forms of knowledge appear as authentic and relevant while other forms of knowing are expropriated, made to seem inferior, and silenced to the point that they cease to be knowledge and appear instead as ignorance or superstitions. (Restrepo, 2018, p. 3)

In this study, I maintain that the current coloniality of knowledge is the root cause of the epistemic injustices in South African universities. Scholars and intellectuals from the Global South are mounting resistance to the coloniality of knowledge because:

The coloniality of knowledge refers to the effect of the subalternisation, folklorisation, or invisibilisation of a multiplicity of knowledges that does not respond to the modalities of production of ‘western thought’ associated with conventional science and expert discourses. The coloniality of knowledge supposes, therefore, a kind of ‘epistemic arrogance’ whereby those who imagine themselves to be modern and consider themselves the owners of the most adequate (or only) means for assessing truth (be it theological or secular) thereby suppose that they can manipulate the natural or social world according to their interests. (Restrepo, 2018, pp. 3–4)

Elsewhere, I assert that “because of coloniality, Black ideas and thoughts have been silenced while whiteness has been decorated with glory multicolours” (2022, p. 8). For Euro-North America to be able to control the world continuously, white colonists put more effort into the coloniality of knowledge as the major form of coloniality above all other forms of coloniality. Thereby, the “Coloniality of knowledge directly addresses the crucial question of how western modernity spread through displacing other cultures, subordinating others, and colonising the imagination of the colonised peoples” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013a, p. 20). With coloniality of knowledge, knowledge produced by colonised subjects is denied and questioned. The knowledge produced in the Global South is considered inferior or even arbitrarily rejected.

The coloniality of knowledge discriminates and is not tolerable because, in the colonised world, “The fundamentals of Eurocentric knowledge are based on a binary system that excludes certain knowledge systems (for the colonised subjects) while elevating others” (Hlabangane, 2021, p. 166) Obviously, the other systems evoked here are for the colonisers who appoint themselves as the only knowers because, in the western view, “knowledge is thus a mechanism that justifies domination and conquest” (Hlabangane, 2021, p. 166). The study emphasises that the danger behind the coloniality of knowledge is that subjects who are dominated epistemically cannot even be aware that they are being dominated epistemically. I would like to emphasise that in this thesis, coloniality refers to present and ongoing forms of epistemic domination, epistemic injustice, epistemic violence, and epistemic inequalities experienced daily by colonised students in South African universities. Coloniality of (university) knowledge will be greatly discussed in *Chapter 2* of this thesis.

Decoloniality

The concept of decoloniality cannot be fully understood without a prior understanding of what coloniality means in the first place. According to Dong Gu (2020), “In common language, the concept ‘decoloniality’ grows out of ‘coloniality’, and ‘coloniality’ grows out of ‘colonialism’ – the consequences of colonisation” (p. 1). Departing from this point, the study relevantly advances that the concept of decoloniality cannot be fully explicated without revisiting a detailed description of coloniality. As a point of importance to Dong Gu’s statement, it should first be taken into consideration while analysing the roots of decoloniality:

With colonialism and coloniality came resistance and refusal. Decoloniality necessarily follows, derives from, and responds to coloniality and the ongoing colonial process and condition. It

[decoloniality] is a form of struggle and survival, an epistemic and existence-based response and practice—most especially by colonised and racialized subjects—*against* the colonial matrix of power in all of its dimensions, and *for* the possibilities of an otherwise. (Walsh, 2018, p. 17)

Therefore, “decoloniality that is argued here cannot be understood without understanding the modernity/coloniality that engendered it, and of course, without modernity/coloniality, there would be no need for decoloniality, because there would be nothing to decolonise” (Mignolo, 2018, p. 109).

The concept of decoloniality is therefore obliged to always be accompanied by its mother term, coloniality. In fact, everyone located in the colonised world experiences coloniality in their everyday lives. It is linked to the principles of globalisation, considering that “coloniality/decoloniality, when introduced by Aníbal Quijano in 1990, was the hinging moment of the closing of the Cold War and the opening of neoliberal global design (i.e., globalism)” (Walsh & Mignolo, 2018, p. 6). This thesis values to a high extent how “The concept of coloniality opened up two trajectories at once: on the one hand, it brought to light the darker side of modernity and, on the other, it mutated decolonisation into decoloniality and decolonial thinking” (Mignolo, 2018, p. 112). Without coloniality, there should not therefore be the naissance of decoloniality. Decoloniality is the antithesis and antidote of coloniality. In this thesis, decoloniality means a tool that has the potential solution to both problems of coloniality of university knowledge and epistemicide and later permits the realisation of pluriversity knowledge in South African universities. The next meaning is about the decolonial epistemic perspective.

Decolonial Epistemic Perspective

The decolonial epistemic perspective generally refers to the political intervention that has the ambition to challenge or question epistemic injustices occurring in knowledge production. It places colonised subjects at the centre to understand how their rejected knowledges should be honoured again, revalued, and restored. It is the epistemic system that privileges epistemologies that have been rejected, banned, ignored, and rendered irrelevant by the Euro-North American epistemic system. It denies the monolithic knowledge advanced by Euro-North America and encourages what Santos (2007) refers to as ecologies of knowledges. Elsewhere, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013, p. 7) describes the decolonial epistemic perspective as aiming “to critique and possibly overcome the epistemological injustices put in place by imperial global designs and questions and challenges the longstanding claims of Euro-American epistemology to be

universal, neutral, objective, disembodied, as well as being the only mode of knowing”. In the context of this thesis, the decolonial epistemic perspective as a concept within the theoretical corpus of decoloniality is used as an asset of decoloniality when it comes to unmasking epistemicide and coloniality of university knowledge in South African universities.

Dehumanisation

Fanon ([1961] 2017, p. 243) argues that colonialism is a systematic negation of the other person and a furious determination to deny the other person all attributes of humanity. The ‘other person’ that Fanon is referring to is the Black subject who suffers conquest, colonisation, and domination. The colonised who happened to be Black in South Africa, “having no value on their own, and having a value in terms of their overuse and misuse, deprivation and degradation, shame and humiliation, dehumanisation and death, the slave has nothing that counts as human” (Sithole, 2021, p. 134). In this thesis, dehumanisation refers to the negation and rejection of colonised subjects’ humanity, keeping in mind that denying someone’s humanity automatically means also denying his/her epistemic values. As a point of clarification to this Memmi ([1974] 2003) notes:

What is left of the colonised at the end of this suborn effort to dehumanise him? He is surely no longer an alter ego of the coloniser. He is hardly a human being. He tends rapidly toward becoming an object. As an end, in the coloniser’s supreme ambition, he should exist only as a function of the needs of the coloniser, i.e., be transformed into a pure colonised. (p.130)

Césaire ([1955] 2000) also strongly condemns that colonialist Europe is dishonest in always trying to justify dehumanisation. In colonised milieux, colonised subjects are objectified or sometimes referred to zoologically, by the names of animals. Dehumanisation takes away all human attributes of the colonised subjects.

Epistemicide

Epistemicide, as understood and used in this thesis, is the systemic and structural destruction of native and indigenous knowledge that happens in the process of colonisation and that remains as coloniality of knowledge and knowledge inequality after administrative colonialism has been dethroned. According to Santos (2014, p. 238), the “dominant epistemologies have resulted in a massive waste of social experience and, particularly, in the massive destruction of ways of knowing that did not fit the dominant epistemological canon. This destruction I call *epistemicide*”. In Santos’s understanding, epistemicide should be defined as the arbitrary

destruction of native knowledges and the replacement of these knowledges with the dominant western epistemologies. Epistemicide is the actual systemic and structural “killing and expropriations of knowledges of the colonised” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni & Zondi, 2016, p. 5). In the context of this study, epistemicide denotes the rejection, denial, killing, silencing, and usurpation of knowledges produced by students and staff from the indigenous colonised communities and local South African universities. It is because of epistemicide that African languages and epistemologies are not centred in South African universities. As discussed deeply in Chapter 3 of this thesis, epistemicide is the negative impact of the coloniality of university knowledge.

Epistemic Violence

Violence is not only physical, but can also be psychological and epistemic. As explained and defined above, epistemicide, for instance, can be considered as genocide in the cultural and epistemic sense. According to Fanon ([1961] 1990), “the violence which has ruled over the ordering of the colonial world is the same violence which will be claimed and taken over by the native” (p. 31). In general, violence as a concept is defined as the use of physical force by someone to offend, harm, or kill another person. In the context of this thesis, epistemic violence refers to the ongoing destruction, distortion, marginalisation, and exclusion of indigenous and native knowledges in South African and African universities, meaning that the concept of epistemic violence is synonymously used with epistemicide. In the conceptualisation of Grosfoguel (2013), the process of conquering and colonising the Global South was accompanied by the genocides of the bodies of the conquered and epistemicides of the knowledges of the natives. Genocide and epistemicide, in that way, are colonial forms of (epistemic) violence in the context of this thesis. Epistemic violence is used in the context of this study same as the concept of epistemicide.

Locus of Enunciation

Decoloniality assumes that a subject who thinks, writes, and speaks does so from a body, geopolitical, social, political, and, therefore, epistemic location. Generally, the locus of enunciation can be explained as “the geo-political and body-political location of the subject that speaks” (Grosfoguel, 2007, p. 213). Santos is a typical example of this concern, just like Sartre, in his preface to Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth*. Both white European philosophers think, write, and speak from the locus of enunciation of the Global South while geographically

located in the Global North. In the context of this study, locus of enunciation means the positionality of the scholars and writers, where two scholars may be writing from the same region but not necessarily sharing the same positionality.

Pluriversity Knowledge

The idea of the university, according to Mpofu (2020), is problematic in that it assumes abstract universality of knowledge and ignores that there is diverse knowledge/s in the world including knowledges of the Global South. Decolonising the university should mean allowing not just universal knowledge that is western and colonial, but also a plurality of universal knowledges—a pluriverse and not just a universe. According to Santos (2021), pluriversity knowledge:

It is a transdisciplinary knowledge that, by its very contextualisation, demands a dialogue or confrontation with other kinds of knowledge, which makes it more heterogeneous internally and allows it to be more adequately produced in less perennial and more open systems organised less rigidly and hierarchically. (p. 203)

Pluriversity knowledge is an antithesis of university knowledge. In the context of this study, pluriversity knowledge refers to the relevant knowledge that is imperative for genuine epistemic decolonisation to be realised in the universities of South Africa, with a focus on the promotion of diversity when it comes to knowledge production. Pluriversity knowledge, as proposed by Santos as a convenient alternative to monopolised university knowledge, constitutes diversity and plurality of knowledges that accommodate indigenous and native knowledges and have been freed of colonial and racist epistemic prejudices and biases.

University Knowledge

As critiqued by Santos and others, “university knowledge is the scientific knowledge produced in universities or institutions separate from the universities, but which retain a similar university *ethos*” (Santos, 2021, p. 201). Here, Barnett (2000, p. 1) strongly advances that “the knowledge for which the university stands lacks legitimacy can simply be understood as a set of language games of the rather privileged set of occupational groups that reflects their interests and marginal standing to the rest of society”. University knowledge, which is dominated by western science in the colonised milieu, satisfies capitalism rather than the local society members.

It is from such a perspective that, in this thesis, university knowledge refers to the status quo of the westernised and colonial knowledge that is dominant and hegemonic at South African universities specifically and in Africa generally. In this thesis, I argue that in South African universities, university knowledge is tantamount to western knowledge at the expense of the South African indigenous knowledge.

In conclusion, in this thesis, I use Santos' concepts to demonstrate how South African universities can genuinely be decolonised. It is from such a perspective that I must provide insights into the leading key concepts used in this study. Understanding the main key concepts of the study was imperative for comprehending where each concept originated and how it is used contextually in the study. It is important to note that concepts may differ depending on the context of the study. Conceptual clarity thus helps the reader to clearly differentiate the concepts' origins, common meanings and contextual uses of the main key concepts of the study. This clarity of concepts must anticipate and be explained before Chapters 2, 3, 4 which all require deep debates and discourses based on the key concepts. An early explanation of key concepts was thus a prerequisite as it prepares the reader for the other chapters that will follow.

1.10 Outline of the Thesis

This study comprises five chapters:

Chapter 1 outlines what the thesis looks like. It draws a picture of the thesis by providing the introduction, background, and context of the study, research problem, research question, objectives of the study, research arguments, motivation of the study, research methodology, definitions, contextual denotations, and clarity of key concepts and finally this outline of the thesis.

Chapter 2 is about coloniality of university knowledge/westernised universities. In South Africa, university knowledge is explained as knowledge that is dominated by western science at the expense of local/indigenous knowledges. At the same time, westernised university is defined and discussed as an extension of the Euro-North America's university in the colonised milieu. In this thesis, I argue that South African universities are labelled as westernised universities since they are dominated by western science rather than local/indigenous knowledge. First, the chapter discusses Santos's concept of university knowledge as an exclusive knowledge. Second, the chapter engages with discourses on the concept of university knowledge. Third, the chapter unpacks concerns and discussions on the 'westernised

university' in South Africa. Fourth, the chapter argues that renewed resistance and students protests are consequences of westernising South African universities. Fifth, Steve Biko's philosophy of Black Consciousness, FeesMustFall and RhodesMustFall, are all discussed along with the westernised university in South Africa. Lastly, the last subheading explains how South African Higher Education System can genuinely be decolonised.

Chapter 3 provides discourses on the concept of epistemicide. In the context of this study, epistemicide is discussed as the erasure of indigenous knowledge and its replacement by western knowledge. It is from this perspective that epistemicide is viewed as problematic, a negative impact of the coloniality of university knowledge. The chapter is divided into two subheadings. First, the chapter critically discusses if epistemicide is a reality in South Africa. Second, epistemicide is explained as a theoretical lens that allows one to understand epistemic injustice in South African universities. The last section concludes the chapter.

In *Chapter 4*, pluriversity knowledge is argued as the potential solution to both problems: the coloniality of university knowledge, and epistemicide. Arguments depart from the fact that, together with decoloniality, pluriversity knowledge accommodates different forms of knowledges from different scholars based in different loci of enunciation. The chapter is discussed into six subheadings. In the first, I provide discourses on pluriversity knowledge with reference to South African universities. In the second, I argue and demonstrate that pluriversity knowledge is an inclusive knowledge. In the third, I explicate and justify how, through decoloniality, pluriversity knowledge theoretically allows deconstruction and challenging of university knowledge and epistemicide. In the fourth, I justify why pluriversity knowledge is realisable in South African universities. In the fifth, I explain the concept of decolonial epistemic perspective as a decoloniality asset. Lastly, decoloniality is discussed along with epistemologies of the South and the search for pluriversality in South African universities.

Chapter 5 is a general conclusion. In this last chapter, I restate some relevant statements, explain the thesis' novel contribution to the corpus of knowledge, elaborate on what is philosophical about my thesis. I show the thesis' uniqueness, and reflect freely on the thesis. I mention my position and positionality regarding the sexual harassment Boaventura de Sousa Santos is accused of, and before the concluding remarks, I provide suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

UNIVERSITY KNOWLEDGE/WESTERNISED UNIVERSITY

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores a range of decolonial discourses diverse, inclusive, and varied in/on South African universities. Based on Santos's concept of university knowledge, I explain and demonstrate that in South Africa, university knowledge is dominated by western science to the detriment of the local knowledge. I therefore argue that university knowledge is exclusive as it does not accommodate most scholars from different loci of enunciations. The chapter mainly illuminates various decolonial critiques about the westernisation of universities in South Africa, exposing to what extent they remain westernised. A westernised university is dominated by western science culture, both ontologically and epistemologically. Decolonial perspectives advance that western science culture is dominating indigenous science in the universities in South Africa and denying indigenous knowledge categorically and arbitrarily. The refusal to integrate indigenous sciences is a major cause of the ongoing protests in South African universities. This is why university students feel compelled to resist westernisation and seek genuine epistemic decolonisation.

Firstly, the chapter engages with Santos's concept of university knowledge. In this section, university knowledge is explained as exclusive knowledge. Secondly, the chapter provides discourses on university knowledge. Thirdly, the chapter critiques the westernised university in South Africa. Fourthly, the chapter unpacks the renewed resistance and students' protests as negative impacts for westernising South African universities. Fifthly, the chapter provides Biko's concept of Black Consciousness, FeesMustFall, and RhodesMustFall as challenges to westernisation of universities in South Africa. Before concluding, the chapter embarks on the examination of genuine epistemic decolonisation in the South African higher education system.

2.2 Santos's Concept of University Knowledge: An Exclusive Knowledge

University knowledge is the scientific knowledge produced in universities or institutions separate from universities, but retaining a similar university ethos (Santos, 2021, p. 201). Santos (2021) critically assesses university knowledge as the knowledge that has been privileged in the Euro-American model of the university. This westernised university has become hegemonic in the Global South, including South Africa. For Santos, university

knowledge is the knowledge that is built on a single abyssal line of thought. According to Santos (2014), “In the field of knowledge, abyssal thinking consists in granting to modern science the monopoly of the universal distinction between true and false, to the detriment of two alternative bodies of knowledge: philosophy and theology” (p. 119). Thus, “The exclusionary character of this monopoly is at the core of the modern epistemological disputes between scientific and non-scientific forms of truth” (Santos, 2014, p. 119). Santos (2014) argues that modern western thinking is abyssal thinking that recognises western science as the only certified and qualified true science to be taught in universities at the expense of other sciences found to be irrelevant in the Global South.

The coloniality of knowledge always victimises the Global South. It is often considered an empty zone when it comes to knowledge production. This is used to justify the absence of thinkers and original thoughts. Departing from his conception of global lines to ecologies of knowledges, Santos (2014) maintains that “on the other side of the line [in the Global South] there is no real knowledge, there are beliefs, opinions, intuitions, and subjective understandings, which, at the most, may become objects or raw materials for scientific inquiry” (p. 120). Coloniality of knowledge, therefore, is created and maintained by the Eurocentric episteme that recognises only one side (line) to produce what it calls true knowledge while, simultaneously, rejecting knowledges produced in the Global South. It is from this epistemic injustice that the visible and invisible lines are created:

Thus, the visible line that separates science from its modern others is grounded on the abyssal invisible line that separates science, philosophy, and theology, on one side, from on the other, knowledges rendered incommensurable and incomprehensible for meeting neither the scientific methods of truth nor their acknowledged contesters in the realm of philosophy and theology. (Santos, 2014, p. 120)

With the abyssal line in mind, western science culture is favoured to dominate university knowledge production and disregard other forms of indigenous knowledges that should have been fully recognised and taught in universities in equal measure to western knowledge. As a point of amplification, “the same abyssal cartography is constitutive of modern knowledge. Again, the colonial zone is par excellence, the realm of incomprehensible beliefs and behaviours that in no way can be considered knowledge, whether true or false” (Santos, 2014, p. 122). The coloniality of knowledge facilitates Euro-North Americans to violate and appropriate the knowledges of the colonised because:

In the realm of knowledge, appropriation ranges from the use of locals as guides and of local myths and ceremonies as instruments of conversion to the pillaging of indigenous knowledges of biodiversity, while violence ranges from the prohibition of the use of native languages in public spaces and the forcible adoption of Christian names to conversion and the destruction of ceremonial sites and symbols and all forms of racial and cultural discrimination. (Santos, 2014, p. 123)

From such a perspective, Santos *et al.* (2008) find it important for “opening up the canon of knowledge and recognition of difference” (p. ix). The recognition of difference in university knowledge production can assist in reducing the dominant western epistemology in the Global South, considering that “The most fundamental problem with the west’s attempt to establish ontology and epistemological homogeneity is that it limits our ability to investigate and understand our world” (De Matos-Ala, 2017, p. 5). Consequently, after being prevented from investigating different worlds, researchers are obliged to continue focusing on the same single geographical angle. This reduces the diversity and plurality of knowledge discovery. Therefore, it should be noted that:

If we continue to privilege a production of knowledge within academia focused on specific publications, we will certainly witness a decrease in discoveries and originality in scientific work and an increase in (safe) research that is publishable. These tensions suggest that we are living in a risk society rather than in a knowledge society. Competition seems to rule in academia, and it threatens the existence of an academic community. (Branco Sousa, 2011, p. 16)

The coloniality of knowledge denies other knowledges produced outside of the western canon. Consequently, such denied knowledges are not recognised in the realm of scientific knowledge, and “since scientific knowledge is not distributed in a socially equitable way, its interventions in the real world tend to serve the social groups having more access to such knowledge” (Santos, 2014, p. 189). Euro-North American scientists are classified as the only true scientists who merit recognition in universities, while Global South scientists are denied recognition, which is a pure epistemic injustice.

In the African context, “Epistemic injustice is understood as the tendency to doubt the capacity of certain people to be reliable knowers” (Masaka, 2019, p. 6). In this concern, Collyer *et al.* (2019) assert that “Indigenous knowledge movements present a powerful critique of the imperialist structure of knowledge in mainstream social science, where colonised peoples are still treated as objects of knowledge” (p. 13). Mudimbe is disappointed that western scientists

have appointed themselves as the makers, producers, and deciders on what must be regarded as science or not. Mudimbe puts it as follows:

The master of the storytelling performance is the listener who, when bored, can stop at any time or simply cease to listen [...] any successful will to truth, converted into dominating knowledge and actualized as an imperialist project (geographically internal or external), might transform itself into a will to 'essentialist' prejudices, divisions, and destructions. (Mudimbe, 1994, p. 213)

The knowledge being taught to students in African universities, especially in South Africa, is questionable and deserves to be seriously challenged. To accomplish this, we need to launch an unstoppable project of genuine epistemic decolonisation. Moreover, for genuine epistemic decolonisation to be realised, Santos (2014) argues that one must adopt or accommodate the principles of the ecologies of knowledges. In fact, "the ecology of knowledges confronts the logic of the monoculture of scientific knowledge and rigour by identifying other knowledges and criteria of rigour and validity that operate credibly in social practices pronounced non-existent by metonymic reason" (Santos, 2014, p. 188). According to Wojciechowski (2010), "The ecology of knowledge is the study of the relationship existing between humans and the body of knowledge" (p. 1). In the African context, the knowledge of students who are enrolled in various universities in Africa is non-existent because their humanity is arbitrarily denied, and the denial of their humanity equals the denial of their knowledge. Consequently, students and thinkers from the Global South are not considered when evaluating the ecology of knowledges that must be integrated into universities. However, it is imperative to note that "at every step of the ecology of knowledges, it is crucial to ask if what one is learning is valid and if what one already knows should be forgotten or unlearned and why" (Santos, 2014, p. 188), just to ensure that the knowledge claimed by the oppressed subjects is genuine and can be used in decolonised universities.

Importantly, based on Santos's thought on decolonising the university, this thesis is concerned with the kinds of knowledge produced in universities, while specifically focusing on universities located in South Africa. Similarly Santos (2021) advises that "it is not possible to discuss the university as an institution without questioning the kinds of knowledge produced by it, given that they are not the only ones circulating in the society or guiding social relations and the lives of citizens" (p. xviii). The knowledge produced in universities is not the only knowledge that societies use. Furthermore, the knowledge produced in universities is facing

challenges when it comes to its application in societies, especially those from the Global South. Step by step, Barnett significantly demonstrates:

For various reasons, it is becoming felt that the knowledge function of the university is being undermined. Some, indeed, have come to suggest that we are witnessing ‘the end of knowledge’ in higher education. The ‘end of knowledge’ thesis takes three forms. *Substantively*, it is felt that the knowledge sustained by the university has no particular status: it simply takes its place and its chances amid the proliferating knowledges that society has now to offer. *Ideologically*, it is felt that the knowledge for which the university stands lacks legitimacy: it can simply be understood as a set of language games of the rather privileged set of occupational groups (‘academics’) that reflects their interests and marginal standing to the rest of society. *Procedurally*, it is applied that the university can now only secure its future by becoming entrepreneurial and by marketing its knowledge wares in forms of academic capitalism; in the process, its knowledge becomes performative and loses its power to enlighten. (Barnett, 2000, p. 1)

In Barnett (2000), the end of knowledge conception is summarised in three forms almost linked to one another. Using a substantive view, Barnett first assesses whether the knowledge that is produced by the university has any particular status that may be beneficial to society. Considering this, it means that the university is decolonising itself and is forced to provide programmes that are no longer beneficial for society members. Secondly, Barnett’s view is based on an ideology that challenges the legitimacy of knowledge produced at the university. Here, Barnett claims that the knowledge produced at universities is hijacked and confiscated by a small group for their interests at the expense of society. Lastly, Barnett focuses on the procedural form. He suggests that if university knowledge is willing to survive, it must become a private enterprise and market its knowledge in the form of academic capitalism. Otherwise, their knowledge will lose its power to enlighten and contribute to society.

In amplification, Santos anticipates elucidating on Barnett’s third form above in arguing that it is now an open secret that “In a few decades, the university went from producing knowledge and professionals for the market to becoming itself a market, the market of tertiary education, and finally, at least according to powerful visionaries, to being run like a market organization”. (Santos, 2012, p. 11) states that the university does not care about its students or staff members but focuses on its interests as an organisation that is fully occupied by epistemic business rather than producing knowledge that is beneficial to local students. However, according to

Nyanchoga (2014), “the politics of knowledge production is an attempt to explain the centrality of knowledge in the sustainability of human society through time” (p. 1). Diverse knowledge must be produced to accumulate a rich knowledge amassed from various corners of the world. However, in the contemporary period, with its sadism and cynicism, the university has chosen to consider itself omnipotent when it comes to knowledge production. The university is called to be flexible and avoid committing epistemicide and coloniality of knowledge over other indigenous ways of knowing which are experienced daily by colonised subjects located in the Global South.

In the Global South, scholars are highly concerned about the university and its knowledge production because in colonised parts of the world, universities continue “privileging knowledge that emanates from the North while displacing, occluding, and erasing knowledge that is developed locally; importantly, it is useful to consider that this local displacement of knowledge has always been to the detriment of Black/Indigenous Knowledge Systems” (Kumalo, 2021, p. 1). Santos agrees with Kumalo that university knowledge is “a homogenous and hierarchically organised knowledge insofar as agents who participate in its production share the same goals of producing knowledge, have the same training and same scientific culture, and do what they do according to well-defined organisational hierarchies” (Santos, 2021, pp. 201–202). This sameness of agents who have the veto to participate in knowledge production is driven and justified by the coloniality of knowledge to continue with the promotion of epistemic imperialism. Hence, “In place of colonialism as the main instrument of imperialism we have today neo-colonialism” (Nkrumah, 1965, p. ix), considering the coloniality of knowledge, therefore, cooperates with neo-colonialism.

Using coloniality of knowledge, the dominance of western science in universities in Africa, and particularly in South Africa has disadvantaged not only the African science culture but also its civilisation. The domination of western epistemologies has nullified the glory of African civilisation because “Black children [within Africa and] overseas are not taught of the glory of African civilisation in the history of mankind, of pillaged cities and destroyed tribes” (Nkrumah, 1973, p. 42). Before the technological era, western scientists developed theories and methodologies that were imposed and used in African universities. Today, with the combination of technology, western scientists dictate what African scholars and thinkers should study via Zoom. However, “From an African political perspective, these tools are not only dangerous but also colonial apparatuses based on the fact that the *same* tools are colonially

designed—a scandal for African society” (Ndayisenga, 2024, p. 1). To enforce the coloniality of university knowledge in Africa, colonialists have developed technological tools that enable them to maintain control of knowledge production in the colonised countries. Unfortunately, “with a few exceptions, they produced studies *about* the subaltern rather than studies *with* and *from* a subaltern perspective. Like the imperial epistemology of Area Studies, the theory was still located in the North while the subjects to be studied are in the South” (Grosfoguel, 2007, p. 1).

Unfortunately, “until recently, the belief that Africans cannot think was widely accepted [...] In academic circles, too, an implicit presumption continues to hold sway that Africans do not think philosophically – or, at any rate, that they lack philosophical thinking” (Flickschuh, 2014, p. 4). Such arbitral and prejudicial racial discrimination should not have any place at a university. Its continuity provokes negative impacts. “Consequently, especially in the 1990s, universities were seen as tools for educational expansion rather than primarily as knowledge-generating institutions” (Kwiek, 2012, p. 3). Since the rise of the technological era, the university has greatly shifted from being a place where knowledge is produced to a kind of corporation where knowledge can be bought. This also justifies why university knowledge is the real cause of the epistemic crisis in the Global South generally and South African universities particularly.

It is important to remember that this thesis argues that knowledge is power, and power cannot be reached or maintained without knowledge, because “Knowledge represents an area where the applications of systemic concepts (systems theory) promise, particularly explanatory benefits. Modern and advanced societies and economies are being understood as knowledge based. Knowledge is regarded as crucial for sustaining wealth and competitiveness” (Carayannis *et al.* 2016, p. 3). Carayannis and others warn here that wealth cannot be reached and maintained without the intervention of the knowledge that they consider crucial. If the university's knowledge is in crisis, this may affect not only the university and scientific community but also society, as the university is considered the main site of knowledge production. In essence, it is highlighted that “knowledge is central. Knowledge is the star of each drama. Knowledge is dynamic, active, engaged and linked to social, political, cultural or sustainable changes” (Hall & Tandon, 2017, p. 5). Normally, without knowledge, students and staff members in South African universities will struggle to achieve their main goal, which is to have a genuinely decolonised university. However, we cannot achieve a decolonised

university if we neglect questioning the assessment methods used in universities. According to Godsell (2021), “if we do not bring decolonisation into assessment, it severely undermines the entire project of decolonisation” (pp. 1–2). Godsell’s (2021) concern is that if we focus solely on decolonising pedagogy and content but rely on existing assessment practices, decolonisation stops at precisely the moment at which students’ knowledge is measured. The assessment methods found in South African universities must no longer be western dominated.

University knowledge should not be used as a tool to discriminate against other thinkers who are not located in the Euro-North American glorified zone. Instead, it should be used to facilitate mediation between academia and society members who are not in the academic space. Generally, “Our understanding of the university research process is rooted in the framework of knowledge production, treating new knowledge as if it were the output of a typical production process” (Lee & Graff, 2018, p. 5). With university knowledge, for Lee and Graff, it must produce other new kinds of knowledge, and this would justify and prove that the university really qualifies to be a credible place where knowledge is supposed to be produced. Both old and new knowledges should be produced in universities, but this does not mean that the university must be the only qualified institution to produce knowledge. Other competent centres or organisations are also called to produce knowledges that can benefit societies.

University knowledge should lead by example to first enlighten the society where that university is and later other societies that need that university's knowledge. Otherwise, society will find itself relying on other kinds of knowledges produced outside universities. It is becoming promising for epistemic decolonial fighters and defenders as “The studies produced outside the universities, sponsored and financed by international organisations and private foundations, has had an enormous influence on public educational policy, determining issues as diverse as the curriculum and the selection of public school system directors” (Santos, 2021, p. 232). Aponte-Hernández (2015) responds to Santos:

With the emergence of the knowledge sector, universities have lost their status as the only site of knowledge production, since research centres in the economic sector and other groups of society are becoming more involved in creating and producing different kinds of knowledge to meet the ‘new economy’ requirements and society’s development needs. (p. 1)

Woods (2018) holds Aponte-Hernández’s view that “Funders and government call increasingly for research that is co-produced with non-academic partners” (p. 1); hence, the university as

“the site of knowledge production and vetting has been a subject of and basis for violence, discrimination, and domination” (Hlabangane, 2021, p. 166). In Africa, particularly South Africa, the university should produce knowledge that is in emergent need for society and not to satisfy the west’s preferred epistemology. The system of knowledge production must be inclusive and not exclusive. In South African universities, “The current system is already challenged in terms of inclusivity and diversity” (Maldonado-Maldonado & Lee, 2019, p. 1), due to the dominance of western epistemologies.

As is the case in most parts of the colonised world, knowledge production has been subject to colonial and imperial designs, as well as geopolitics that universalise European thought (Walsh, 2007). In his critical analysis regarding university knowledge, knowledge producers, and designers, Masaka agrees with Walsh that, “The ones who design and control the curriculum necessarily seek to achieve necessarily influence what must be taught *or not* ... The dominant class seeks to portray its philosophy paradigm as the dominant one by ensuring that it exclusively informs the curriculum” (Masaka, 2017, p. 4; [Emphasis added]). In South African universities, “The need to open academic knowledge production as a practical activity” (Kallio & Houtbeckers, 2020, p. 10) does not necessarily have to be debated, but is a reality that, if applied, can assist in preventing or reducing the ongoing epistemic crisis in universities.

Obviously, in the Global South and with a focus on South Africa, one reason among many that caused the epistemic crisis to continue is that “education is politicised, the curriculum is never simply a neutral assemblage of knowledge, somehow appearing in the texts and classrooms of a nation; indeed, it is always part of someone’s selection, some group’s vision of legitimate knowledge” (Apple, 1976, p. 209). Sensitively, it always matters to consider who is producing the knowledge that is being taught at universities. Critically, such knowledge is still dominated by western epistemology. Others outside the Euro-North American region being recognised as thinkers or knowledge producers can only emerge through a decolonial struggle.

Unfortunately, the role of the university in society’s development is downgraded because university knowledge is being sold to those who have a lot of money, rather than to the students who are registered there. This has become a culture in the current university due to capitalism and the marketisation of university knowledge. Lebakeng (2021) illuminates that “Africans cannot think of a ‘decolonial turn’ in the social sciences and humanities curriculum outside the process of epistemicide” (p. 122). Therefore, in fulfilling its accountability, the university should not easily neglect those in charge of the whole “responsibility of creating rich learning

conditions that prepare learners for their place in society by providing access to scientific knowledge of high quality—and an environment that bridges knowledge generation and the application of such knowledge in society” (Ndofirepi & Cross, 2017, p. 1). Due to the high demand for the adoption of pluriversity knowledge in universities in South Africa, “there is increasing pressure on universities to bridge the gap between higher education and society” (Waghid, 2002, p. 1). The absence of a connection between the university and society prevents pluriversity knowledge from being realisable.

Furthermore, “the planetary pedagogical system prevents the students from gaining knowledge through the application of their common sense and imprisons them within the suffocating compartments of so-called ‘academic disciplines’” (Dey, 2022, pp. 2–3). In the Global South, of which South Africa is a part, university students are often treated like prisoners and forced to study whatever programme is provided without any choice. The western education system imposed on them does not allow them to choose what must be taught in universities. University staff in the same part of the world are not consulted when it comes to designing and programming what must be taught to students. They are considered workers but not thinkers, and, regrettably, the western system arbitrarily decides on their behalf.

The western education system was not designed to allow the application of common sense in universities in the Global South and, especially in South Africa, because, “we must once again ask about the value of the so-called common sense knowledge, the knowledge which we, as an individual or as collective subjects, create and use to give meaning to our practices, but which science insists on considering irrelevant, illusory and false” (Santos, 2021, p. 14). The rejection of common sense in universities is the cause for students blindly study programmes from the Euro-North American canon. The knowledge that is more linked to their everyday lives is ignored since the western agenda is to transform students into docile western agents who have been trained outside the Euro-North American recognised zone. It is critical to keep in mind that “Unlike Aristotelian science, modern science distrusts the evidence of our immediate experience” (Santos, 2021, p. 19) as it “fashions itself as universal, objective, logocentric, apolitical and impartial, effectively casting itself as having a god-eye view of the world” (Hlabangane, 2021, p. 176), without caring or recognising other knowledges from the Global South.

Furthermore, university knowledge is also tested when it comes to political capitalism, marketing, and epistemic commerce on national or world rankings of universities, as Santos criticises as follows:

Concerning the highest-ranking universities of the global North, university capitalism is a recent development in a long historical continuity. Since these universities have always been closely associated with the formation of capitalist elites, university capitalism appears to be just an intensification of the aforesaid association ... On the contrary, in the case of the lower-ranking universities, and particularly universities of the global South, the new university capitalism represents a significant break with the past and, as regards the future, almost a death foretold. (Santos, 2021, pp. 356–357)

The politics behind national/world rankings of universities are linked to capitalism, but they are also intended to discourage almost all other universities in the Global South, as Santos above asserts. The ranking of universities covers colonialism and capitalism, which are driving western epistemology so that it remains eternally dominant in the world. The politics of ranking universities should also be greatly critiqued as it appears to be a major tool that assists the western epistemic agenda for their universities to carry on with brain-draining, where all clever students/professionals from the Global South are targeted to leave their local universities to join well-ranked universities in Euro-North America. Epistemologists from Euro-North America already know that “In a knowledge society, the basic economic resource is no longer capital, or natural resources or even labour, but knowledge” (Okemwa, 2011, p. 2) itself because with knowledge, almost everything is possible. The fight among powerful nations over who should produce knowledge is linked to the struggle of the epistemic empire, which Euro-North America has already declared to have achieved.

Furthermore, it should not be neglected that “the dominant university knowledge has two bases: modern science and Eurocentrism” (Santos, 2021, p. xviii), considering that the principles of modernity and Eurocentrism only consider that there is “No other knowledge before theirs. No other knowledge except theirs. No other knowledge after theirs” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2016, p. 33), with ‘theirs’ referring to western thinkers. Ndlovu-Gatsheni uses the same tools of analysis as Hlabangane, who affirms that “western knowledge silences views from its periphery while it valorises itself as the universal” (Hlabangane, 2021, p. 183). It presents itself as universal, but it also imposes what must be studied and how it must be studied on those who try to resist. The western knowledge that is dominant in universities in Africa, and particularly

in South Africa, is violent by nature. It is what I may call poor science as it promotes one side of knowledge and rejects others (the majority).

Santos suggests that pluriversity knowledge can be adopted as a potential alternative to challenge both epistemicide and the monopoly of university knowledge by the western canon. Such adoption will prevent the fatal bifurcation from happening in South African universities, considering that “The passage from university knowledge to pluriversity knowledge is, thus, a much ampler process than the commodification of the university and of the knowledge it produces” (Santos, 2021, p. 206). However, a shift from university knowledge to pluriversity knowledge must be fought by those who are epistemically suffering the consequences of western epistemic domination.

2.3 Discourses on University Knowledge

According to Santos (2021), university knowledge is privileged in the Euro-American model of the university and dominates in the Global South, including South Africa. Like the concept of epistemicide discussed above, university knowledge, as detailed by Santos, is part of the coloniality legacy in Global South universities. In other words, “university knowledge is the scientific knowledge produced in universities or institutions separate from the universities but which retain a similar university *ethos*” (Santos, 2021, p. 201). Santos is concerned that the production of university knowledge is being questioned in the current world. Many decolonial scholars accuse the western world of creating a hegemonic episteme production that benefits them to the detriment of the colonised world, which is also known as the Global South. Such scientific knowledge is intentional as it envisions elevating the western epistemologies to the altar of knowledge production and its validation while denying, rejecting, and destroying other sciences that are produced locally in the colonised world.

Pertinently, Santos (2021) highlights that:

It [university knowledge] is a homogenous and hierarchically organised knowledge insofar as the agents who participate in its production share the same goals of producing knowledge, have the same training and the same scientific culture, and do what they do according to well-defined organisational hierarchies. (pp. 201–202)

This homogeneity of western knowledge is, for Santos, justified by the fact that university knowledge is dominantly produced by western epistemologists. Unfortunately, they promote the interests of the western world while producing new knowledges, and simultaneously

consider the knowledges produced in the Global South as invalid knowledges that do not deserve to be referenced. From this perspective, in reinforcing Santos's view, Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Zondi (2016) assert that "the current westernised university becomes a legitimate site of decolonial struggles because it continues to reproduce coloniality" (p. 4). The coloniality of university knowledge is a trigger of the epistemic crisis that has remained rampant in universities in the Global South, including South Africa.

Santos's political thought on the need to decolonise the university should therefore be founded on the fact that coloniality remains a rampant problem in universities in Africa, particularly in South Africa. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013a) holds that "universities in Africa are sites for the reproduction of coloniality. We so far do not have African universities. We have universities in Africa" (p. 1). In Africa and other colonised parts of the world, universities are present-absent. University knowledge favours the western science domination in different campuses of South African universities. This is why there is "a long list of African thinkers who have not stopped making this call for decolonisation and the Africanisation of knowledge and education" (Muchie, 2021, p. v). Contemporary university knowledge is in a continual crisis as it is confronted by daily questions related to epistemic freedom and justice because:

It comes at a time when there are growing calls for decolonisation and Africanisation of knowledge and education in Africa. These are coming from young people protesting in the streets, as well as revolutionaries in academia who are concerned about the continued colonial traditions in education and knowledge production. (Muchie, 2021, p. v)

Furthermore, Mudimbe (1994) concurs that "African literature as a commodity is a recent invention, and authors, as well as critics and specialists in the field, tend to resist this fact" (p. 177). Mudimbe argues that Euro-North American epistemologists believe that African literature is in its infancy—a point that most African epistemologists strongly reject. The exclusion of African literature in universities has been a point of discussion that most African authors still complain about. Epistemologies from the colonised world have been excluded and denied in universities. This has strengthened a single site of epistemologies from Euro-North America, which dominates university knowledge production, and that is why "the way in which one becomes a Black intellectual is highly problematic" (West, 1985, p. 2). The issue of coloniality of knowledge in South African universities cannot be debated, though there is a "possibility of South Africa becoming a PhD hub for the continent" (Cloete *et al.*, 2015, p. 96).

Thus, epistemic decolonisation in Africa should start in South Africa, considering that South African universities have many universities ranking best globally.

Due to the continual epistemic violence and attacks that target local people and their base communities, Wa Thiong'o (2016) strongly recommends that colonised subjects secure their base. Therefore, Wa Thiong'o's 2016 book *Secure the Base* invites all colonised subjects to protect their local communities as an effective way to confront the ongoing epistemicide and coloniality of university knowledge. Wa Thiong'o (2016) points out that "The neocolonial framework cannot be the foundation or even the cornerstone of African unity. Only a consistent anti-neocolonialism and a people-driven democracy can form such a foundation" (p. 57). Epistemologists from the Global South group strive to have an anti-neocolonial university as they seek to uproot the coloniality of knowledge and dominance of knowledge production by the western canon. The western cognitive empire is justified by the fact that:

The European enslavement and colonisation of Africa were about the control of knowledge about Africa. Africa became the battleground for the production of knowledge regarding Africa and the rest of the world, for it became apparent that the determination by the imperialist powers to gain control over African human and natural resources was, at the grassroots level, a struggle for political power and control over the human minds they tried to colonise. It was a struggle by the imperialists 'self' to dominate the colonised other 'other', the 'other' in this case being the Africans and other oppressed peoples of the world. (Nabudere, 2011, p. 1)

Nabudere's interest is to condemn western epistemic colonisation in Africa, where African subjects have been epistemically violated by the invasion of western science. Only western philosophy was granted supremacy over other forms of local thought. Such epistemic discrimination and injustice are real since "Epistemologically, dialectical materialism did not recognise the division of knowledge into disciplines. It upheld not only the unity of knowledge but also the view that all scientific knowledge was reducible to finite nomothetic propositions or universal laws" (Mafeje, 1991, p. 3). Like Nabudere, Mafeje criticises the universalisation of scientific knowledge after ignoring the contribution of indigenous knowledge from Africa and other colonised parts of the world. Neutral, Mathebula (2019) advises that "indigenous knowledge systems lack a clear, coherent, and unambiguous definition of 'knowledge'" (p. 6). However, such ambiguity is justified by the fact that indigenous knowledge in the African context is based on oral knowledge.

As advanced in this thesis, the “western philosophy of knowledge and knowing (assumptions, principles, theories guiding the knowing and an actual world-making knowledge) is ‘imperial/colonial politics’” (Mignolo’s interview with Sayan Dey, 21 January 2017). It is imperial because it separates true knowledge from the knowledge at the periphery, which justifies that it recognises its imbalances and inequalities. Thereby, by “recognising these inequalities, it is also vital to acknowledge that the imperial knowledge economy was never the only form of organised knowledge in the world” (Collyer *et al.*, 2019, p. 12). In turn, Aponte-Hernández (2015) responds to Santos that in our contemporary period:

With the emergence of the knowledge sector, universities have lost their status as the only site of knowledge production, since research centres in the economic sector and other groups of society are becoming more involved in creating and producing different kinds of knowledge to meet the ‘new economy’ requirements and society’s development needs. (Hernández, 2015, p. 1)

What differs in Santos’s view is that Aponte-Hernández demands that knowledge should be produced by communities in addition to the knowledge produced by corporations and institutions. While Santos and his supporters argue that the university is the supreme site of knowledge production, Aponte-Hernández demonstrates that the university is no longer the only site of knowledge production. His concern is that in the contemporary world, there is an increase in research centres, and such centres are involved in knowledge production. With a focus on the United Kingdom’s higher education and the increased regulation of universities’ research, Woods (2018) holds Aponte-Hernández’s view that “Funders and government call increasingly for research that is co-produced with non-academic partners” (p. 1). Hence, the university as “the site of knowledge production and vetting has been a subject of and basis for violence, discrimination and domination” (Hlabangane, 2021, p. 166). The university is uniquely intended to be a place for knowledge production, not a colonial institution marked by daily violence and the dehumanisation of oppressed students.

In the colonised world, universities are built on the principles of western science. In fact, “Such a western science erected an abyssal line between itself and other knowledge systems, casting itself as a superior kind of knowledge while castigating these other systems” (Hlabangane, 2021, p. 176). From this point of view, it is still critical how:

Western science has assumed the role of both player and arbiter, in that it prescribes a particular view of the world. Also, it imposes its view of what constitutes credible and worthy knowledge.

It is a master signifier—the alpha and the omega of knowledge systems. (Hlabangane, 2021, p. 176)

As is often the case in colonised parts of the world, knowledge production has long been subject to colonial and imperial designs, as well as geopolitics that universalise European thought as scientific truth. This has led to the subalternation and invisibilisation of other epistemes (Walsh, 2007). The urgent need to reconstruct social sciences and humanities is informed by the fact that as an academic project in Africa and, especially in South Africa, “such disciplines have failed to have a material bearing on Africa’s re-awakening as they remain warped in their western origins epistemologically, methodologically, and theoretically” (Lebakeng, 2021, p. 120). As a point of justification, Lebakeng (2021) illuminates that “Africans cannot think of a ‘decolonial turn’ in the social sciences and humanities curriculum outside the process of epistemicide” (p. 122). Thus, for Lebakeng, students must confront epistemicide as a serious problem that is a burden to the university, which allows for a decolonial turn. The process of epistemic decolonisation is not an easy task to achieve, especially considering that “Southern African whites, as a general category, not isolated individuals, are not willing or prepared to relinquish their hegemony established since the conquest of the sub-region. This includes white intellectuals of all persuasions” (Mafeje, 1997, p. 1). The following scenario is a witness to this statement:

Recently, an adult student approached the registrar’s office at a public university about returning to full-time study after a twenty-year gap. Somewhat sceptical about just how her work taken at the institution so many years earlier might apply, the registrar entered her courses into the computerised degree-audit program and found that not only were the twenty-year-old course numbers and titles the same as the current curriculum, but the general education and major requirements matched up as well. In short, it appeared that she could continue her program of study in psychology as though she had not been away. Interestingly, the department chair had been the chair when she was first enrolled at the institution long ago! (Ferren & Mussell, 2000, p. 246).

Ferren and Mussell (2000) highlight that this may be an isolated instance. However, it can be concluded from the scenario above that the curriculum is stable. Department chairs need not be concerned with change.

Santos and pro-Santos scholars have not negated the views of Aponte-Hernández, Woods, Hlabangane, Ferren, and Mussell. However, these scholars are concerned that universities and

research centres are monopolised by the Euro-North American canon. Santos and pro-Santos scholars believe that university knowledge production is based on homogeneity, where monologue is more welcome than dialogue. When it comes to knowledge production, “The current system is already challenged in terms of inclusivity and diversity” (Maldonado-Maldonado & Lee, 2019, p. 1). This monologue is maintained by Euro-North American epistemologists at the expense of knowledge producers from the Global South, which is why “with a few exceptions, they produced studies *about* the subaltern rather than studies *with* and *from* a subaltern perspective” (Grosfoguel, 2007, p. 1). This is why western epistemology results in and favours the monologue that a diversity of views.

Essentially, Euro-North America should not have ignored that “the subalterns can [also] speak” (Dey, 2018, p. 127). Departing from that point, it should be a justification that when it comes to knowledge production, “the power of universities needs to be broken down” (D’Silva, 2018, p. 4). Considering what is taught in the domains of social sciences and humanities, the western epistemology is still dominating because, “Like the imperial epistemology of Area Studies, the theory was still located in the North while the subjects to be studied are located in the South” (Grosfoguel, 2007, p. 1). Barnett (2000) testifies that “For various reasons, it is becoming felt that the knowledge function of the university is being undermined. Some, indeed, have come to suggest that we are witnessing ‘the end of knowledge’ in higher education” (p. 1). Western science considers itself as the only science to the detriment of the other multiple sciences found outside of Euro-North America. There is nothing new as everything related to science always comes from the same place, which is the end of western knowledge and the beginning of knowledge from the epistemologies of the South, as Santos (2014) suggested.

In the Global South, and South Africa particularly, it is regrettable that “In a few decades, the university went from producing knowledge and professionals for the market to becoming itself a market, the market of tertiary education, and finally, at least according to powerful visionaries, to being run like a market organization” (Santos, 2012, p. 11). Western epistemologists have declared themselves the masters of knowledge production, and they do not want to hear any other kind of knowledge that emerges outside of the Euro-North American canon. However, “there is a need to pay attention to the limits preferred through a continued focus on some of the dead white European males by bringing into greater focus on African ontological realities, which are currently marginalised across the disciplines” (Dube, 2021, p. 10). The concern of this study is that in the contemporary period, university students should

be taught programmes that communicate with their lived experiences, and this should assist them to learn to unlearn and then relearn. The university may have lost its mission as it tends to be more focused on commercial pursuits than being a centre for knowledge production and training. Almost all theories learned and used in the colonised world are imported from the west and imposed in the peripheral zones. This is the reason for Santos (2018) suggesting that “we don’t need another theory of revolution; we need rather to revolutionise theory” (p. ix), because “colonial education was European biased” (Nyanhoga, 2014, p. 11), and this must be fought revolutionarily.

Furthermore, Masaka (2021) points out that “knowledge confers power to its producers that might be inappropriately deployed to impose an inferior status to those contentiously considered incapable of producing it” (p. 1). Masaka (2021) elaborates that people living under epistemic conquest are denied the right to use their knowledge, produced within their terms and frameworks, to create power that they could use to attain their preferred goals. This includes the creation of new forms of knowledge that initiate or enhance their independence. It is for this reason that Mpofu and Steyn (2021) warn that the empire has co-opted, usurped, and colonised knowledge and world academia itself to be dominated by western science. Normally, “in world academia including the westernised universities in Africa and Asia, privileged academics and intellectuals use their professional and expert authority to defend and promote the empire” (Mpofu & Steyn, 2021, p. 11) for the western’s interests and to the detriment of scholars and thinkers from the Global South.

It is strange that epistemologists from the Global South have not yet reached the point of epistemic decision-making. Santos (2018) appeals:

Since constantly reinterpreting the world while changing it is a collective work, there is no room for philosophers conceived of as vanguard intellectuals. Instead, the epistemologies of the South call for rearguard intellectuals, intellectuals who contribute their knowledge to strengthening the social struggles against domination and oppression to which they are committed. (p. ix)

Santos encourages epistemologists from the denied zone—the Global South—and students who are unhappy with university programmes to resist the colonial epistemic violence that is ravaging traditional knowledge. More (2019) is concerned with the attitude of some intellectuals who nominate themselves as vanguard over others. In the African context, Black intellectuals are rejected regardless of academic brilliance. More puts it in the following words:

I have learned that in the social world, most, if not all, whites feel the urge to exercise intellectual authority over Blacks to a point where it is hard for them to even take you seriously when it is obvious that you are well above them, mentally and academically. (More, 2019, p. 11)

In addition, More (2019) continues to stress that:

Because academic philosophical discourse and practice reserve no place for Blacks, identifying myself as a philosopher felt like being a fish out of water. If philosophy is about thinking, ‘thinking, thinking itself,’ how is it possible that Black philosophers can exist? In other words, how is it possible that a nonthinker can think? (More, 2019, p. 10)

In More’s understanding, Black philosophers are arbitrarily rejected and removed from the list of thinkers and philosophers, which needs to be challenged. He does not understand how some white people can nominate themselves as the only thinkers at the expense of other thinkers from different schools of thought. Santos’s (2014) advancement of the “epistemologies of the South” intervenes as the arbiter between those who nominated themselves as the only thinkers and rejected thinkers from the periphery. However, some thinkers like Arendt cannot be easily convinced by Santos and More. From a radical western perspective, Arendt’s argument differs from both Santos and More because for Arendt (1970):

Negro students, most of them admitted without academic qualification, regarded and organised themselves as an interest group, the representatives of the Black community. Their interest was to lower academic standards. They were more cautious than the white rebels, but it was clear from the beginning that violence against them was not a matter of theory and rhetoric. (p. 18)

Arendt’s argument is supported by another radical voice from a western perspective: Castells (2018) notes that “if universities succumb to the temptation to promote social equity at the expense of knowledge production, they will end up merely providing ‘poor education for all’” (p. 1). Both Castells and Arendt’s arguments are negated by Mpofu and Steyn (2021) who support Santos’s argument that “knowledge, in the shape of science and philosophy, has been constructed and mobilised to lend responsibility, acceptability, and normality to war, social inequalities and dehumanisation of the lesser other” (p. 11). In the Global South, which includes South Africa, “the colonial myths of knowledge production not only erased the Indigenous histories and myths but also systematically erased selective episodes of European colonisation” (Nirmal & Dey, 2022, p. 9). By erasing the histories of colonised subjects, colonialists were committing epistemicide, meaning that the destruction of someone’s history

equals deleting his/her knowledge, but also, to a deep extent, this equals the ontological suspension of the colonised. In relation to that raised pint, Mafeje asserts that:

Therefore, to be able to decode certain texts, the interlocutor must have a deep understanding of their historical context. The argument here is not that social formations are determined by the ethnographies which accompany them, but that ethnographies provide codes for the conduct, social classification, and ideological reproduction. (Mafeje, 1991, p. 9).

In his political thought, Mafeje is concerned that university knowledge ignores the historical Black experience, while certain texts require a native interlocutor who can decode them based on his/her life experience. He maintains that South African universities should consider using ethnography. Western science may not be capable of interpreting certain coded texts that require a native speaker for clear and adequate decoding. Santos's conception of the epistemologies of the South resonates well with Mafeje's conception of not neglecting ethnography while attempting to interpret and produce university knowledge. Drawing from his positionality and political and intellectual intervention, it is attested that:

In many ways, Archie Mafeje was one of the African intellectual pathfinders. He contributed immensely to the African people's search for self-understanding, self-determination, and political emancipation as they struggled against alienation and misrepresentation. He did this through his role as an African scholar, intellectual, thinker, and academic. In this role, Mafeje did an excellent job and left a heritage that future young scholars and thinkers will have to complete. His attempts in this direction were not single-handed. He was one among many intellectuals who defended Africa's 'civilisational' achievements and succeeded in asserting and defending the African identity and Africanity. (Nabudere, 2011, p. 1)

Nabudere testifies that, as an African scholar, Mafeje was a great intellectual and thinker who significantly criticised the anti-Black world that alienates and misrepresents Black subjects in the contribution of knowledge and knowledge production. Thus, Mafeje's works are the main gateway for Santos's epistemologies of the South to be realised in South Africa, particularly, and in Africa generally. Analytically, "Archie Mafeje was a very independent Pan-Africanist and cosmopolitan individual who sought to understand the world at a global level to locate Africa within the tapestry" (Nabudere, 2011, p. 7), and this made him remain a figure who architected how the cognitive empire should be refrained in South Africa particularly and Africa generally.

While the epistemologies of the South strive for diversity in the university's knowledge production, to the contrary, "the modern university emerged as a global structure of Euro-North American-centric modernity" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2016, p. 29). Contrasting this point of view, Mbembe (2017) argues that "Europe is no longer the centre of knowledge of the world" (p. 1). According to Mbembe (2017), some possibilities are becoming available due to the demotion of Europe. He does not consider European epistemology to be supreme, but rather a carcass that is degrading. From this perspective, it is clear that outside of Euro-North America, there is a growing number of new epistemologies that differ greatly from traditional western ones. However, Mudimbe (1988) reminds Mbembe above that "the fact of the matter is that, until now, western interpreters, and African analysts, have been using categories and conceptual systems which depend on a western epistemological order" (p. x). Mbembe (2019) thought twice and concurred with both Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Mudimbe:

The reason is a faculty we used to recognize in humans and humans alone. In the western tradition, we have all, willingly or not, become the inheritors of reason, always seen as the highest of all human faculties, the one that opened the doors to knowledge, wisdom, virtue, and, most importantly, freedom. (p. 14)

University knowledge cannot be separated from the colonial epistemic violence that is committed while colonials pretend to strengthen what they call modernity. It is important to keep in mind that "the concepts of the 'modern' and modernisation were fused in a calculus that regarded a Euro-American 'modern' and modernisation as the only future for the region" (Kamugisha, 2019, p. 43). University knowledge is semantically like that of modern universities, considering that 'modernity' is just another name for the European project of unlimited expansion undertaken in the final years of the eighteenth century (Mbembe, 2017, p. 54). Santos is concerned that universities in the colonised world are characterised by the coloniality of knowledge, which is why "coloniality of knowledge must be met with decoloniality of thinking and knowing" (Mpofu & Steyn, 2021, p. 15). Otherwise, it is important to consider that "a university is not only a space of positivist knowledge transmission, but also one of the transmissions, and reproduction, of values and dispositions" (Dube, 2021, p. 6). To be valid, the stage of knowledge reproduction at universities must be inclusive of different forms of knowledge from various geographies and places around the world. Dube further argues that:

What we know and teach reflects who we are, and who we are is no longer being (some would even argue that it has never been) reflected by what we teach. In essence, this is what the call for decolonisation asks the discipline to reconsider in its call for decentring Eurocentric ideas and centring African ones. It is about students being able to see themselves reflected in (and by) the knowledge that they are told is important to know. (Dube, 2021, p. 7)

In his political analysis, Dube makes it clear that universities should be careful when recruiting teaching staff. It is important to consider that what lecturers know and teach reflects who they are. He continues to elaborate that one of the many claims about the call to decolonise the university is that the Eurocentrism of thought in South African universities must be decentred and African thought must be centred so that students can reflect on knowledge. This is the same knowledge that is justified as important to acquire because “the knowledge that they are receiving towards this end is seen by many of them as not reflective or constitutive of their desires” (Dube, 2021, p. 7). Consequently, it has become a daily concern as the “students have questioned in the high education curriculum; viz., that the curriculum as it stands does not speak to their lived experiences and universities don’t seem interested in addressing this issue – hence the radical stance of decolonise or perish” (Dube, 2021, p. 12). As evidence of coloniality of knowledge, Dube does not see that the curriculum taught in South African universities speaks to the lived experiences of students, and obviously, Black students. It is from this perspective that Dube observes that South African universities do not seem interested in addressing epistemic injustices and epistemic colonisation happening in universities; hence, the failure to address the matter invites an increase in the number of students and staff who call for decolonising universities in South Africa.

However, in their thinking and principles, western thinkers must ensure “no other knowledge before theirs. No other knowledge except theirs. No other knowledge after theirs” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2016, p. 33). Western thinkers have complexes of superiority, and they ensure that they maintain such dominance no matter what and how. Although they lead, they do not agree with other thinkers who are not registered on the Euro-North American list of thinkers. It is important now and in the future to recognise that “in African universities, Africa must be privileged as a legitimate epistemic site of research, and African people should not be treated as objects of knowledge but must be enabled to regain their lost epistemic virtue as repositories of knowledge” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2016, p. 40). Likewise, it should be noted that “decolonial thinking is an invitation to unmask and to deconstruct received knowledge about many aspects

of our naturalised life” (Hlabangane, 2021, p. 166). Decoloniality thus has the power and the ability to identify wherever the coloniality of knowledge is occurring.

From a South African perspective, university knowledge is led by western principles that promote the expansion of modernity. According to Hlabangane (2021), “modernity has two sides: one that was always intended to benefit the west, and a darker side that led to violence to enable the benefits enjoyed by the west” (p. 165). University knowledge is therefore synonymous with western knowledge. In Hlabangane’s view of the current period, university knowledge is dominated by the western canon, which is justified by the fact that “western knowledge silences views from its periphery while it valorises itself as the universal” (Hlabangane, 2021, p. 183). In Hlabangane’s view, western knowledge considers itself universal knowledge to the detriment of the indigenous knowledge that is rejected and denied being counted or recognised as formal knowledge that deserves to be known or taught in universities. Therefore, African scholars are invited to engage in a serious critique of Eurocentrism. From this point of view, “a critique of Eurocentrism and coloniality is necessarily built in the process of tapping into the African knowledge archive and engaging with the ontological narratives of African people” (Nyoka, 2020, p. xii). The domination of western science must be haunted by a serious engagement of thoughts from Africans when it comes to dealing with African problems or concerns.

Due to the erasure of indigenous knowledges caused by epistemicide and coloniality of university knowledge, Chinweizu (1985) observes that African literature has come to be regarded “as a literature with no traditions of its own to build upon, no models of its own to imitate, no audience or constituency separate and apart from the European, and above all, no norms of its own” (p. 3). This means that due to epistemicide, colonised subjects struggle to find references to their knowledge matrix when they want to develop their epistemologies. The only available historical epistemologies are those from the west. According to Mudimbe (1988):

Because of the colonialising structure, a dichotomising system has emerged, and with it, a great number of current paradigmatic oppositions have developed: traditional versus modern; oral versus written and printed; agrarian and customary communities versus urban and industrialised civilisation; subsistence economies versus highly productive economies. (p. 4)

Departing from Mudimbe's view, it should be remembered that before colonialism, most societies in the Global South relied on oral history, which was often marked by symbols. However, due to colonial epistemic violence, the current universities for local indigenous people are no longer able to trace their original history due to the forcible adoption of modern epistemologies that promote western vision and interests. Concerning Africa and its universities, Masaka (2017) suggests that the transformation and Africanisation of the curriculum in universities in Africa are necessary to reverse epistemicide. To achieve Santos's vision of a true pluriversity, it is imperative to decolonise the university. "To decolonise the university today and rethink the university of tomorrow calls for a clear understanding of its present situation" (Olivier, 2021, p. 154). What shall be known is, as Santos states (2018), "knowledge production and university training will be confronted with a fatal bifurcation, one that separates those for and those against the commodification of knowledge. Researchers and teachers will experience the consequences of this bifurcation" (pp. 278–279). It is through this bifurcation that pluriversity knowledge must emerge, as reviewed in the following subsection.

2.4 The Westernised University in South Africa

Generally, the university in South Africa should be defined as a qualified, authorised, and guaranteed institution for formal training for all, where knowledge is produced, transferred, and gained, considering the local social context. However, "in terms of this definition, in many countries, the overwhelming majority of private universities and even some public ones are not universities at all" (Santos, 2021, p. 221). Why? There are no universities at all in the sense that:

With respect to public universities that are not really universities, the problem ought to be solved by creating a public university network so that universities without autonomous research or postgraduate courses can offer them in partnership with other universities in national or even transnational networks. (Santos, 2021, p. 221)

In South Africa, universities are often described as westernised due to several factors, the most visible and indisputable evidence being their use of English as the primary language of instruction. In Santos's political thought, the westernised university is colonial as he justifies that "university colonialism took the form of Eurocentrism or western centrism" (Santos, 2021, p. 358). Grosfoguel (2013) notes how the thinkers who are privileged in the westernised university in the Global South are still white and male canonical thinkers from the United States, United Kingdom, France, and Germany. Kriger (2016) provides a historical account

that proves that the universities in South Africa, including the University of Cape Town, Stellenbosch University, and the University of the Witwatersrand, were originally founded for the education of the ‘white sons of Empire’ to further colonialism and imperialism in Africa. Even the infrastructure, statues, and architecture of universities commemorate conquest and colonialism and do not reflect local South African history and memory. The argument can be made that the university system, institutional models, and culture in South Africa are still western and colonial.

Referring to African universities in general and South African universities in particular, Nyerere stresses that the university “was not designed to prepare young people for the service of their own country; instead, it was motivated by a desire to inculcate the values of the colonial society and to train individuals for the service of their colonial state” (Nyerere, 1967, p. 2). This quote shows how prevalent issues of epistemic racism and epistemic violence trace back to a history experienced by Black students in South African universities.

It is now an open secret that “[a]ll over the world, the university is facing many challenges” (Santos, 2021, p. 309). “The big problem of the university is the fact that the label ‘university’ is today attached to initiatives, organisations or ventures which have nothing to do with what the university historically and until recently stood for” (Santos, 2021, p. 220). The mission of the university has changed to the point where it now only strives to promote western interests through capitalism at the expense of indigenous interests that are nullified because a westernised university seeks “to elevate knowledge emanating from the west over that of the South” (De Matos-Ala, 2017, p. 1). It means that the knowledge from the west has an arbitrary primacy over other knowledges from the rest of the world. Worse is that the university is currently operating corporately or commercially and, consequently, has derailed from its goals by opting for business rather than producing knowledge for all, the major objective for which it was built.

In Santos’s view, universities in South Africa, like in other colonised countries, are no longer standing for what they were supposed to. South African universities are still categorised as westernised universities because the “school board controls the appointment of teachers” (Wilson & Mafeje, 1963, p. 103). They are built on modern western science culture at the expense of indigenous sciences, since “modern science presents itself as a set of arguments that address the universal audience” (Santos, 2021, p. 109). Not only westernised, South African institutions of higher education are also globalised during this modern colonial era (Mamdani,

2019). According to Mamdani (2019), “the modern [westernised] university, as the name suggests, claims a universal significance as a site for the study of the human. Its graduates claim ‘excellence’ globally” (p. 15).

Essentially, this justifies the lack of what Moll (2004) terms curriculum responsiveness. As a point of evidence, a senior lecturer in the Department of Political Studies at Witwatersrand University, Johannesburg, Dube (2021) proves that:

In fact, what the discussion of curriculum responsiveness highlights specifically for Political Studies/Science in South Africa is the continued delimited responsiveness to calls for decolonisation in Higher Education. Specifically, for my discipline, such a lack of responsiveness can be observed in the continued lack of engagement with African perspectives, especially Black Political Thought, in our curriculum, despite the availability of the information and resources to teach a whole curriculum focused on a diverse set of thinkers from the country and the African continent as a whole. That is, whilst some of these thinkers feature in courses, such as the ones I teach on Black Consciousness Thought or African Political Theory or Afro-Politics and Religion, they largely remain marginal and not central in other broad courses on Political Studies offered in the rest of the degree that focuses on more ‘foundational’ concepts. In the context of my department, the courses I am teaching were brought in as part of the process of responding to the call for decolonisation. However, part of the critique being proffered [...] is precisely that a large part of a focus on Black Political Thought, for example, remains largely peripheral and nominalist rather than central. In fact, the same can be said for many other marginalised perspectives in Political Studies/Science, including, but not limited to, women, the youth, and other non-hegemonic people of colour. (Dube, 2021, p. 3)

The above testimony proves how Black students and staff members’ daily demands and proposals are not adequately attended to in the Department of Political Science at Wits University due to the department’s intense focus on the promotion of western science. Courses that may amplify the voice of the Black subject are marginalised, even though they were intended to be central. This is evidence that the Department of Political Science favours western science culture. Generally, the university promotes the dominance of the Euro-North American episteme, triggering the continual call for decolonising universities.

Boycotting the westernisation of South African universities has been a problem raised by students since the 1970s and remains rampant today. Kriger testifies that:

Collectively, we as South Africans have a violent past ever-present in the ‘now’ and which manifests itself in the ‘lived experience’ of all. This, say the students, has never been adequately dealt with by us, their parents, whether former oppressors or oppressed. Thus, they call for a TRC-like process within the higher education sector. (Kriger, 2016, p. 2)

The efforts of South African students calling for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) to debate the epistemic injustices in the higher education sector during and after apartheid have been in vain. “After a series of mergers between 2002 and 2007, South Africa was forced to revise its policies on the structure of the higher education system” (Cloete *et al.*, 2015, p. 37). Due to the denial of their rights and demands, students opted to protest and show their dissent to the university authorities. They have had to group themselves together to commonly fight for their rights and place in institutions of higher learning.

What remains encouraging for the colonised Black community is that “the philosophy of Black Consciousness, therefore, expresses group pride and the determination by the Blacks to rise and attain the envisaged self” (Biko [1978] 2017, p. 74). In the 1970s, Biko’s Black Consciousness philosophy motivated Black students to be organised into a strong and united group that opposed racism and discrimination in South African universities. “These groups rejuvenated popular protest and shattered the silence of the 1960s. Despite the obvious differences among them, they made common cause during important actions such as the Durban strikes in 1973” (Mamdani, 2021, p. 165).

The Black Consciousness Movement was a powerful forum for students in South Africa. It was used to question both the university and the oppressive state. Regrettably, “the apartheid state understood this reality and saw it fit to uproot the BCM [Black Consciousness Movement] by cracking down on its leadership” (Valela, 2022, p. 24). The educational struggle continued. The main objective of the movement was the call for epistemic decolonisation in South African universities. According to Mathebula, “in the 1980s, the anti-apartheid struggle’s educational and political goals became clearer, with the demand for ‘people’s education for people’s power’” (2013, p. 5).

Black students had always demanded an education that respected their indigenous knowledge. It should be noted that:

Until the passing of the Bantu Education Act in 1954, all the schools in Langa (Cape Town township on the periphery of the city) were mission schools, aided by government grants; since

that date, all, except the Roman Catholic, have been government schools controlled by the Department of Bantu Education. (Wilson & Mafeje, 1963, p. 103)

In higher education, Bantu education entered the university faculty through African studies. Mamdani (1998) asks: “Are African studies to be turned into a new home for Bantu education at UCT?” (p. 1). Looking back to its origins, “African Studies developed outside Africa, not within it. It was a study of Africa, but not by Africans. The context of this development was colonialism, the Cold War, and apartheid” (Mamdani, 1988, p. 1). In South African universities, “the disciplines studied the White experience as universal, human experience; area studies studied the experience of people of colour as an ethnic experience” (Mamdani, 1998, p. 1). In that way, there is racism, discrimination, and, therefore, epistemic inequality and injustice in South African university disciplines. Students are not only undermined but also daily dehumanised.

African studies focused mainly on Bantu administration, customary law, Bantu languages, and anthropology. This system that was true of African Studies at the University of Cape Town was also true of other South African universities (Mamdani, 1998, p. 1). Tired of long epistemic injustice, students were left with no choice but to protest. In the 1970s, Black students adopted Biko’s Black Consciousness philosophy as a driving force. The Black Consciousness philosophy was able to map out how epistemic injustice should be challenged at South African universities. Many students have and are still advancing activism due to their beliefs in Biko’s Black Consciousness philosophy.

In March 2022, there were significant protests at the University of Witwatersrand and the University of Johannesburg. The students demanded that they should not be financially excluded and that such exclusion of most Black students was intertwined with the westernisation of South African universities and the commodification of education. These protests were like the 2015 FeesMustFall and RhodesMustFall movements, and from the perspective of this study, they are rooted in the 1970s protests. This means that the historical problem remains unsolved in the present. Due to the legacy of apartheid, Black students continue to face financial challenges daily and are doubly obliged to learn the imported languages at the expense of their mother tongue languages. This sparks existential protests that recur at South African universities, as Kriger details:

In discussion fora, mass gatherings and workshops, on social media, and multiple commentaries, students, academic staff, vice-chancellors, political analysts and observers like me have made

attempts at unravelling these moments of anger, frustration, determination, and, at times, anarchic violence erupting at campuses across the country [South Africa]. Currently, the focus of the protest has reinvigorated the call for fee-free, quality higher education. (Kriger, 2016, p. 2)

Kriger (2016) invites us to look back to the South African politico-history through which we learn that “every intention *for white liberals in South Africa* was to secure the future enrichment of the ‘white race’ at the expense of and the invisibility of the ‘native’ majority” (p. 2; emphasis added). White liberals, while constructing the university, did not anticipate that a time would come when a Black student would be registered at these universities. Everything was designed for white students, including the use of English and Afrikaans as languages of communication. This is comprehensible insofar as “coloniality of language was not a spinoff or an accompanying process of colonisation, but colonisation itself” (Sibanda, 2021, p. 150). This indeed evinces how the coloniality of knowledge is facilitated by the coloniality of language, which is referred to as *linguicide*. *Epistemicide* goes hand in hand with its cousin, *linguicide*, at South African universities. Sibanda goes further to claim that “the imposition of colonial languages was a calculated erasure of memory and forced amnesia” (2021, p. 154).

Unfortunately, from the university’s design and architecture to its culture, all represented the white child and forcibly ignored the Black child. As a typical example, some African games are not welcomed at the university, and only western games are catered for. A Black child attending a university in Africa, and particularly in South Africa, finds himself/herself epistemically, ontologically, politically, and economically alienated, and, of course, dehumanised. Having discovered that their voices and demands are not being received and considered, students in the Global South and, especially, South Africa, have no choice but to strike and protest. Consequently, while attempting to reject the western epistemic dominance in Africa, Kriger further asserts that:

The ‘colonial-imperial project’, as often cited by the protesting students, comprised a range of state-sponsored initiatives which were to anchor the overarching goal of building a self-sufficient, loyal subject nation of the British Crown. The Natives Land Act of 1913 was one such critical factor in realising this goal. Another was the suite of acts of 1916 which saw the establishment of the University of Cape Town (UCT), University of Stellenbosch (US), University of South Africa (Unisa), and later, the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) in 1922 for, in the main, ‘the young white men of the Union’. Although the acts were laced with contradictions and ambiguities from the very outset, these universities were there to promote, institutionalise, and perpetuate knowledge immersed in social Darwinism and British superiority. (Kriger, 2016, p. 2)

It is from this perspective that Santos's political thought on decolonising the university intervenes as a theory that points out how it can genuinely be decolonised. The need is therefore imperative for establishing epistemic justice in South Africa and Africa in general.

It is the decolonial perspective that sparked the RhodesMustFall movement in South Africa in 2015. In decolonial thought, Rhodes is a symbol of genocide, enslavement, conquest, colonisation, apartheid, and material dispossession, and the author of the inequalities haunting South Africa today. Thus, the attack on the statue was a decolonial symbolic gesture of confronting a system of coloniality. It is therefore not surprising that what emerged as RhodesMustFall quickly mutated into sub-nomenclatures and hashtags such as Fees Must Fall, Open Stellenbosch, Transform Wits, Patriarchy Must Fall, and many others. This is how decoloniality announced itself in South Africa, drawing inspiration from such earlier decolonial movements as Black Consciousness and Fanonian decolonial thought. (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018, p. 222)

Universities in Africa and South Africa, particularly, are there for the satisfaction of western interests, which is why “the demands of the RhodesMustFall movements were framed by a broader demand for the decolonisation of the university in South Africa” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018, p. 222). South African universities are westernised because “they are local institutions of a dominant academic model based on an epistemic canon that is western and colonial... This is a canon that privileges the western way of knowledge production and disregards other epistemic traditions” (Mbembe, 2016, p. 33). These other epistemic traditions are arbitrarily regarded as peripheral knowledge that does not qualify as knowledge. From this point, Mbembe (2016) suggests that “decolonising an African university requires a geographical imagination that extends well beyond the confines of the nation-state” (p. 36). Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Zondi argue that,

By ‘decolonising the university’, students meant, among others structural changes: curriculum changes; epistemological paradigm shift from Eurocentric knowledge to Africa-centred knowledge, and a change of university cultures and systems that are alienating ... and affordable access to education in general. (Ndlovu-Gatsheni & Zondi, 2016, p. 4)

Through decolonisation, university students focus on denying the domination of western science. It must be accompanied by other kinds of change, including the university's culture. Therefore, “decolonising the university and rethinking the university of tomorrow calls for a clear understanding of its present situation” (Kumalo, 2021, p. 154). The western knowledge

that has been universalised, spread, and circulated across various universities worldwide is more than 500 years old and has been circulated as knowledge, whereas other knowledge has been dismissed as superstition. As history reveals, “for 500 years, there has been an entanglement between the metropole and the locals, hence in the colonies, the natives’ knowing and knowledges were impoverished” (Mignolo, 2021, p. x). Such an impoverishment of native ways of knowing and knowledge testifies to how difficult moments of epistemic injustice are experienced in South African universities. What is regrettable is that epistemic injustice is marked by “the intensification of anti-Blackness” (Martinot & Sexton, 2003, p. 176), since being Black in the university equals being a problem. Exceptionally, even though other African countries have suffered from the negative impact of the cognitive empire, South Africa is a special case. It is the only country in Africa that is still economically, educationally, and technologically dominated by white people who no longer consider themselves colonialists but full citizens.

This has been variously called ‘internal colonialism’ or ‘colonialism of a special type’. Logically, colonialism cannot be internal because historically the term presupposes external imposition. Qualifying it as ‘of a special type’ does not invalidate this basic postulate. Moreover, if the designation were granted, it would allow no exceptions. Yet, some Whites in Southern Africa, namely, communists and liberals, do not think of themselves as colonialists. At the same time, they cannot prove that they are not liable because, in practice, they are as much white supremacists as the openly racist Whites. (Mafeje, 1997, p. 9)

Internal colonialism is a special type of colonialism that favours white supremacists in different South African universities. With white supremacy, we must immediately think about the continual epistemic injustice generated by such a special type of colonialism. To challenge this in the South African academic space, “we argue that the university as a whole - its curriculum, the classroom, and its dynamics, the intellectual spaces of knowledge production and sharing, the methodologies, including the governance structures of higher education in general - needs to be questioned” (Schuhmann & Dube, 2018, pp. 1–2). All these aspects are still dominated by western culture at the expense of local culture. Thus, Schuhmann and Dube argue that decolonising South African universities must touch on different aspects, with the major one being epistemic injustice.

According to Fricker (2007), “epistemic injustice is a potent yet largely silent dimension of discrimination” (p. 1). Epistemic justice strives for the dismantlement of western thinking,

which is categorically abyssal thinking that consists of a system of visible and invisible distinctions, with the invisible ones being the foundation of the visible ones (Santos, 2007). Hlabangane espouses Santos's thought in reaffirming that:

Therefore, western science, as a product of Cartesian thinking that hides the locus of enunciation and the enunciator, is systematically, strategically, and wilfully blind to sociality and power dynamics. It hides the beneficiaries of the world order espoused by science and naturalises the suffering of those who are imagined through its prisms. In this way, it privileges the enunciated and obscures the identity of the enunciator. (Hlabangane, 2021, pp. 167–168)

Thus, it means that “western science not only perpetuates modern aspirations of conquest, silencing, discrimination, and domination but also naturalises these aspirations in that it purports to espouse a natural, apolitical view of the world” (Hlabangane, 2021, p. 168). In the case of western science, “this view can be summed up in the statement *I think, therefore I am*, thereby privileging the thinking subject involved with himself/herself to the exclusion of others” (Hlabangane, 2021, p. 172). The above statement ‘I think, therefore I am’ justifies why “Eurocentric thinkers, in their bias and blindness, assume that the only history, knowledge, and culture that truly exist in the world is European” (Mpofu, 2021a, p. 78). Similarly, Sithole espouses Mpofu's argument in reaffirming that, “it is hegemonic of the Euro-North American episteme and its technologies of subjection that see fit to be the perceptivity and the sole embodiment of thought” (2020, p. 23), regardless of other thoughts from the Global South.

Looking to the past, the “history of epistemicide in social sciences and humanities in Africa raises fundamental questions of cognitive and epistemic justice; this is because of the subordination of social sciences and humanities to western epistemological paradigms which de-historicise and decontextualise African experience” (Lebakeng, 2016, p. 55). South African universities, from the foregoing, can be understood to be westernised because the models of teaching and learning, curricula, and syllabi are still western and colonial.

According to Santos (2021), “the big problem of the university is the fact that the label ‘university’ is today attached to initiatives, organisations or ventures which have nothing to do with what the university historically and until recently stood for” (p. 220). In Santos's view, as it remains practical in the colonised world, universities in South Africa, like in other colonised countries, are no longer standing for what they were supposed to. The mission of the university has changed to the point where it now only strives to promote western interests through capitalism at the expense of indigenous interests that are nullified because a westernised

university seeks “to elevate knowledge emanating from the west over that of the South” (De Matos-Ala, 2017, p. 1). It means that the knowledge from the west has an arbitrary primacy over other knowledges from the rest of the world. Worse is that the university is currently operating corporately or commercially and, consequently, has derailed from its goals by opting for business rather than producing knowledge for all, the major objective it was built.

2.5 Resistance, Protests as Consequences of Westernising South African Universities

The recent RhodesMustFall and FeesMustFall movements in 2015 and 2016 were rooted in the history of South African universities and schools, while propelled by students’ anger. South African universities stood accused of not fulfilling their professed ideals:

Both the *RhodesMustFall* and *FeesMustFall* movements illustrate in dramatic ways how intimately university capitalism and university colonialism are today intertwined in the crisis of the university. I would venture to say that, in the South African case, strengthening university capitalism gives more visibility to university colonialism, so much so that the latter becomes an autonomous cause for student struggles. These struggles seek to champion both access and recruitment issues, curricula, syllabi, and teaching/learning methods issues. The conflict becomes more intense due to the mutual reinforcement of capitalism and colonialism (Santos, 2021, pp. 364–365).

Santos avers that the ‘fallist’ movements are the outcome of the commodification of education by South African universities. The westernised university cannot be separated from capitalism; hence, “university capitalism is the main driving force behind the global university system, but it always operates in articulation with university colonialism” (Santos, 2021, p. 356). From this perspective, the westernised university is built on the principles of colonialism, keeping in mind that “colonialism is thus a far larger phenomenon than the foreign occupation of a given territory” (Santos, 2021, p. 357). In his analysis, Mamdani agrees with Santos that “the African university began as a colonialist project – a top-down modernist project whose ambition was the conquest of society. The university was on the front line of the colonial ‘civilizing mission’” (Mamdani, 2019, p. 17). The university in Africa, and particularly South Africa, emerged as a cemented colonial project in which one among many goals was to epistemically dominate the society in place. The role of the university is then to verify if the project of epistemic colonisation is feasible and viable in the colonised world.

In Santos's (2021) understanding, the imposition of western science culture appears to be justified. This is because "the western-centric abyssal line has historically excluded large segments of populations and ideas from experiencing the world as their own and thus from actively participating in its transformation" (Santos, 2014, p. 240). In world academia, including the westernised university in Africa, and especially in South Africa, "privileged academics and intellectuals use their professional and expert authority to defend and promote the empire" (Mpofu & Steyn, 2021, p. 11). The promotion of the empire is normally beneficial for the west to the detriment of the rest of the world—the Global South. It is critical that in African, and specifically South African, universities,

Our pattern of education has been aligned hitherto with the demands of British examination councils. Above all, it was formulated and administered by an alien administration desirous of extending its dominant ideas and thought processes to us. We were trained to be inferior copies of Englishmen, caricatures to be laughed at with our pretensions to British bourgeois gentility, our grammatical faultiness and distorted standards betraying us at every turn. We were neither fish nor fowl. We were denied the knowledge of our African past and informed that we had no present. What future could there be for us? We were taught to regard our culture and traditions as barbarous and primitive. Our textbooks were English, telling us about English history, English geography, English ways of living, English customs, English ideas, and English weather. Many of these manuals had not been altered since 1895. All this must be changed. (Nkrumah, 1963, p. 49)

According to Nkrumah, the westernised university is characterised as a culminant of the western culture of science, thus considered to be justified sites to dominate indigenous people to the point that they remain without a future as colonialism converts them into Black-English representatives in their societies. Graduates from westernised South African universities act like white people due to the full training that they receive from universities that promote white culture. The westernisation of universities in South Africa is a concern that needs to be addressed to achieve change, transformation, or epistemic decolonisation.

There has been "[a] force [that] was provided by student activists of all colours and by migrant and township labour. Students and workers crafted a vision that exploded the narrow confines into which each had been slotted by the architects of apartheid" (Mamdani, 2021, p. 164). Mamdani (2021) further argues that "standing outside the structures of workday routines, students were free to think beyond their specific stations in life" (p. 164). The university should be the main source of knowledge production for all. However, "the university [is rather

considered] a contested terrain” (Santos, 2021, p. 175) because it is dominated by modern science. And the same “[m]odern science found itself fighting one single major enemy: the monopolies of interpretation, whether of religion, the state, the family or the party” (Santos, 2021, p. 92). Caught in circular logic, it does not allow other epistemologies from outside of Euro-North America to grow in the knowledge production terrain.

According to Santos (2021), “under the current conditions, the public university is a collective good, lacking strong allies” (p. 435). Most South African universities are public, and “[t]he public university is, thus, a permanently threatened public good, which is not to say that the threat comes only from the outside; it comes from within it as well” (Santos, 2021, p. 435). Westernising the university in South Africa can therefore be taken as the main cause for the university to face external and internal threats daily. Students are subject to the imposition of western science, which simultaneously rejects them. Those students should resist being used or considered as western reservists when it comes to science. The university staff is also affected when it comes to knowledge production, as they are considered to be like external Europeans who operate in the universities as agents of western science.

Moreover, “the current westernised university becomes a legitimate site of decolonial struggles because it continues to reproduce coloniality” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni & Zondi, 2016, p. 4). Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013a) holds that “universities in Africa are sites for the reproduction of coloniality. We so far do not have African universities. We have universities in Africa” (p. 1). In South Africa, the westernisation of the university has become critical must-read news because “[i]t’s ambition was to create universal scholars, men, and women who stood for excellence, regardless of context, who would serve as the vanguard of the ‘civilising mission’ without reservation or remorse” (Mamdani, 2019, p. 17). The westernised university is built on the principles of modern science and such a “modern science has deserted the other possibility of knowledge inscribed in the paradigm of modernity: knowledge-as-emancipation” (Santos, 2014, p. 156). Western, modern science bans the emergence of other kinds of knowledge from outside Euro-North America from being recognised as knowledge that deserves to be taught in universities.

The denial and resistance of western epistemic domination in South African universities have historical roots. From this perspective, it means that the recent fallist movements in universities in South Africa should not be assessed simply as new issues, but that their roots should be traced back to protests in the 1970s. Epistemic domination in universities of South Africa has

remained an unsolved problem to the present day due to “the marginalisation or denigration of the indigenous or local knowledges of the South” (De Matos-Ala, 2017, p. 5).

South African universities are often seen as westernised because their programmes and curricula are dominated by western science culture. This presents a double challenge for Black students learning in English instead of their mother tongue. The protests against western science culture remain renewed because “[m]odern science consecrated man [/woman] as an epistemic subject but expelled him [her] as empirical subject” (Santos, 2021, 62). Students in universities in South Africa, particularly Black students, must pay a considerable amount of money for programmes that they detest. Black students have familiarised themselves with moments of anger as Kriger posits:

In discussion fora, mass gatherings and workshops, on social media, and multiple commentaries, students, academic staff, vice-chancellors, political analysts and observers like me have made attempts at unravelling these moments of anger, frustration, determination, and, at times, anarchic violence erupting at campuses across the country [South Africa]. Currently, the focus of the protest has reinvigorated the call for fee-free, quality higher education. (Kriger, 2016, p. 2)

This racial discrimination has fuelled Black students’ anti-racist and anti-colonial movements to take over different campuses. These protests are a form of self-protection and reclamation of voices that have not been heard.

In South Africa:

The public university must remain free with maintenance scholarships, rather than loans, going to students from subaltern classes and historically excluded and discriminated against social groups, sometimes most of the population. If it is not controlled, the indebtedness of university students will become a time bomb: a population encumbered by the certainty of a debt that can take twenty years to pay is being thrown into an increasingly uncertain labour market. Scholarships should be granted that include the possibility of students’ jobs in university activities, both on and off campus, a rare practice, especially in peripheral and semi-peripheral countries. (Santos, 2021, p. 224)

In South Africa, universities are expected to recognise and honour African studies as the basic studies to be pursued. While claiming the recognition of African indigenous studies, students are engaged daily in the unfinished protests. At this time of writing, heavy protests are continuing at Wits University and the University of Johannesburg. Students claim that they

have been financially excluded—consequences of the westernisation of universities and commodification of education. Other protests that happened a few years ago were concerned with the denial of African indigenous knowledge that is arbitrarily rejected and remains unknown due to the long-standing western structural epistemic injustice. The next section engages with the contribution of Biko’s Black Consciousness as a challenge to the agenda of westernising South African universities.

2.6 Black Consciousness, FeesMustFall, RhodesMustFall and Westernised University

In the 1970s, Black high school learners in South Africa adopted Biko’s Black Consciousness philosophy as a driving force to challenge the racist schooling system. In its utmost importance and relevance, “the philosophy of Black Consciousness, therefore, expresses group pride and the determination by the Blacks to rise and attain the envisaged self” (Biko [1978] 2017, p. 74). Biko’s Black Consciousness philosophy motivated Black students to challenge the western epistemic domination in South African universities.

The Black Consciousness philosophy was introduced to help address structural epistemic injustice in South African universities. As a result, many South African students have died while practising Biko’s Consciousness philosophy. It is important to remember that “Maptla [Mohapi] was the first leader of BMC [Black Consciousness Movement] to die in detention – on 5 August 1976. The police’s explanation of his death was that he had committed suicide. The pathology report detailing his wounds has a different story to tell” (Valela, 2022, pp. 22–23). The practice of Black Consciousness philosophy has been consequential to Black students, as Valela further elaborates:

There were more arrests, tortures, and deaths in detention in 1976 than in any previous year, and this was set off by the death of this forgotten martyr named Mapetla. The year 1976 was one of the worst periods of the anti-apartheid struggle, beginning with the Soweto students’ protests on 16 June. Maptla was among those detained en masse from then onwards, and he was among those who were tortured and murdered. (Valela, 2022, p. 23)

The practice of Black Consciousness philosophy has always been and continues to be an at-your-own-risk activity. It is risky in that the Black Consciousness Movement is still a powerful forum that students use to question the western epistemic domination in South African universities. Therefore, “the apartheid state understood this reality and saw it fit to uproot the

BCM by cracking down on its leadership” (Valela, 2022, p. 24). Otherwise, the Black Consciousness Movement was a fast-growing movement that put the universities and the South African government into a state of panic and peril. Biko’s Black Consciousness philosophy was a complicated concept that he coined after reading Fanon’s *Black Skin White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth*. This conception, found in the 1970s, is still important and relevant these days in the Global South, and South Africa, particularly. Therefore, Biko’s Black Consciousness philosophy has significantly confronted and challenged the westernisation of South African universities.

Relevantly, the Black Consciousness Movement mainly intervened in calling for epistemic decolonisation in South African universities. In South African universities, students are still encouraged and motivated to cut ties with western epistemic domination. The need for decolonising universities (as discussed later) is an emergent matter; hence, “after a series of mergers between 2002 and 2007, South Africa was forced to revise its policies on the structure of the higher education system” (Cloete *et al.*, 2015, p. 37). Taking this as a point of departure, Santos’s political thought on decolonising the university is the imminent plan that clearly explains why and how the university in South Africa needs to genuinely be dewesternised.

Dewesternising South African universities does not entail severing any educational relationship between the west and South Africa. However, in Santos’s understanding and Biko’s Black Consciousness philosophy, the call for dewesternisation is concerned with the integration of indigenous knowledges into curricula—or the application and acceptance of pluriversalism in knowledge production in South African universities. From this perspective, Santos insists on asking: “Is the global university a possible answer?” (Santos, 2021, p. 257). After interpreting the arguments of Santos and other pro-Santos scholars, it is doubtful whether the global university can provide an answer to the problems caused by the westernisation of South African universities. Instead, it worsens the critical situation experienced by Black students. Because of the negative impact of westernisation on South African universities, as discussed above, and motivated by the principles of Black Consciousness, students are encouraged to join decolonial movements and protests to move from being voiceless to being heard.

The RhodesMustFall movement in South Africa in 2015 was based on decolonial thought. Students invoked this thought to justify that no matter the cost, Rhodes is a symbol of genocide, enslavement, conquest, colonisation, apartheid, discrimination, and material dispossession, and the author of inequalities that still haunt South Africa today. The students insisted that such a

symbol had to be demolished immediately. Significantly, the act of attacking the statue was not stupid but rather a decolonial symbolic gesture of confronting the ongoing system of coloniality in South African universities. It was a serious and engaged action. What emerged as RhodesMustFall rapidly mutated into sub-nomenclatures and hashtags such as FeesMustFall, OpenStellenbosch, TransformWits, and PatriarchyMustFall, to mention but a few.

Therefore, “this is how decoloniality announced itself in South Africa, drawing inspiration from such earlier decolonial movements as the Black Consciousness and Fanonian decolonial thought” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018, p. 222). Students in South African universities are thoughtfully ensuring that the struggle for decolonising the westernised university is complete and fruitful because “a successful struggle for a non-westernized university will allow the public university a minimal playing field in which to conduct the most encompassing and demanding struggle, the struggle for legitimacy” (Santos, 2021, p. 222). In addition, Santos (2021) posits that “excluded from the debate and frequently accused of defending the *status quo* of corporate public instruction, the university has retreated to the role of questioning the dominant discourse about public school crisis and has not bothered to formulate alternatives” (p. 232). The current university, in Santos’s view, cannot propose or intend to bring solutions to the crisis that is rampant in universities due to its dominance of a single episteme that is for the North and rejects the others from the South.

Therefore, Santos’s concern is that:

“The university has historically been one of the main pillars of European ideas, however questionable such ideas may have been. This has been possible by granting the university a degree of institutional autonomy unimaginable in any other state institution. The dark side of this autonomy has been social isolationism, lack of transparency, organizational inefficiency, social prestige disconnected from scholarly achievement, and reproduction of cognitive injustice (epistemicide).” (Santos, 2021, p. 260)

Based on Santos’s ideas above, one should criticise that Euro-North America is using the university as a tool to carry on with the epistemic control and domination of the rest of the world. It is argued that the one who produces and controls knowledge controls the world. In South Africa, the university has been granted such autonomy to serve as an instrument of epistemic control. Black Consciousness intervenes as a counterforce to challenge the university itself and its epistemic control in South Africa. Particularly,

South Africa is chosen as a case study because it is today one of the highly volatile sites of multiple struggles, including that spearheaded by students, which demands decolonisation in a country that was said to have gained political independence in 1910. (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018, p. 36).

Where world rankings are concerned, South Africa is one of many other African countries that are highly ranked by western capitalist rankings for universities. Oppositely, it is the same country that has become a terrain for student protests against capitalism, colonialism, and colonial epistemic violence. In the same perspective, Ndlovu-Gatsheni states:

The university in South Africa became a key site of decolonial struggles in 2015. What began as RhodesMustFall targeting Cecil John Rhodes's statue at the University of Cape Town (UCT) quickly expanded into broader demands for cognitive justice, change of curriculum, decommissioning of offensive colonial/apartheid symbols, right to free, quality and relevant education, cultural freedom, and overall change of the very idea of the university from its western pedigree ('university in Africa') to 'African university.' (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018, p. 37)

The root of these struggles is the strengthening of epistemic injustice that is driven by capitalism and colonialism in South African universities. The Black Consciousness philosophy disturbs and disorients capitalists and colonialists. From this concern, Santos (2021) claims that "as the university becomes more and more compromised by capitalism, its compromise with colonialism and patriarchy becomes increasingly visible too" (p. 312). In addition, "unlike what happens in the global North, epistemic and cultural colonialism prevents the global South from representing the world as its own, that is to say, it prevents the emergence of an anti-imperial, global South" (Santos, 2021, p. 320). Universities in South Africa are dominated by the epistemologies of Euro-North America. In his political imagination, Ndlovu-Gatsheni advises that "consequently, it would be naïve for peoples of the global South in general, and Africa in particular, to continue looking to Europe and North America for usable knowledge, relevant ideas, critical theories and solutions to modern problems" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018, p. 38). Euro-North American epistemic producers and leaders have arbitrarily decided to nominate themselves as the only leaders when it comes to knowledge and the running of westernisation of university agenda, however, they could know that Black Consciousness philosophy permits them to be aware that "these are not the days when people follow leaders blindly" (Nkrumah, 1973, p. 8). This is why students from different universities around the

world, and especially South Africa, have decided with unequivocally that universities must be genuinely decolonised.

Moreover, “the global North is where a greater convergence is to be found between the epistemologies of the North and the dominant Eurocentric culture, and where wider social groups benefit directly or indirectly from the capitalist, colonist, and patriarchal domination” (Santos, 2021, pp. 349–350). Epistemologists from Euro-North America have appointed themselves the masters of episteme producers, ignoring other parts of the world that they consider to be empty of knowledge production. From this point, they see themselves as the controllers of all universities in the world. This generalisation affects universities located in South Africa, labelling them as westernised universities. Therefore, they are still considered colonial, as “colonialism and colonial education in Africa were relational” (Nyanchoga, 2014, p. 3) and correlational, especially in the South African university landscape.

Epistemologists from Euro-North America see themselves as the controllers of all universities. They ensure that universities are characterised by what Farmer (2004) calls structural violence; “in short, the concept of structural violence is intended to inform the study of the social machinery of oppression” (Farmer, 2004, p. 4). Farmer goes beyond Fanon’s conception of violence and observes that the South African university is not only simply westernised, but its westernisation is also deeply characterised by structural violence. This is a kind of institutionalised violence that affects the totality of whatever a student may need for his/her life to remain continual. From the same point of view, since its inception, colonial violence has been and is still institutionalised. In clear terms, “it was institutionalised insofar as it oversaw the entrenchment of subjugation by force, the origin of which was dependent on force and the maintenance of which was dependent on force” (Mbembe, 2012, p. 4). Mbembe also perceives that the westernisation of universities in the South is marked using force that cannot be separated from structural violence. Positively, combining Fanon’s conception of *tabula rasa* with Biko’s Black Consciousness should assist with the eradication of such structural violence in South African universities.

Therefore, the westernisation of South African universities cannot be successful in the absence of a kind of force that is structurally institutionalised. This is justified by the fact that “between coloniser and the colonised there is room only for forced labour, intimidation, pressure, the police, taxation, theft, rape, compulsory crops contempt, mistrust, arrogance, self-complacency, swinishness, brainless elites, degraded masses” (Césaire, [1955] 2000, p. 42).

Here, Césaire refers to the university in the Global South, including South Africa, as a place where students experience intimidation daily. The university responds to student protests by using police who quickly arrive with firearms to push them back. Unfortunately, the students use their hands to confront the armed police and security. It is from this perspective that “despite protest and charges of racialism from liberal-minded white students, the Black students stood firm in their rejection of the principle of unholy alliances between Blacks and whites” (Biko, [1978] 2017, p. 73). In Biko’s understanding, the university claims to be for all, but privileges white students over Black students, who are the majority in South Africa.

Consequently, “modern science that is synonymous with western science has become the privileged form of knowledge-as-regulation, although the social regulation cautioned by it is neither reliable nor sustainable” (Santos, 2014, p. 156). Sharing the same view of analysis, Hlabangane (2021) agrees with Santos that “western science cannot be thought of as outside the aspirations of modernity; it is premised on modernity – they are two sides of the same coin, so to speak” (p. 167). The critique of the westernisation of South African universities is inseparable from the critique of the modernisation of South African universities. Neither can assist in finding the ongoing student protests that have become daily and renewed practices at various campuses. Morally motivated by the Black Consciousness philosophy, “Black students, on the other hand, began to rethink their position in Black-white coalitions” (Biko, [1978] 2017, p. 73), despite all odds. It is a philosophy that rendered them mature and understand who they are in an oppressive state of white liberals.

In South Africa, universities are criticised for being and remaining westernised, which is the reason why “the demands of the RhodesMustFall movements were framed by a broader demand for the decolonisation of the university in South Africa” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018, p. 222). In South Africa, universities are expected to contribute to finding durable solutions to epistemic domination. However, they often reinforce western superiority by promoting western science and preventing other indigenous forms of knowledge from emerging. We should see that “the universities in South Africa are ‘westernised’ in the sense that they are local institutions of a dominant academic model based on an epistemic canon that is western and colonial” (Mbembe, 2016, p. 32). A westernised university that is challenged by Black Consciousness philosophy is thus characterised by an epistemic canon that is fully western. In fact, “this is a canon that privileges the western way of knowledge production and disregards other epistemic traditions” (Mbembe, 2016, p. 33). Here, as Mbembe argues, the westernised

university does not care about any other epistemic tradition that is not in the west's interests. Instead, those other epistemic traditions that are not western are considered peripheral knowledge that does not deserve to be recognised as valid sciences. This certifies and warrants that western knowledge remains the sole knowledge accepted in South African universities at the expense of other native knowledges. South African students are forced to consume western knowledge while simultaneously having their native and indigenous knowledge revoked, which is relevant and recommended to their geographical needs, causing an imbalance. The next theme discusses the need for South African universities to be genuinely and epistemically decolonised.

2.7 Towards Epistemic Decolonisation of the South African Higher Education System

Despite the resistance and continual domination of the western science culture in South African universities, it should also be underlined that “within the current milieu of South African higher education there is increased pressure by government, academics, and students for de-colonised curricula in all subjects” (De Matos-Ala, 2017, p. 2). Students in general and particularly Black students complain daily that indigenous knowledge must also be incorporated and taught in South African universities. The knowledge taught at the university must value the local and geographical demands of the university's location. Biko's oeuvre, *I Write What I Like* ([1978] 2017) and Mugo's *Writing and Speaking from the Heart of my Mind* (2012) call for African scholars to unlearn and relearn how to speak from their locus of enunciation.

To ensure that most students are happy at different campuses in South Africa, one of the many goals was “to redress past discrimination and ensure representative and equal access” (South African Higher Education Act 101 of 1997, p. 2). Universities in South Africa should be places that are not characterised by discrimination, but rather accommodating all, regardless of skin colour or appearance. This should prove that South African universities have good intentions to “provide optimal opportunities for learning and the creation of knowledge *for all*” (South African Higher Education Act 101 of 1997, p. 2; [Emphasis added]). The creation of knowledge for all means a kind of knowledge that values everyone, regardless of their locus of enunciation. South African universities must accept pluriversity knowledge, which is knowledge for all and from all. If they do not, they will always be challenged by repetitive calls for epistemic decolonisation.

Relevantly, knowledge that does not value geographical needs should be decolonised. Mbembe (2016) posits that “decolonising an African university requires a geographical imagination that extends well beyond the confines of the nation-state” (p. 36). Concerned with Africa and especially with universities in Africa, Santos (2021) advises that the process of decolonising must avoid the risk of confusing it with Africanisation. The problem of westernising the university is not only a matter for South Africa but everywhere in the Global South. Santos could not deeply imagine how, when it comes to colonialism, capitalism, and the westernisation of universities in Africa, particularly in South Africa, Black students and intellectuals find themselves bound to the extent that their lives cannot continue in the absence of western intervention. It is regrettable that “our knowledge of Africa is largely filtered through European languages and their vocabulary” (Wa Thiong’o, 2016, p. 71). Here, Wa Thiong’o is concerned with the fact that what we call African knowledge is the knowledge that emerges from the western canon. We are still using western languages such as English, French, or Portuguese to transmit our indigenous knowledge to the world and colleagues or classmates who are in different universities around the world.

Does decolonising the university in the South African context mean a complete severance of the relationship between the west and the universities of South Africa? Ndlovu-Gatsheni responds that when students demanded that universities be decolonised, they actually “meant among others structural changes: curriculum changes; epistemological paradigm shift, from Eurocentric knowledge to Africa-centred knowledge, and a change of university cultures and systems that are alienating as well as increased and affordable access to education in general” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2016, p. 4). Although this thesis focuses on universities in South Africa, it is important to note that universities in Europe are also experiencing a crisis due to increased demand from students who are calling for the decolonisation of universities because “universities in Central Europe are desperately struggling to remain in the outer layers of the dramatically changing global academic centre” (Kwiek, 2012, p. 3). Santos’s thought on decolonising the university is not only relevant and in demand by students in the Global South, but is also an emergent request in the European academia space, as Kwiek above revealed.

In the South African context, decolonising the university primarily seeks the integration of indigenous knowledge into the university’s programmes or curricula. It intends to reduce the monopoly of western science’s domination over native knowledge. If the monopoly of western science is not challenged, epistemicide takes over. Therefore, it is important and relevant to be

aware that “decolonising the university and rethinking the university of tomorrow calls for a clear understanding of its present situation” (Kumalo, 2021, p. 154). According to Wa Thiong’o (2016), a clear understanding of the university on its own is not enough to achieve satisfaction. It is recommended that, as Africans, we continually examine our relationship with the European memory in the organisation of knowledge. To avoid those who are willing to make the institution a normal business place, the South African government has announced that “no person other than a public higher education institution or an organ may provide higher education unless that person is registered or conditionally registered as a private higher education institution in terms of this Act” (South African Higher Education Act 101 of 1997, p. 18). The South African government may seriously take into consideration the value of introducing indigenous knowledge, as most public higher education institutions in South Africa are still promoting western science over indigenous knowledge.

In Santos’s political thought, students in South African universities must fight to the death until universities become genuinely decolonised. For this to happen, they must not fear anything but embrace the struggle that leads them to change. Santos observes and advises that “the struggle for a decolonisation of the university will never be successful if it is not articulated with the struggle for demercantilising and depatriarchalising the university” (Santos, 2021, p. 313). At this point, Santos insists that the western-centric university has been making arbitrary decisions on behalf of many other universities. This deserves a serious counter-response and is obviously problematic: “I am only referring to the decolonisation of the western-centric university, that is to say, the western or *westernised* university” (Santos, 2021, pp. 313–314). Santos believes that universities in South Africa are westernised because they rely on instructions from western-centric universities—that is, universities from Euro-North America. For instance, Harvard University is considered the model university worldwide in the contemporary period.

For more than 500 years, western knowledge has been universalised, spread, and circulated not only in universities of South Africa but also in other universities around the world. The westernisation of South African universities has long been a project of domination of western science over indigenous knowledge. It justifies the difficult moments lived by students as they remain without choice except to accumulate western science—an epistemic injustice that is experienced daily by students enrolled in South African universities. Such an epistemic injustice cannot be separated from the discrimination against Black students’ conditions in South Africa. Hence, Fricker (2007) defines “epistemic injustice as a potent yet largely silent

dimension of discrimination” (p. 1). The epistemic injustice is justified by the westernisation of science in South African universities. It promotes western thought while disregarding other thoughts from around the world as surplus thoughts that do not deserve attention. western thinking is abyssal thinking, and it consists of a system of visible and invisible distinctions. The invisible distinctions are the foundation of the visible ones (Santos, 2007). Likewise, Hlabangane agrees with Santos’s view that:

Therefore, western science, as a product of Cartesian thinking that hides the locus of enunciation as well as the enunciator, is systematically, strategically, and wilfully blind to sociality and power dynamics. It hides the beneficiaries of the world order espoused by science and naturalizes the suffering of those who are imagined through its prisms. In this way, it privileges the enunciated and obscures the identity of the enunciator. (Hlabangane, 2021, pp. 167–168)

Unfortunately, “we cannot afford to be intellectual outsiders in our own land” (Wa Thiong’o, 2016, p. 76). The acceptance of westernised South African universities by students cannot, therefore, be separated from self-imprisonment, and resisting this causes tensions and protests at various campuses. The resistance to accumulating western science equals disobedience and disrespect of the university and its rules—resisting western science that carries on driving modern goals and its principles. Colonised subjects should not forget that “western science not only perpetuates modern aspirations of conquest, silencing, discrimination, and domination but also naturalises these aspirations in that it purports to espouse a natural, apolitical view of the world” (Hlabangane, 2021, p. 168). Here, Santos accommodates Hlabangane by clarifying that “Modern science, in its turn, makes these dualisms more efficient, since the false (but hegemonic) universalism of its cognitive-instrumental rationality is particularly good at turning dominant experiences into universal experiences” (Santos, 2021, p. 75). The universalism of western epistemology through modern science is illegal because it crosses the borders of all other countries and denies anyone who attempts to question it.

With modern western science, it becomes difficult to verify whether something is false or true. Hence, the producers of western science come from a single location in the world (Euro-North America). Men (predominantly) from that zone decide which theory to produce and where to apply it without consulting any other indigenous producers from the rest of the world—the Global South. In essence, “western science can be summed up in the statement *I think, therefore I am*, thereby privileging the thinking subject involved with himself/herself to the exclusion of others” (Hlabangane, 2021, p. 172). The above statement, “I think, therefore I am,” justifies

why “Eurocentric thinkers, in their bias and blindness, assume that the only history, knowledge, and culture that truly exist in the world are European” (Mpofu, 2021a, p. 78). This is to the detriment of other knowledge that is experienced and used daily by the indigenous peoples found in the Global South. Precisely, “colonialism was not only an economic process but also one of imposing Euro-centric knowledge on the colonised” (Meekosha, 2011, p. 11). That was and remains the case in South Africa.

The westernisation of universities in South Africa is an indisputable fact; hence, “it is hegemonic of the Euro-North American episteme and its technologies of subjection that see fit to be the perceptivity and the sole embodiment of thought” (Sithole, 2020, p. 23), regardless of other indigenous thoughts that should be recognised as valid thoughts. The African thought, or what Mudimbe called the *Idea of Africa*, has been dominated by westernisation in the universities of Africa. However, in order “to comprehend the archaeological organisation of this very idea of Africa and its resonances, it seems to me, it is impossible not to consider western literature and, particularly, its culmination in the ‘colonial library’” (Mudimbe, 1994, p. 213). Mudimbe observes that western science has reached the culmination of what he calls a colonial library. This means that all knowledge we need to use must originate from the western single angle. Indeed, at this point of analysis, it is assumed that “the knowledge stored in the colonial library was meant to ‘translate’ Africa for Europe, thus precluding any form of writing and thinking about Africa other than the categories for knowing the world generated by Europe” (Santos, 2021, p. 330). Santos’s emphasis and concern are that, for the interests of the white colonists, Africa is interpreted for Europeans, while even Africans themselves still do not have enough knowledge of African opportunities.

According to Santos (2021), “the critique produced in the schools of education has reinforced the perception that the university is completely obsessed with the defence of the *status quo*” (p. 233). The university must defend itself to maintain its status quo, which facilitates the domination of western epistemologies in Africa, particularly in South Africa. The historical epistemicide that has become an alarming daily problem in social sciences and humanities provokes vital questions related to cognitive and epistemic justice. Deep and careful analysis shows that in South African universities, social sciences and humanities are subordinated to the western epistemological paradigm, which historicises, devalorises, and decontextualises life experiences of African subjects (Lebakeng, 2016). Therefore, in South Africa, universities

can also be referred to as westernised because of the models of teaching and learning, curricula, and syllabi that are criticised for remaining western and colonial.

Before this chapter concludes, it is highlighted that the westernisation of universities in South Africa cannot be separated from the dominance of western patriarchal thought. Grosfoguel (2013) notes that in westernised universities in the Global South, white male canonical thinkers from the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and Germany are still privileged. This is why “besides being western and capitalist, modern science is also patriarchal” (Santos, 2021, p. 75) in nature, which justifies the discrimination and marginalisation that happen in the universities. According to Santos (2021), “the university’s marginalisation goes along with the demand for the tertiary qualification of teachers at all instructional levels, resulting in the progressive privatisation of teacher training” (p. 233). Regrettably, students enrolled in universities in the Global South “the Euro-North American tendency to universalise its knowledge is intricately linked to coloniality, which is, in turn, linked to colonialism premised on the subjection of those thoughts of as the empire’s Other” (Hlabangane, 2021, p. 168). The epistemic injustice/violence is perpetrated by the monopoly of Euro-North America’s universalisation of its knowledge. Such a universalisation aligns with the westernisation of South African universities. One should know that “being epistemically free entails being able to choose one’s epistemic endeavours, having the means to pursue them, as well as being able to meaningfully partake in the shared endeavours of the epistemic communities that one belongs to” (Landström, 2024, p. 1). However, people who are denied their humanity—dehumanised people- cannot epistemically choose their epistemic endeavours.

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter explored a range of decolonial discourses in/on South African universities, which are diverse, inclusive, and varied. The chapter demonstrated that university knowledge in South African universities is dominated by western science. From this perspective, based on Santos’s concept of university knowledge, I showed that university knowledge is exclusive, while it should be inclusive. Discourses on university knowledge also emphasised that university knowledge produced in South African universities does not accommodate different scholars and thinkers from different loci of enunciations. The chapter mainly illuminates the various decolonial critiques about the westernisation of universities in South Africa, exposing to what extent they remain westernised.

A westernised university is a type of university that is dominated by western science culture, both ontologically and epistemologically. Decolonial perspectives advance that western science culture is dominating indigenous science in the universities in South Africa and denying indigenous knowledge categorically and arbitrarily. The refusal to integrate indigenous sciences is a major cause of the ongoing protests in South African universities. This is why students feel compelled to resist westernisation and seek genuine epistemic decolonisation. I demonstrated that Black students are still experiencing epistemic injustices in South African universities—the imposition of using English as the only language of learning is another challenge.

In this chapter, Black Consciousness Movement, FeesMustFall, and RhodesMustFall were discussed as antagonist elements of westernised university in South Africa. The 2015 and 2016 students' protests under the umbrellas of FeesMustFall and RhodesMustFall were assessed as repetition of what happened in 1976 in South African schools when students refused to continue studying in Afrikaans, and many became martyrs of the Soweto students' protests.

CHAPTER 3

EPISTEMICIDE

3.1 Introduction

Santos's concept of epistemicide allows us to understand how western science destroys indigenous knowledge in South African universities, considering that epistemicide is defined as the rejection, killing, and destruction of indigenous knowledges (Santos 2014; 2018; 2021). Western science currently has a monopoly on the knowledge produced in South African universities due to epistemicide. Epistemicide may preliminarily be defined as the destruction of indigenous knowledges in the replacement of western knowledge. In fact, the ongoing epistemicide in South African universities is the product of coloniality of knowledge—meaning that epistemicide is the negative impact of coloniality of university knowledge. In clear terms, with epistemicide in South African universities, one could simply and quickly understand the denial and rejection of local indigenous knowledge over western science.

Firstly, departing from an African context, this chapter engages in a serious debate on the concept of epistemicide, which is the central and pivotal element of the study. Under this subsection, epistemicide is discussed as the source of the epistemic injustices witnessed in South African universities. Secondly, Santos's concept of epistemicide permits us to understand the ongoing epistemic injustices that daily happen in South African universities. The last section concludes the chapter.

3.2 Is Epistemicide a Reality in (South) African Universities?

The concept of epistemicide, which is central to this study, is extensively explained by Santos (2014) in a book titled *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide*. The concept refers to the systemic and structural destruction of native/indigenous knowledges (and languages) while privileging the colonial knowledges (and languages) in their place. This concept, as Santos uses it, is diagnostic of the problem in African universities, which are described as sites of epistemicide where knowledges and languages of the indigenous people suffer distortion, marginalisation, and systemic destruction.

In the observation of Santos and others, due to the colonial epistemic violence, the knowledge of the colonised subjects has been defeated and silenced. Santos's view on the concept of epistemicide harmonises with Masaka's 2018 view, which significantly supports Santos's

argument. The foisting of one group's knowledge on another group, leading to the near destruction of the latter's epistemology, is referred to as epistemicide (Masaka, 2018c, p. 4). Due to such colonial epistemic violence, Masaka (2018a) reinforces that the result has been epistemicide or the suppression of the paradigm of thought of the dominated people, and western epistemology has enjoyed questionable and unjust dominance in the colonised world. In this light, "epistemicide becomes part of the hegemonic group's strategy to deny the humanity of the dominated group" (Masaka, 2018c, p. 4). Unfortunately, the indigenous knowledge has not been silenced but has been expropriated by colonialists and later claimed it to have originated from the western canon. It is highlighted that:

A number of social phenomena and social relations in Black Africa had been looked upon in certain ways, largely by non-Africans. The intention is to show that most of these had been misconceptions that are attributable to an inarticulation between universal language, as is employed in the social sciences and derived from European historical experience, and vernacular, as is experienced and understood by the Africans themselves. As we see it, what is at issue is the authenticity of the social sciences texts. We believe that in the social sciences, there are no texts, without a historical context. Therefore, to be able to decode certain texts, the interlocutor must have a deep understanding of their historical context. (Mafeje, 1991, p. 9)

Mafeje (1991) criticises the authenticity of social sciences texts because most are reproduced based on the western science culture and at the expense of African science culture. It is from this perspective that, in the African context, Mafeje observes that social sciences texts are a void for Africans as they do not recognise African history. Western scientists who interpret African texts do not have any historical context of African beliefs, values, or attributes. Forcing the interpretation of African texts to be analysed using only the western canon is a mere declaration of epistemicide in Africa.

Referring to Mafeje's view above, Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Zondi (2016) follow the same steps in affirming that epistemicide is the "killing and expropriations of knowledges of the colonised" (p. 5). For Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Zondi above, epistemicide does not only deal with the killing/destruction of the knowledges of colonised subjects but also with the *banditisme* justified by the usurpation of traditional knowledges they found in the colonies. Some of this knowledge has been modified in a metamorphic manner to become linked to western cultural science. In fact, "the point here is that Euro-North American-centric epistemic hegemony was achieved through genocides (killing of non-Europeans); epistemicides (killing and

appropriation of knowledges of non-Europeans); linguicides (killing of languages of colonised peoples) and cultural imperialism (imposition of western culture)” (Benyera & Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017, p. 2). Thus, if hegemonic western science has been achieved through violence and injustices, it is doubtful that decolonising the university can be a peaceful action. Decoloniality is thus a counterattack to the coloniality of knowledge and epistemicide that are causing epistemic damage to universities in South Africa.

In amplification, “I am talking about societies drained of their essence, cultures trampled underfoot, institutions undermined, lands confiscated, religions smashed, magnificent artistic creations destroyed, extraordinary possibilities wiped out” (Césaire, [1955] 1972, p. 1). Just precisely at this point, Mudimbe (1994) does not exactly share the same view as Césaire because, “from the 1930s, the colonial objective might be defined as the invention of a new cohesive culture” (p. 131). Mudimbe (1994) further clarifies that “at the end of the nineteenth century, colonisation cohesively binds the diverse, often antagonistic, collective memories of many African cultures. Offering and imposing the desirability of its memory, colonisation promises a vision of progressive enrichment to the colonised” (p. 129), ruses and lies used by colonialists to perpetuate colonialism. Mudimbe is, however, also concerned with the colonial library that recognises western knowledge and rejects any knowledge produced in Africa and beyond in the Global South.

Epistemicide, therefore, is maintained by Euro-North America that warns of any other knowledge from outside of their zone, and from this point of view, “endogenous and indigenous knowledges have been pushed to the margins of society. Africa is today saddled with irrelevant knowledge that disempowers rather empowers individuals and communities”, declares Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013a, p. 1). In his emphasis, Santos (2014) argues that “epistemicide, [is] the murder of knowledge” (p. 92) of the natives and its replacement by that of the colonisers in the Global South. He means that the murder of knowledge is committed by colonialists using colonial epistemic violence. In this process, the indigenous knowledges, including the knowledges from Africa, have arbitrarily and perpetually been destroyed and forfeited due to “the colonial epistemicide that has given rise to the suppression of the historical contribution of Africans to the knowledge canon” (Masaka, 2018b, p. 1). Likewise, Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Zondi (2016) accept Masaka’s view in asserting that “racism, genocides, epistemicides, and linguicides are a central leitmotif of coloniality” (p. 3), which is still rampant in knowledges universities of South Africa.

The unfortunate aspect is that, due to the coloniality of knowledge, the world outside Euro-North America became a victim of epistemicides generated by colonial epistemic injustice and violence. Thinkers and scientists from outside Euro-North America are not valued but rather considered reservists to be used or consulted only if there is an absence of scientists from the self-glorified and appointed region of Euro-North America, which holds the supreme site of knowledge production. Consequently, “the colonial world, therefore, permits the Euro-North America to be considered as the only human beings who deserve to be inventors, researchers, and discoverers through epistemicide and cognitive empire” (Ndayisenga, 2022, pp. 7–8). Conquerors, in the shape of colonisers, imperialists, and enslavers, systematically tend to deny the humanity and knowledgeability of the conquered. Regrettably, the dominance and hegemonic standard of western epistemologies has sown the silence of other indigenous knowledges or the complete death of traditional knowledges in the colonised world. As Santos observes, the:

Unequal exchanges among cultures have always implied the death of the knowledge of the subordinated culture, hence the death of the social groups that possessed it. In the most extreme cases, such as European expansion, epistemicide was one of the conditions of genocide. The loss of epistemological confidence that currently afflicts modern science has facilitated the identification of the scope and gravity of the epistemicides perpetrated by hegemonic Eurocentric modernity. The more consistent the practice of diatopic hermeneutics, the more destabilizing the image of such epistemicides. (Santos, 2014, p. 92)

Considering Santos’s view, the hegemonic Eurocentric modernity facilitates the spread of epistemicide in the colonised territories of the Global South. The arbitrary decision to kill the different ways of knowing in the colonised world is made without consulting the indigenous people. Therefore, epistemicide in the colonised world manifests in the same way as the action of rape. Modern sciences completely replace other sciences found in the colonised world, thereby muting them. Collyer, Connell, and Morell (2019) partly agree with Santos as for them, “except where colonisation involved absolute genocide, elements of pre-colonisation knowledge have survived” (p. 13). Collyer and others do acknowledge that despite the launch of epistemicide, certain indigenous knowledge has resisted. For them, not all indigenous knowledges were damaged or destroyed by epistemicide.

However, considering other views, “I take epistemicide as the foundational problem that must be reversed to establish parity between the global North and the global South”, Masaka (2017b,

p. 3) appeals. Mpofu (2021a) addresses Masaka's concern that "conquest and colonisation, just like slavery, had an investment in silencing and erasing the cultures, histories, and knowledges of the conquered and colonised peoples" (p. 79). "In essence, epistemicide was profoundly informed by Eurocentrism, which was itself fundamentally ethnocentric as it was premised on the belief in European superiority, European science, and the European civilising mission" (Lebakeng, 2021, pp. 117–118). This study is more concerned with the perpetuation of epistemicide in African universities and South African universities in particular, based on the fact that:

The effects of epistemicide are still prevalent in African academia and affect South Africa disproportionately due to false and unfounded historical identification of the country's exceptionalism that sought to distance it from its African roots and anchorage. Even in this post-colonial period, when one enters any department in the disciplines of the social sciences and humanities, the canon of thought is fundamentally founded on theories, methodologies, and concepts produced by the west and the theoretical and cultural presuppositions are still entirely western, this notwithstanding variations in representations and pronouncements within the very west. (Lebakeng, 2021, p. 119)

Mpofu (2021b) concurs with Lebakeng's view in underlining that "truth and knowledge are the first to be murdered before individuals and populations of human beings are slaughtered in armed operations by those that seek to conquer, dominate and rule others by hook or by crook" (p. 1). Here, Mpofu highlights how knowledge is the first element targeted to be murdered—epistemicide—before the conquered human being is attacked by those who seek to enforce colonial epistemic dominance. In his political imagination, Mpofu (2021b) defines the concept of epistemicide as "the assassinations of the truth and knowledge" (p. 2). His concern is that the assassination of truth should not be ignored when it comes to epistemicide, meaning that knowledge must be verified by truth. Mpofu's argument is related to that of Foucault (1980), who immediately argues that "to be a philosopher was to be concerned with the question, what is truth? What is knowledge?" (p. 82). Notably, Foucault alluded to epistemicide well before Santos and Mpofu, even though he did not use specific terminology.

In essence, "epistemic injustice is understood as the tendency to doubt the capacity of certain people to be reliable knowers" (Masaka, 2019, p. 6). The knowledge that has been universalised, spread, and taught in different universities around the world is now over 500 years old. "for 500 years, there has been an entanglement between the local metropolis and the

local-colonial, hence in the colonies, the natives' knowing and knowledges were impoverished" (Mignolo, 2021, p. x). This problem is not concerned with knowledge itself, but rather that it has been monopolised by Euro-North America in committing epistemicide in the rest of the world. The major problem is that for Lebakeng (2016), "epistemicide was comprehensive and totalising as it extended to all spheres of life, including religion, politics, law, education, history, and the economy" (p. 50). Other knowledges from Africa, Asia, and South America have been arbitrarily denied and rejected. The epistemic freedom movements have arisen due to other sites of knowledge production resisting and claiming to have a voice in the world of knowledge production. As a point of confirmation, Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Zondi (2016) assert that:

The crisis is historically and philosophically traceable to the rise of that modern world system that came into being in 1492. At the centre of the unfolding of the modern world, the system was modernity, which enabled the processes of colonisation of time, space, being, knowledge, and even nature as Europe engaged in the usurpation of world history. (p. 6)

The usurpation and confiscation of knowledges by Euro-North America have divided the world: Euro-North America has proclaimed itself as the dominant and supreme of knowledge production, and the denied region, which is the rest of the world, or simply what Mbembe (2015a) defines as "Out of the World" (p. 173) or the Global South that he justifies in advancing that "the colonised has no freedom, no history, no individuality in any real sense" (Mbembe, 2015a, p. 190). Here, Mbembe is welcomed by Olivier (2021), who asserts that "epistemicide is an illustrative term for the prevailing subjugation to the coloniser's epistemological paradigm and concomitant displacement of African thought" (p. 152). With epistemicide, the African thought is ignored and put aside.

Consequently, it is due to epistemicide that "African people have continued to be major consumers of ideas generated in the west and tested on African soil and African minds" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013b, p. 53). In fact, it should be remembered that as identified by decoloniality, "epistemicide is essentially a condition of injustice and falsity that bestows pre-eminence to the European system of knowledge and inferiorises other systems of knowledge, in particular Indigenous African knowledge systems" (Kumalo, 2021, p. 116). Epistemicide in South African universities has been legalised while it should be fought and eliminated wherever it is for the sake of safeguarding indigenous knowledges. According to Collyer *et al.* (2019), "indigenous knowledge movements present a powerful critique of the imperialist structure of

knowledge in mainstream social science, where colonised peoples are still treated as objects of knowledge” (p. 13). It is such an epistemic injustice that has led the world to be in an epistemic crisis and at a confusing crossroads, because:

Epistemologically speaking, the modern world is at a crossroads, dominating rather than leading in the domain of knowledges. The Euro-North American epistemology that underpinned the imperial and colonial processes of usurpation of world history by Europe and North America, and which succeeded in appropriating and displaying other knowledges is now facing its deepest epistemic crisis. (Ndlovu-Gatsheni & Zondi, 2016, p. 8)

Unfortunately, “the crisis is compounded by the fact that the exhausting Euro-North American epistemology is refusing to open up to other intellectual traditions and epistemologies” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni & Zondi, 2016, p. 9). Such a denial of other knowledges encourages resistance and engagement with the epistemic freedom of the denied intellectuals. Epistemic freedom cannot be achieved through negotiation, but rather through force and counter-violence, as was done by colonial epistemic violence and injustice. The problem of epistemicide is closely related to the problem of linguicide, as described by Wa Thiong’o (1981). He is concerned that English, French, and Portuguese have become the languages of formal education in the colonised world and that this has led to the loss of the culture of colonised people. This, therefore, should mean that linguicide easily facilitates the missions of epistemicide in universities located in the colonised world, keeping in mind South African universities as a particularity or focus of the study.

The concern in this thesis is that in South Africa, the university continues to privilege knowledge that emanates from the North. It is the same university that displaces, occludes, and erases knowledge that is developed locally and importantly, “it is useful to consider that this local displacement of knowledge has always been to the detriment of Black/Indigenous Knowledge Systems” (Kumalo, 2021, p. 1). Remarkably, epistemicide is still an existential problem in the colonised world. It deserves careful and critical examination to create epistemic justice in the social sciences and humanities dominated by western epistemologies.

In essence, “epistemicide is essentially a condition of injustice and falsity that bestows pre-eminence to the European system of knowledge and inferiorises other systems of knowledge, in particular Indigenous African knowledge systems” (Lebakeng, 2021, p. 116). In addition, according to Lebakeng (2021), it [epistemicide] thrives on the systematic destruction of any Indigenous knowledge base that does not converge with the western knowledge system and

superimposes an alien system at the expense of the other's annihilation" (p. 116). The problem of epistemicide in universities of South Africa, therefore, raises fundamental questions related to the cognitive and epistemic justice experienced by staff and students. This is justified by the fact that:

The history of epistemicide in the social sciences and humanities in Africa raises fundamental questions of cognitive and epistemic justice. This is because the subordination of the social sciences and humanities to western epistemological paradigms dehistoricises and decontextualises the African experience. (Lebakeng, 2016, p. 55)

With this quote in mind, epistemic injustice is remarkable in social sciences and humanities, emerging from the consequences caused by the massive destruction and appropriation of the traditional knowledge used by ancestors in colonised zones. The restoration of knowledges requires engaging in a serious struggle that denies this usurpation of native sciences. At this point, Mpofu (2013) concurs with Lebakeng that "in the fashion of epistemic plagiarism and tradition of intellectual theft, the knowledge goods of the colonised are summarily stolen and rebranded and then discharged as the coloniser's own" (p. 6). Sharing the same view, Said ([1975] 1993) notes the idea that:

Because Egypt was saturated with meaning for the arts, sciences, and government, its role was to be the stage on which actions of world-historical importance would take place. Taking, then, a modern power would naturally demonstrate its strength and justify history, Egypt's destiny was to be annexed to Europe, preferably. (p. 174)

Colonialism has divided the world and, in this regard, while focusing on the impact of colonialism, Egypt was not the only target but the whole African continent, as Césaire (1997) posits:

Nature and history have placed us at the crossroads of two worlds of two cultures, if not more. There is the African culture, which I see as being below the surface; and precisely because it is below the surface, overlooked, treated with contempt, it needed to be expressed, to be brought out alive into the light. (p. 7)

For Césaire (1997), "Unfortunately, Africa will not get off so lightly. The disappearance of colonialism does not mean that the danger of African culture disintegrating has also disappeared" (p. 8). In another sense, Césaire alerts us that epistemicide is still a reality in the colonised world, and this requires serious engagement by the colonised subjects to remove it.

Santos's political thoughts on decolonising the university can open doors to radical social change. However, this cannot be successful without anti-colonial thought. This is the reason why Kamugisha (2019) asserts that “radical social change is inconceivable without anticolonial thought and praxis” (p. 176).

What major damages does epistemicide cause to African knowledge? In an attempt to provide an adequate response regarding the negative impact of epistemicide, “African knowledge was distorted, and the self-understanding and self-knowledge of Africans was disfigured and displayed as European colonists sought to replace Africanity as a knowledge system with a Eurocentric sense and sensibility in what would be understood as epistemicide” (Mpofu, 2013, p. 5).

From the various discussions and debates above, I hold that epistemicide is still a reality in Africa, the Global South generally and South Africa specifically. The discussions show that there is a dominance of western science and daily organised destructions of indigenous and local knowledges (epistemicide) in South African universities, and this is orchestrated by the promoters and supporters of western science at different campuses. Santos's critical examination of the concept of epistemicide is still relevant because it allows us to discover the roots and main causes of the monopoly of the Euro-North American canon on university knowledge production, as I further explain in detail in the following section.

3.3 Understanding Epistemic Injustices in South African Universities through Epistemicide

According to Santos (2014), “epistemicide [is] the murder of knowledge” (p. 92) of the natives/ indigenous people and its replacement by that of the colonisers in the Global South. Santos uses the term murdering of indigenous knowledge to describe the way colonialists use colonial epistemic violence. Colonialists committed what Santos (2018) calls a massive epistemicide by forcing the validation of modern western science and rejecting all other forms of knowledge found in the colonised zones. What does this mean?

A massive epistemicide the destruction of an immense variety of ways of knowing that prevail mainly on the other side of the abyssal line—in the colonial societies and sociabilities. Such destruction disempowered these societies, rendering them incapable of representing the world as their own on their own terms, and thus of considering the world as their own in their own terms

and considering the world as susceptible to being changed by their own power and for their own objectives. (Santos, 2018, p. 8)

Western epistemologies have dominated and silenced other local South African indigenous knowledges. Santos (2014) notes that this has resulted in the death of traditional knowledges in the colonised world, as “unequal exchanges among cultures have always implied the death of the knowledge of the subordinated culture, hence the death of the social groups that possessed it” (p. 92). The ruthless destruction of indigenous knowledges has a direct negative impact on universities in Africa, and South Africa in particular. The Euro-North American episteme uses coloniality of knowledge in its vanguard behaviour to destroy and ban all other indigenous knowledges, unfortunately resulting in massive epistemicide in South African universities.

In Africa and its universities, students still complain that “epistemicide was one of the conditions of genocide” (Santos, 2014, p. 92). Likewise, Mudimbe (1988) assesses that the dominance of one western epistemology in the Global South has facilitated the destruction and disappearance of the local epistemes that existed before colonialism. Critical to the contemporary epistemicide that is ravaging universities in Africa, and particularly in South Africa, Mudimbe maintains that:

In other words, during the Classical Age, there was one and just one *episteme* ... The *episteme* that allowed general grammar, natural history, and the theory of wealth gradually disappeared. There is a radical mutation from the theme of order to that of history. In those systems of classical knowledge never occupied, new ways of knowing to define themselves, thanks to new transcendentals: labour, life, and language. (Mudimbe, 1988, p. 24)

According to Santos (2014), “the loss of epistemological confidence that currently afflicts modern science has facilitated the identification of the scope and gravity of the epistemicides perpetrated by hegemonic Eurocentric modernity” (p. 92). Backed by western science, hegemonic Eurocentric modernity decorates a sole form of western and dominant epistemology, neglecting other epistemologies from the Global South. Promoting one form of epistemology while arbitrarily destroying other ways of knowing harms indigenous knowledges, which is not integrated and incorporated into curricula and programmes. For example, the indigenous knowledges produced or experienced by Zulus, Xhosas, Vendas, and others, are often muted automatically and not recognised in South African universities. These

local knowledges are dominated and destroyed by western science, which is recognised as the only legal form of knowledge to be taught in South African universities.

If Euro-North America is aware that “the foisting of one group’s knowledge on another group leading to the near destruction of the latter’s epistemology has been referred to as epistemicide” (Masaka, 2018c, p. 4), they should know that time has come for them to pay back the indigenous knowledge they have damaged. Due to such colonial epistemic violence, Masaka (2018a) reinforces that the result has been epistemicide or the suppression of the paradigm of thought of the dominated people, and western epistemology has enjoyed unquestionable and unjust dominance in the colonised world. The African philosophy is absent in South African universities because it is dominated by the western paradigm. It is argued that “the supposed absence of the philosophy in the ‘strict’ sense among the indigenous people of Africa becomes the reason for the dominance of one philosophy paradigm in the curriculum in universities in Africa” (Masaka, 2017, p. 5). Thus, the epistemicide that is rampant in universities in Africa, and particularly in South Africa, is groomed by the current existential coloniality of knowledge. As a point of clarification, “this means that the primacy of place that is accorded western ways of knowing and being, which are then imposed in understanding other knowledges and ways of being, constitutes coloniality of knowledge” (Hlabangane, 2021, p. 166). The coloniality of university knowledge in the oppressed world is intended to erase the indigenous memory of native subjects and replace it with a Euro-North American memory.

In essence, in Santos’s thought, epistemicide is the structural and systemic destruction of indigenous knowledges, which is justified by the fact that the “dominant epistemologies have resulted in a massive waste of social experience and, particularly, in the massive destruction of ways of knowing that did not fit the dominant epistemological canon” (Santos, 2014, p. 238). Collyer *et al.* (2019) challenge Santos’s view as for them, “except where colonisation involved absolute genocide, elements of pre-colonisation knowledge have survived” (p. 13). Collyer and others hold their view that some indigenous knowledges have resisted epistemicide since not all indigenous knowledges have been completely damaged or destroyed by epistemicide, even though such knowledges are not recognised as worthy of being taught in universities. De Matos-Ala explains that “there is the real threat of the epistemicide of American and European-based knowledge from our curricula” (De Matos-Ala, 2017, p. 2). Here, she means that the Euro-American episteme is not only still arbitrarily dominating in the universities from the

South but also a peril to other forms of indigenous knowledges. The concept of epistemicide thus permits us to see clearly why epistemic injustice is a reality in South African universities.

According to Santos (2018), “During the past forty years, one crucial impulse for the epistemologies of the South has come from the peoples that suffered most harshly the epistemicide provoked by modern science and the genocide resulting from the European colonialism” (Santos, 2018, p. 9). In response to Collyer and others above, Santos explains that the negative impact of epistemicide is immeasurable. For him, modern western science not only commits epistemicide, but such epistemicide has also been converted into genocide. Killing the knowledge of other indigenous peoples is equal to killing the same people because of European colonialism. However, Puwer (2019) doubts and warns about Santos’s intellectual credibility. His critiques about Santos are:

It is on the podium when the somatic force of Santos takes on the hue of the white masculine European trailblazing for epistemologies of the South, with him at the centre. There is a touch of the evangelical tone in the orchestration of voice, body, auditorium, and audience. He orients himself as presenting an entirely new position, pioneered and orchestrated by him. (Puwer, 2019, p.5)

Puwer above considers Santos as among those who should have been critiqued to commit epistemicide, but he is now pretending to be the preacher of epistemicide in the oppressed places. Puwer does not support Santos and sees him as someone who is only seeking to be known in the Global South, which currently has more population than the west. Puwer considers Santos’s actions as a way of doing propaganda. He doubts Santos is a disciple of epistemicide. My point of view here is, however, that Santos’s concept of epistemicide is still consultative and informative for scholars who are interested in how South African universities should be decolonised. The concept of epistemicide cannot be separated from that of pluriversity knowledge, as seeking a solution without mentioning the root cause may be misleading.

In Mpofu’s thought, the concept of epistemicide should be critically assessed as “the assassinations of the truth and knowledge” (Mpofu, 2021b, p. 2). Mpofu (2021b) philosophises that “truth and knowledge are the first to be murdered before individuals and populations of human beings are slaughtered in armed operations by those that seek to conquer, dominate and rule others by hook or by crook” (p. 1). At this point, Mpofu’s concern is that knowledge is the first targeted element to be murdered—epistemicide. From this stage of epistemic dominance,

colonialists can fully control colonised subjects who must blindly follow without questioning. These colonised subjects can no longer be questioned as they are epistemically corrupted and dominated.

Therefore, Mpofu's concern is that the assassination of truth should not be ignored when it comes to epistemicide, since knowledge is verified by truth, and truth validates knowledge. That is the reason why "to be a philosopher was to be concerned with the questions 'What is truth?', and 'What is knowledge?'" (Foucault, 1980, p. 82). From this view, Foucault should know that the philosophers from the Global South are rejected and denied their truths and intellectualism. This demonstrates to what extent there is "a huge epistemicide caused by modern science" (Santos, 2018, p. 38) in universities located in the Global South, and particularly in South Africa. In Africa, the colonial conquest of Africans led to real or attempted epistemicide, resulting in the decimation or near complete killing and replacement of endogenous epistemologies with the epistemological paradigm of the conqueror (Nyamnjoh, 2012, p. 1).

Santos and Nyamnjoh's views suggest that Eurocentric modernity is hegemonic and facilitates the spread of epistemicide in colonised territories of the Global South. In fact, "the more consistent the practice of diatopical hermeneutics, the more destabilizing the image of such epistemicides" (Santos, 2014, p. 92). In this light, epistemicide becomes part of the hegemonic group's strategy to deny the humanity of the dominated group (Masaka, 2018c, p. 4). Considering the centrality and relevance of the concept of epistemicide to this study, "I take epistemicide as the foundational problem that must be reversed to establish parity between the global North and the global South" (Masaka, 2017b, p. 3). Here, Masaka considers epistemicide as both a foundational problem and the source of crises ravaging universities. The student protests that have happened and are still happening on various campuses in South African universities are, for Masaka, a way to reverse the negative impact of epistemicide that has been created and implanted in universities by the dominance of western epistemology.

Likewise, Mpofu (2021a) aligns himself with Santos and Masaka in affirming that "conquest and colonisation, just like slavery, had an investment in silencing and erasing the cultures, histories, and knowledges of the conquered and colonised peoples" (p. 79). "In essence, epistemicide was profoundly informed by Eurocentrism, which was itself fundamentally ethnocentric as it was premised on the belief in European superiority, European science, and the European civilising mission" (Lebakeng, 2021, pp. 117–118). As this study is significantly

concerned with the rampant epistemicide that is becoming a perpetual problem in South African universities, it is evident that:

The effects of epistemicide are still prevalent in African academia and affect South Africa disproportionately due to false and unfounded historical identification of the country's exceptionalism that sought to distance it from its African roots and anchorage. Even in this post-colonial period, when one enters any department in the disciplines of the social sciences and humanities, the canon of thought is fundamentally founded on theories, methodologies, and concepts produced by the west and the theoretical and cultural presuppositions are still entirely western, this notwithstanding variations in representations and pronouncements within the very west. (Lebakeng, 2021, p. 119)

The impact of epistemicide is a reality and not a matter that requires debate in universities in Africa, and particularly South Africa. Lebakeng does not hesitate to state that the effects of epistemicide are still prevalent and not prevented in African academia, and especially in South African academia. Lebakeng continues to regret how each department related to the disciplines of social sciences and humanities is dominated by the western science culture in theories, methodologies, and other relevant concepts. Scholars and thinkers in South African universities are products of western science. These scholars may be physically Black, but they are mentally and intellectually white. They fight daily for the interests of the west while simultaneously destroying themselves. They have discovered that the only way out is to adopt the epistemologies of the South, an alternative proposed by Santos. In support of the promotion of the epistemologies of the South as a response (justice) against epistemicide in universities, Santos insists that epistemic colonialism has never ended, as it is still experienced and witnessed by struggling scholars in the Global South. He holds and justifies:

It is as difficult to imagine the end of colonialism as it is to imagine that colonialism has no end. Post-colonial or decolonial studies and struggles in the past three decades have shown how entrenched colonialism is [still perpetual in] both private and public life, even many decades after the end of historical colonialism. (Santos, 2014, p. 26)

According to Santos (2018), "the epistemicide caused by the Eurocentric modern sciences was far more devastating on the other side of the abyssal line, as colonial appropriation and violence were converted into the colonial form of social regulation" (p. 21). The Eurocentrism of modern sciences acts in favour of one side, which is Euro-North America, and renders other sciences from the rest of the world irrelevant and invalid. Indeed, science produced by *others*

is considered surplus. In fact, “it is the essence of Othering, which is informed by the *I think, therefore I am world* view that privileges individualism, reductionist, and binary thinking, hierarchies and rational thinking devoid of emotion” (Hlabangane, 2021, p. 168). The Eurocentric thought is facilitated by capitalism, which has a direct negative impact on universities. The universities are contemporarily capitalised as being considered centres for formal training. Has capitalising on university knowledge in South African universities reached its end? Based on the principles of the epistemologies of the South, Santos also finds that:

It is as difficult to imagine the end of capitalism as it is to imagine that capitalism has no end. If it is true that the fall of the Berlin Wall had a devastating effect on the idea of postcapitalist futures, it is no less true that it is hard to believe that capitalism may escape the fatality of all historical phenomena, that is, the fatality of having a beginning and an end. (Santos, 2014, p. 24)

Referring to the impact of colonial education in Africa, and particularly in South Africa, Nyerere (1967) observes that colonial education did not transmit the values and knowledge of African society from one generation to the next. Instead, it was a deliberate attempt to change those values and replace traditional knowledge with knowledge from a different society. In the African context, students in universities, especially in South African universities, experience a continuous pedagogy of absence. In this concern, “the pedagogy of absences would be geared to show the measure of epistemicide caused by northern epistemologies, their monopoly on valid and rigorous knowledge, and the waste of social experience thereby produced” (Santos, 2018, p. 276). The primary objective of the western science culture is to suppress other forms of knowledge. With the current technologies, students are unable to access the necessary data, while western students have more access to it. Therefore, it is critical that “the master is the only one who has the key to open and close the world’s activities and their achievements require passwords and pins to be accessed” (Ndayisenga, 2021, p. 47). The coloniality of knowledge is characterised by the storage of knowledge that is only saved by the colonialists. They make it hard for those who do want to access such knowledge by making it expensive for them to pay for the published articles and books. They aim to prevent scholars, students, and staff from the oppressed world from easily accessing knowledge.

Santos (2014) argues that epistemicide is the systemic and structural destruction of indigenous knowledge in the colonised world. He believes that it is imperative to adopt the epistemologies of the South as an adequate and alternative justice against epistemicide. With epistemicide in mind, other non-western, native/indigenous knowledges are denied recognition. From this

point of analysis, it is still regrettable that the world could not receive balanced ideas from different parts of it. Hence, “other knowledges, neither scientific nor philosophical, particularly non-western knowledges, have remained largely outside the debate until today” (Santos, 2014, p. 166). This also reminds us that we must consider the oppressed Black subjects and other races who daily experience the problem of dismemberment.

Actually, “the concept of dismemberment captures not only physical fragmentation but also the epistemological colonisation of the mind, and the ‘cultural decapitation’ that resulted in profound forms of alienation among Africans” (Santos, 2018, p. 111). From this point of view, the concept of dismemberment fulfils the principles and intentions of epistemicide. Dismemberment clears the way for epistemicide to be realised easily. Dismemberment is used by western epistemic colonialists to cut off and nullify all indigenous intellectuals found in universities in Africa, particularly in South Africa. Reflecting on the dismemberment into question and its negative consequences, Fanon (1952 [2008]) accentuates that “the Black man[/woman] has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man” (p. 90), hence such a colonised man/woman is completely dismembered.

In Santos’s thought, colonised subjects in the colonised world experience the negative impact of epistemicide daily. Consequently, they are arbitrarily obliged to reinstate themselves in the “global apartheid, a world of ghettos without entrances or exits, swirling in a sea of colonialist and fascist currents” (Santos, 2014, p. 93). Unfortunately, “epistemicide was comprehensive and totalising as it extended to all spheres of life, including religion, politics, law, education, history, and the economy” (Lebakeng, 2016, p. 50). Due to the daily experience of being drained by the effects of epistemicide, students in South African universities are forced to discover to what extent their lives have been transformed into a western and colonial lifestyle. Reinforced by the coloniality of power and coloniality of being, the coloniality of knowledge has managed to control and disorientate students to the point that all programmes and curricula are western/modern by nature and not related to local knowledge. This means that students are facing modern epistemicide in South African universities. The justification of this view is that modern science is preserved using a modern archive, while “the other face of the archive is modern epistemicide and all its historical repercussions” (Santos, 2018, p. 198). Santos believes the use of western technologies facilitates modern epistemicide, which speeds up the goals of the coloniality of knowledge in universities in the Global South.

Therefore, “the epistemological privilege that modern science grants to itself is thus the result of the destruction of all alternative knowledges that could eventually question such a privilege and it is a product of what I called *epistemicide*” (Santos, 2014, pp. 152–153). In their intervention, Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Zondi (2016) critically argue that epistemicide is the “killing and expropriations of knowledges of the colonised” (p. 5). Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Zondi believe that epistemicide in South African universities involves not only the killing, silencing, and destruction of native/indigenous knowledges, but also the theft thereof or the mere acceptance that “Europe engaged in the usurpation of the world history” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni & Zondi, 2016, p. 6). Some indigenous knowledges have been modified in a metamorphic manner that resembles western cultural science and have been brought back to be perceived as new and original western programmes. Let us keep that:

The point here is that Euro-North American-centric epistemic hegemony was achieved through genocides (killing of non-Europeans); epistemicides (killing and appropriation of knowledges of non-Europeans); linguicides (killing of languages of colonised peoples), and cultural imperialism (imposition of western culture). The burning of libraries built by Muslims was part of the commission of epistemicides. This epistemic violence is not comparable to the current burning of a few libraries by students in South Africa. The decolonial project as a liberatory process does not advocate for the burning of libraries, partly because that would amount to the repetition of what colonialism did and partly because the project advocates what the leading Portuguese decolonial sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos termed ‘ecologies of knowledges.’ (Benyera & Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017, p. 2)

Therefore, having seen that epistemicide is still a growing problem in universities in Africa, “I seek to argue that the philosophy curriculum in universities in Africa must be transformed to address its apparent bias towards one philosophy paradigm at the expense of that of the indigenous people” (Masaka, 2017, p. 5). Here, Masaka’s argument shows that his wish is to see students in African universities learning the philosophy that is African by origin and not western philosophy taught in African universities without questioning where it emerged from. Since the first universities were established in Africa, western epistemology has been dominant. Some western theories, methodologies, and thoughts are taught to students in African universities, but are later found to be irrelevant and not useful in their everyday lives. This can lead to an increase in unemployment in African societies.

Furthermore, for over 500 years, there has been conflict between the local metropolis and the local colonised places. In the case of colonies, the natives' knowledge was destroyed, rejected, silenced, denied, and impoverished (Mignolo, 2021). Mignolo believes that despite the global dominance of western epistemology, it is outdated and needs to accept alternative epistemologies from different parts of the world. Mignolo insists that due to epistemicide that is still rampant in colonised countries, including South Africa, the natives' ways of knowing and knowledge have been arbitrarily depleted. Therefore, the destruction of indigenous knowledge in South African universities has direct and indirect consequences. Santos puts it in the following words:

The destruction of knowledge is not an epistemological artefact without consequences. It involves the destruction of social practices and the disqualification of the social agents that operate according to such knowledge. In mainstream economics, the particular intensity of the significant spectator has imposed an essentially arrogant single view, and, consequently, the epistemicide has been broader and deeper. (Santos, 2014, p. 153)

Generally, as Santos has highlighted above, the destruction of knowledge affects not only knowledge itself but also the societies where such knowledge is applied and experienced. Killing African knowledge (systems), therefore, equals committing genocide against the African people. This reminds us that deleting and destroying Black indigenous knowledge in South African universities is equivalent to the genocide of Black people in those universities. Students who resist genocide are terrorised as they must leave the university, while they later opt for protesting against the epistemicide that is continual and ravaging in these universities. The colonialists who launched the project of colonialism, which is the umbrella of epistemicide, are unwilling to accept that they are attacking the docile bodies of students who become victims of their system. Later, "the result is an imaginative structure consisting of docile bodies and strangers, victims of successive epistemicides, navigating in a sea of residues" (Santos, 2014, p. 153). Consequently, because of such an extensive epistemicide, "the colonised has no freedom, no history, no individuality in any real sense" (Mbembe, 2015a, p. 190). Due to the negative impacts of colonialism, he/she is left as objects and not treated like human beings. As a result, all his/her human values and attributes, and life experience, have been dispossessed and usurped by the master.

In essence, with the presence of epistemicide, "many alternatives are left out: alternative types of agents other than docile bodies and strangers, alternative knowledges other than scientific

knowledge, alternative projects other than the project of the significant spectator” (Santos, 2014, p. 153). The launch of the *longue-durée* project of colonialism was thought out and calculated before the project was launched to the point that, with epistemic colonialism today operating as colonality of knowledge, all other forms of knowledges except western science must be destroyed and murdered without exception. Using the same *triage* of analysis as Santos above, Olivier (2021) critically assesses that “epistemicide is an illustrative term for the prevailing subjugation to the coloniser’s epistemological paradigm and concomitant displacement of African thought” (p. 152). With epistemicide in mind, Olivier critically assesses that the concept of epistemicide describes the subjugation of African epistemologies by western ones that prevent and block them from emerging on a global scale.

Indeed, it is because of epistemicide that African people have continued to be major consumers of ideas generated in the west and tested on African soil and African minds (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013b, p. 53). Due to epistemicide, Black scholars still point a finger at some South African universities such as the University of Cape Town, University of Witwatersrand, and North West University, to mention but a few, as these institutions remain very colonial in almost everything, including the complex of superiority. More states that “whites feel the urge to exercise intellectual authority over Blacks to a point where it is hard for them to even take you seriously when it is obvious that you are well above them, mentally and academically” (More, 2019, p. 11). Here, More’s concern is that being a Black scholar, philosopher, or thinker requires him/her to always justify who he/she is for a white master to check or evaluate such a Black thinker. In academic spaces, Black thinkers are required to justify or convince the white master about their credibility. This kind of life experienced daily by Black thinkers is related to Manganyi’s (1973) *Being-Black-in-the-World* as being a problem in the same world.

The students’ protests against the western epistemological dominance in South African universities are undermined by Arendt as for her “Negro students, most of them admitted without academic qualification, regarded and organised themselves as an interest group, the representatives of the Black community. Their interest was to lower academic standards” (Arendt, 1970, p. 18). Referring to Black students from the United States of America, Arendt doubted whether academic standards would be affected by universities becoming more inclusive and tolerant to accommodate Black students; therefore, it should not affect the world or national ranking of the particular universities. In Arendt’s understanding, Black students are not only problems but also stupid—they intend to use violence to lower academic standards.

Arendt could not keep in mind that for instance, the root cause of student protests in South African universities, is due to epistemicide.

Castells (2018) observes that “if universities succumb to the temptation to promote social equity at the expense of knowledge production, they will end up merely providing ‘poor education for all’” (p. 1). Castells does not care about promoting social equity in South African universities when it comes to knowledge production. For him, to avoid providing poor education in universities, he only suggests merit over the promotion of social equity. Castells may have forgotten that the university should not ignore the plurality of thought as a solution to complaints that the university is monopolised by one race.

“Epistemicide is essentially a condition of injustice and falsity that bestows pre-eminence to the European system of knowledge and inferiorises other systems of knowledge, in particular Indigenous African knowledge systems” (Lebakeng, 2021, p. 116). In Lebakeng’s analysis, epistemicide is an unjust condition that inferiorises indigenous knowledges while elevating and glorifying the sole western system of knowledge. According to Mporu (2013), “In the fashion of epistemic plagiarism and tradition of intellectual theft, the knowledge goods of the colonised are summarily stolen and rebranded and then discharged as the coloniser’s own” (p. 6). Mporu’s idea here is that he accuses colonialists of being qualified thieves of knowledges from other indigenous places that differ from theirs. Colonialists have stolen other indigenous knowledges and retransformed these knowledges and later considered them as their own, which is a form of plagiarism. Thus, the concept of epistemicide incites us to think about plagiarism as some knowledges have not only been killed but also usurped. Students must continuously be careful because “Epistemicide thrives on the systematic destruction of any Indigenous knowledge base that does not converge with the western knowledge system and superimposes an alien system at the expense of the other’s annihilation” (Lebakeng, 2021, p. 116). With epistemicide, local knowledge suffers the impact of epistemic injustices and violence, as such knowledge is not accepted at all in the realm of knowledge production.

In the African context, the epistemologies that originate in Africa are discarded and regarded as empty epistemologies that cannot be counted as alternatives and, consequently, “Dealing with discarded alternatives means dealing with non-existent entities” (Santos, 2014, p. 153). Here, with non-existent entities, Santos’ reference reminds us of the indigenous knowledge that is suppressed before it even emerges or is evaluated. Santos provides further details:

There are at least two ways in which non-existent entities may ‘occur’ and, accordingly, two ways of trashing alternatives. First, some alternatives never occurred because they were prevented from emerging. Second, some alternatives did occur, but the types of scale, perspective, resolution, time compression, and signature used by science did not recognise them at all or took them for residues [...] In the first situation, where the alternatives did not occur, we are dealing with silences and unpronounceable aspirations; in the second situation, where the alternatives did occur, we are dealing with silencings, epistemicides, and trashing campaigns. (Santos, 2014, p. 153)

There are multiple negative impacts of epistemicide because, with the concept of epistemicide in mind, “I am talking about societies drained of their essence, cultures trampled underfoot, institutions undermined, lands confiscated, religions smashed, magnificent artistic creations destroyed, extraordinary possibilities wiped out” (Césaire, [1955] 1972, p. 1). The negative impacts of the western epistemic domination in Africa and other colonised parts of the world are still visible in our societies, universities and, particularly, in the social sciences and humanities, because “the history of epistemicide in social sciences and humanities in Africa raises fundamental questions of cognitive and epistemic justice, because of the subordination of the social sciences and humanities to western epistemological paradigms dehistoricises and decontextualises the African experience” (Lebakeng, 2016, p. 55). However, as has been explicated by Santos, epistemic justice cannot be realised without cognitive justice. The humanities and social sciences in South African universities are dominated by western epistemology, and this cultivates what is later harvested as epistemicide in South African universities.

According to Mudimbe (1994), “from the 1930s, the colonial objective might be defined as the invention of a new cohesive culture” (p. 131), which was still monopolised by the western culture of science. Mudimbe (1994) further emphasises that “at the end of the nineteenth century, colonisation cohesively binds the diverse, often antagonistic, collective memories of many African cultures. Offering and imposing the desirability of its memory, colonisation promises a vision of progressive enrichment to the colonised” (p. 129). Colonialists have chosen to promote one western culture of science at the expense of many others found in colonised zones. Mudimbe is extremely concerned with what he calls the colonial library. This library recognises and decorates western knowledge with multicolours, but it arbitrarily denies other knowledges produced by indigenous students and staff in African universities. In fact, in his political imagination, “the colonial library denies the possibility of any plural rationality or

history” (Mudimbe, 1988, p. 208). In South African universities, epistemicide is groomed by the Euro-North American epistemic dominance, as it is witnessed that “endogenous and indigenous knowledges have been pushed to the margins of society. Africa is today saddled with irrelevant knowledge that disempowers rather than empowers individuals and communities” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013a, p. 1). Pushing indigenous knowledges to the periphery means that the lives experienced by Africans are denied, and they are rejected in the scene of knowledge production.

Before this subsection comes to an end, I would like to underline that most contemporary problems that are ravaging South African universities are caused by “the colonial epistemicide that has given rise to the suppression of the historical contribution of Africans to the knowledge canon” (Masaka, 2018b, p. 1). Equally, Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Zondi (2016) underline that “racism, genocides, epistemicides, and linguicides are a central leitmotif of coloniality” (p. 3) of knowledge, which is still a continual problem in South African universities. With the use of coloniality of knowledge as the tool for the destruction of indigenous knowledges, epistemicide is successful in South African universities due to the perpetual colonial epistemic injustice and violence. In the next section, I conclude the chapter.

3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I provided discourses on the concept of epistemicide. Based on Santos’s definition of epistemicide, the chapter explained that epistemicide is the rejection, denial, and destruction of local indigenous knowledge by the dominance of western science. The chapter critiqued that western science has a monopoly on the knowledge produced in South African universities. The chapter explained that due to epistemicide, indigenous knowledges are judged as void and not worthy to contribute to the corpus of universal knowledge. The chapter thus observed that epistemicide remains a lasting problem in South African universities and a product of coloniality of knowledge—meaning that coloniality of knowledge is the *raison d’être* for epistemicide to be alive in South African universities. It is from this perspective that the chapter held that, similarly to coloniality of university knowledge, epistemicide is also a main cause of epistemic violence witnessed in South African universities.

The chapter also argued that Santos’s concept of epistemicide permits us to understand the ongoing epistemic injustices that daily happen in South African universities. Santos explicated that epistemicide destroys indigenous knowledge, and from this destruction, it becomes clear

that the renewed calls for decolonising South African universities attempt to prevent and deconstruct epistemicide from continuing to spread in South African universities. The chapter explained that decolonisation of university knowledge intervenes to challenge or respond to the problem of epistemicide. Different African scholars and thinkers argued that there is a need for a pluriversality of knowledge in South African universities—this will bring a total epistemic freedom in the university that was previously labelled as westernised.

CHAPTER 4

DECOLONIALITY/PLURIVERSITY KNOWLEDGE

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the justification of Santos's concept of pluriversity knowledge as the inevitable concept responding to the renewed calls for decolonising South African universities. Contrary to university knowledge that is critiqued to be exclusive and not accommodating different knowledges produced by different scholars, pluriversity knowledge is, fortunately, an inclusive knowledge. It strives for diversity and multiple forms of knowledges to take part in the knowledge production. Empowered by decoloniality, pluriversity knowledge becomes the umbrella for all knowledge producers, including society members—meaning that with pluriversity knowledge, everyone is invited to the table of knowledge production. Santos's concept of pluriversity knowledge is considered the potential solution to the epistemic injustices that daily happen in South African universities, and this is conditionally realised if there is an intervention of decoloniality. It means that decoloniality permits Santos's concept of pluriversity knowledge to shift from concept to action. The principles and values of decoloniality strengthen pluriversity knowledge to deconstruct the system of epistemic colonisation in South African universities and to reconstruct another epistemic system that accommodates everyone. Pluriversity knowledge strives for epistemic justice and epistemic freedom. In this chapter, I argue that decoloniality is an imperative tool for pluriversity knowledge to be realised in South African universities. Decoloniality permits Santos's conception of pluriversity knowledge to be relevant and consultative when it comes to the epistemic decolonisation of South African universities.

This chapter is structured as follows: Firstly, I provide discourses on pluriversity knowledge. Secondly, pluriversity knowledge is discussed as an inclusive and accommodating knowledge. Thirdly, I explain how decoloniality licenses pluriversity knowledge. Fourthly, I justify why pluriversity knowledge is yet realisable in South African universities. Sixthly, I explain the decolonial epistemic perspective as an asset of decoloniality. Before I conclude the chapter, I discuss decoloniality, epistemologies of the South, and the search for pluriversality.

4.2 Discourses on Pluriversity Knowledge in South African Universities

In his understanding, Santos (2021) observes that “contrary to the university knowledge [...] pluriversity knowledge is a contextual knowledge insofar as the organising principle of its construction is its application” (p. 203). Santos believes that pluriversity knowledge has the potential to be a decolonial alternative to epistemicide and university knowledge that is presently given privilege and centrality in the westernised university of the Global South, including South Africa. Pluriversity knowledge is an anti-imperial, anti-colonial, and anti-monopoly of knowledge. It aims to establish diversity in knowledge production by recognising the multiple angles of knowledge sources. It challenges the Euro-North American canon that dominates the episteme of knowledge production in the modern world. Pluriversity allows society members to contribute to knowledge production, in contrast to university knowledge, which is considered an organisation of restricted members.

While university knowledge is critically assessed as the homogeneous knowledge dominated by the western canon, Santos (2021) observes:

It [pluriversity knowledge] is a transdisciplinary knowledge that, by its very contextualisation, demands a dialogue or confrontation with other kinds of knowledge, which makes it more heterogeneous internally and allows it to be more adequately produced in less perennial and more open systems organised less rigidly and hierarchically. (p. 203)

Pluriversity knowledge is built on heterogeneity, which allows for contextualisation and a dialogue that includes different views from different angles of analysis. It allows students from all over the world to contribute to knowledge production and find elements of knowledge linked to their cultures and life experiences. Pluriversity knowledge advocates for the establishment of diverse sources of knowledge, rather than a monopoly of the source of knowledge. It accommodates all thinkers from the Global South and Global North, allowing everyone to contribute to knowledge production regardless of their origin.

Relevantly, pluriversity knowledge defends truth rather than being biased. This is the kind of knowledge that Santos is proposing for South African universities to overcome the epistemic injustice that has become a daily concern. It is the alternative knowledge that is, therefore, recommended by Santos to be adopted in the world of knowledge production. For Santos, pluriversity knowledge has the power to question university knowledge and address issues caused by epistemicide. As a recommendation, “what is necessary is to create alternative,

counter-hegemonic visions, capable of sustaining the daily practices and sociability of citizens and social groups” (Santos, 2004, p. 173). Santos (2021) continues by elaborating that:

All the distinctions upon which the university knowledge is based are put in question by pluriversity knowledge, but most basically, it is the relation between science and society that is in question. Society ceases to be an object of scientific questioning and becomes itself a subject that questions science. (p. 203)

In Santos’s understanding, the adoption of pluriversity knowledge is unique because it welcomes society to participate in knowledge production, whereas university knowledge is imposed upon society. Therefore, pluriversity knowledge converts society from being the object of science to being the subject of science. Contextually, it means that pluriversity knowledge grants power to voiceless people, allowing them to be heard in the world and considered during knowledge production. It does not neglect any angle from which knowledge should be produced and interrogates any thought that seems to be biased. Likewise, Mbembe (2015b) agrees with Santos’s view by stating that:

A pluriversity is not merely the extension throughout the world of a Eurocentric model presumed to be universal and now being reproduced almost everywhere thanks to commercial internationalism. By pluriversity, many understand a process of knowledge production that is open to epistemic diversity. It is a process that does not necessarily abandon the notion of universal knowledge for humanity but embraces it via *a horizontal strategy of openness to dialogue among different epistemic traditions*. (Mbembe, 2015b, p. 19)

In essence, Mbembe’s argument strengthens Santos’s position that pluriversity knowledge is the result of a dialogue between different views. Its validation is justified by a multipolarity of ideas. In addition, Santos (2021) posits that “pluriversity knowledge has had its most consistent realisation in university-industry partnerships in the form of mercantile knowledge” (p. 204). Pluriversity knowledge allows every member of society to contribute to an engaged debate. Through this conversation, each participant has the right to ask questions, which promotes dialogue. As a guest in the debate, everyone is welcome to ask questions and respond.

From the point of view above, pluriversity knowledge is not necessarily concerned with those asking these questions as a condition or prerequisite when it comes to knowledge contribution: “first question: who is speaking? Who, among the totality of speaking individuals, is accorded the right to use this sort of language? Who is qualified to do so?” (Foucault, 1972, p. 50). It is

a kind of knowledge that opens all closed borders and permits everyone to access and contribute to it. However, in the African context and from a decolonial perspective, it should be argued that pluriversity knowledge can only emerge from the struggle against the dominant western epistemic canon, which is seen to be negative to the growth of African indigenous knowledge. This immediately leads to the following argument:

Denying the indigenous people of Africa an epistemology that is comparable to epistemologies from other geopolitical centres translates to questioning their humanity, which is a form of injustice. I thus proceed to argue that, as a precondition to an authentic discourse on the possibility of ‘global justice’, epistemic injustice must first be challenged and rejected. In so doing, I am defending the position that the acceptance and respect for the diversity of the peoples of this world and their epistemologies is imperative if genuine epistemic progress at the global level is to be realised. (Masaka, 2017b, p. 1)

Baptista and Vilsmaier (2021) critically analyse that the concept of pluriversity knowledge cannot be realised without the intervention of a transdisciplinary mode of knowledge. This view is in line with the view of Santos and Masaka. What is exceptional about the transdisciplinary mode of knowledge is that “transdisciplinary research is considered a collaborative and integrative praxis grounded in different ways of knowing, acting, and being” (Baptista & Vilsmaier, 2021, p. 1). Transdisciplinary research should therefore be considered as the cousin or the imperative element that is required for pluriversity knowledge to be realised. Thus, the transdisciplinary approach to learning and research drives pluriversity knowledge to reach its full potential. In their observation, Baptista and Vilsmaier hold that pluriversity knowledge is recommended for genuine epistemic decolonisation to be realised. Based on transdisciplinary research, pluriversity knowledge allows a multicultural science from different scholars and their different views. What is more relevant than important is:

In multi-ethnic and multinational countries, pluriversity knowledge begins to emerge from inside the university itself when incoming students from ethnic and other minority groups understand that their inclusion is a form of exclusion. They are confronted with the *tabula rasa* that is made of their cultures and the traditional knowledge of their communities. All of this leads scientific knowledge to confront other kinds of knowledge and demands a high level of social responsibility from the institutions that produce it and, consequently, from the universities. (Santos, 2021, pp. 204–205)

The university is qualified as a site of knowledge production. It means that epistemic decolonisation must start from the decolonisation of the university, which is the concern of this study. What does it mean to decolonise the university? This question has become a daily concern in most universities in Africa, especially in South Africa.

By decolonising the university, students meant structural changes among others: curriculum changes; epistemological paradigm shift from Eurocentric knowledge to Afrocentric knowledge, and a change of university cultures and systems that are alienating, and increased and affordable access to education in general. (Ndlovu-Gatsheni & Zondi, 2016, p. 4)

In the South African context, Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Zondi elucidate that decolonising the university should not only be synonymous with genuine epistemic decolonisation through which the pluriversity of knowledge may emerge, but they also mean that with the conception of decolonising the university, students are asking for a combination of changes, including changing the curriculum, shifting the geography of reason from Eurocentrism of science to African-based knowledge and, importantly, changing university cultures and systems that are anti-Black by nature.

In addition, Santos (2018) cautions that “an epistemological shift is necessary to recover the idea that there are alternatives and indeed to recognize, as the bearers of potential alternatives, the struggles against oppression that continue to be fought in the world” (p. viii). However, the epistemological shift cannot happen on its own—it must emerge from a genuine epistemic decolonisation. The current university knowledge must be confronted by authentic epistemic decolonisation. For Fanon ([1961] 2017), “decolonisation is always a violent phenomenon” (p. 63). Here, Fanon expresses uncertainty about the possibility of genuinely decolonising the Global South’s policies without the use of violent means. It should be recommended that decolonising the university would require equally radical approaches. The FeesMustFall and RhodesMustFall student protests in South Africa had some incidents of violence and arson.

Fanon and Arendt (1970) disagree on the use of counter-violence as the real mechanism for the oppressed to reach their self-determination, being free from colonial epistemic violence (injustice). Simultaneously, Arendt (1970) strongly disagrees with Fanon in arguing that “if only the practice of violence would make it possible to interrupt automatic processes in the realm of human affairs, the preachers of violence would have won an important point” (p. 30). Arendt denies that the use of violence (counter-violence) by students in universities cannot help

to end the colonial epistemic violence, even though Masaka (2019) reminds her that knowledge passed on to learners must fulfil their needs to awaken their agency so that they might contribute meaningfully to the determination of their destiny in life. In fact, for this to happen, the university's curriculum of different disciplines must be fully decolonised. This means that a decolonised curriculum must become a subversive educational project that requires the dismantling and rebuilding of disciplines through pluriversal and transformative praxes (Dube, 2021, p. 16).

Arendt seems to ignore that the coloniality of knowledge in universities located in the Global South is, by nature, arbitrarily violent. As such, epistemic decolonisation must take the same approach by applying radicalism while resisting and attempting to restore the rejected and silenced knowledges. The warning is that “the violence can be justifiable, but it never will be legitimate” (Arendt, 1970, p. 52). Arendt is mainly concerned with the counter-violence that students should use to decolonise the university and refute colonial epistemic violence. What remains uncertain is how Arendt is not willing to acknowledge the colonial epistemic violence, but only insists and warns thinkers and students from the Global South not to use epistemic counter-violence while seeking to overcome the colonial epistemic violence. Arendt does not believe that pluriversity knowledge should emerge from the use of force and seems to discourage those who think that knowledge can be born out of struggle.

At the same point, Fanon ([1959] 1965) was not surprised that Arendt's argument is colonial, considering that “colonialism shuts its eyes to the real facts of the problem” (p. 31). Fanon means that Arendt is pro-colonialist as she recognises and defends the epistemic colonial violence while rejecting the epistemic counter-violence that may be used by the rejected thinkers and students who seek to overcome the colonial epistemic violence. Marriott (2018) does not use the same glasses of analysis as Arendt. He follows Santos and Fanon's ideas and agrees that “the necessities of revolution call forth obligations that necessarily have to be fulfilled, imperatives of knowledge, method, and ideological reinvention—everything that comes last and is now first” (p. 191). For Marriott, it means that pluriversity knowledge must emerge from the naissance of *tabula rasa* in the university systems of knowledge production. This requires restructuring university curricula and programmes from the zero point. *Tabula rasa* resists any narrative or archaeo-teleological schema that would reduce it to a final meaning (Marriott, 2018, p. 29).

In accord with Fanon, Santos (2018) emphasises that “since colonialism is a co-creation, however asymmetrical, decolonising entails decolonising both the knowledge of the colonised and the knowledge of the coloniser” (p. 107). Based on Santos’s argument, this means that decolonising universities should be the durable *muthi* that has a high potential to end epistemic crisis and injustice in universities in South Africa. Santos argues that decolonisation entails decolonising both the knowledge of the colonised and that of the coloniser. Therefore, genuine epistemic decolonisation is a fair arbitral tool, meaning that any kind of knowledge, whether western or indigenous, should not be dominant over another. Due to the domination of university knowledge production by the western canon (epistemic colonialism), the treatment of Black subjects becomes disastrous because,

There is nothing comparable when it comes to the Black man. He has no culture, no civilisation, and no long historical past. Perhaps that is why today’s Blacks want desperately to prove to the white world the existence of Black civilisation. (Fanon, [1952] 2008, p. 17)

Proving to the white world that a Black civilisation exists means that Black subjects must refute the white world and prepare themselves to fight for a new world that may restore the lost or forgotten Black civilisation and knowledge. Pluriversity knowledge accommodates not only the knowledge produced by Black intellectuals but also the knowledge produced by their civilisations. Pluriversity knowledge allows invention and creates new possibilities for different lives. It questions and assesses the role of intellectuals and their contributions to societies. In essence, “the role of an intellectual is not to tell others what they have to do. But what right would he do so?” (Foucault, 1988, p. 265). As for Foucault’s warning, intellectuals should avoid giving commandments or orders through their use of theories, but instead contribute to their societies and mainly join the decolonial terrain in practice. This way, they shall bring pluriversity knowledge from theory to practice.

Mpofu (2013) espouses Fanon’s view above that:

The resistance to the Eurocentric knowledge of Africa by scholars and intellectuals in African academia is as sweaty and as bloody as the nationalist and Pan-Africanist battles that dethroned judicial colonialism in Africa and liquidated administrative apartheid in South Africa. Colonialism was accompanied by colonial knowledge of Africa, consequently, Afrocentric activists and scholars are generating decolonial African knowledge in resistance and negation to coloniality, which is a power that is the oxygen of colonialism, and which lives after colonialism has died. (Mpofu, 2013, p. 1)

Mpofu is concerned that resistance to Eurocentric knowledge will lead to the acceptance of pluriversity knowledge, regardless of the opinions of colonialists and beneficiaries of colonialism. This is only possible when there is a significant and remarkable move of the centre—Eurocentrism—to other spheres in the world. There is, therefore, “the need to move the centre from its assumed location in the west to a multiplicity of spheres in all the cultures of the world” (Wa Thiong’o, 1993, p. 6). At this point, Mbembe (2017) questions Wa Thiong’o in reminding us that “Europe is no longer the centre of gravity of the world” (p. 1). However, “moving the centre in the two senses – between nations and within–nations will contribute to the freeing of world cultures from the restrictive walls of nationalism, class, race, and gender”, appeals to Wa Thiong’o (1993, p. 8). Moving the centre of the western episteme canon is imperative for the realisation of pluriversity knowledge. Otherwise, pluriversity knowledge is a radical alternative that should be able to dethrone coloniality knowledge in the westernised universities in Africa, particularly in South Africa.

According to Mafeje (1991), “the division of the world into *centre* and *periphery* created grounds for affirming a *sui generis* identity for the Third World (Mafeje, 1991, p. 4). Due to epistemic imperialism, due to their identity, great thinkers from Africa have been and continue to be labelled as thinkers from the periphery. Pluriversity knowledge seeks to deconstruct the epistemic Eurocentrism and to construct the epistemic plurality that welcomes similar, neutral, and oppositional thoughts from various knowledge producers. It was for this reason that Mafeje attempted to endogenise and deconstruct knowledge production in South African universities (Nabudere, 2011, p. 51). Nyoka (2020) is supportive of Nabudere in arguing that “Mafeje had very important things to say about decolonising knowledge and knowledge production, and about race and class issues, all of which are hugely relevant in South Africa today” (p. xvi). In Nyoka’s understanding, Mafeje’s works are still relevant, vibrant, and especially recommendable for African decolonial scholars. Hence, epistemic decolonisation in South African universities has become a daily concern. It is important for everyone to accept that “under the current conditions of calls for decolonisation in South African higher education and elsewhere, pedagogical practices in general need to be reviewed” (Schuhmann & Dube, 2018, p. 1), not only for satisfying Black students in particular but also for establishing genuine epistemic decolonisation that benefits all.

According to Maldonado-Torres (2004), “[epistemic] decolonisation is about the creation of a new symbolic and material order that takes the full spectrum of human history, its

achievements, and its failures, into view” (p. 36). Maldonado-Torres explains how genuine epistemic decolonisation has a high potential to restore the rejected and silenced knowledges and appear once again in the world of knowledge production. Concerning this study, the epistemic decolonisation of colonised subjects must go hand in hand with the revival of their history, myths, values, traditions, and life experiences. It is from this perspective that staff and students are called to deny the perpetual epistemic injustice that has been arbitrarily imposed on them.

Mignolo (2009) states that political and epistemic delinking, and decolonialising and decolonial knowledges, are necessary steps towards imagining and building democratic, just, and non-imperial/colonial societies. In his view, “now decolonial politics is enough and necessary to understand the Eurocentric (imperial/colonial) politics of knowledge” (Mignolo’s interview with Sayan Dey, 21 January 2017). The realisation of pluriversity knowledge has emerged from the struggles that led to epistemic decolonisation. In essence, “epistemic decolonisation is concerned with the redress and reversal of the particularly colonial subclass of wrongs” (Mitova, 2021, p. 24) that characterise current South African universities.

Knowledge that has been rejected and silenced must be restored after a serious struggle. It aims to destroy the practice of epistemicide outside of the Euro-North American zone. This zone is the only one accused of being certified to have the right and reason to generate scientific knowledge. Agreeing with Santos and Fanon, Sartre ([1961] 2017) confirms that “the oppressed do not condemn their revolt, knowing full well that white people have done everything to provoke it” (p. 54). Sartre clarifies that the launchers of epistemicide outside of Euro-North America should not be surprised by the denial of epistemic injustice, whether through revolt or rebellion. A decolonial epistemic perspective designs and encourages pluriversity knowledge to be successful in the establishment of epistemic justice. While Santos (2014, 2018, 2021) holds that pluriversity knowledge may emerge from dialogue, Fanon ([1964] 1967) strongly disagrees that “[epistemic] decolonisation is the destruction of the colonial system from the pre-eminence of the language of the oppressor” (p. 105). If decolonisation deals with the destruction of the western educational system, it means that university students in Africa, and particularly South Africa, must engage in an endless struggle—a struggle that Santos does not deny. In fact, “the African struggles have now entered a phase of serious epistemological battles in which epistemologies of the Global South in general and Africa, in particular, are locking horns with previously hegemonic Euro-North

American epistemologies” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni & Zondi, 2016, p. 11). Such epistemic domination must be demolished and weakened by the principles of decoloniality.

In her intervention, Sharpe (2016) posits that decolonial works must be concerned with “new modes and methods of research and teaching; new ways of entering and leaving the archives of slavery” (p. 13) as justification for why pluriversity knowledge shall lead in universities in Africa. At this point, Fanon asserts that under the perpetual colonial conditions, colonised epistemologists cannot prove or justify their intellectualism. In his observation, Fanon ([1952] 2008) questions: “What will be the place of the Black genius in the universal chorus? We claim, however, that a genuine culture cannot be born under present conditions. Let us talk of Black genius once man[/woman] has regained his[/her] true place” (p. 164). In other words, Fanon means that pluriversity knowledge and the recognition of Black philosophers cannot happen under the continual machinery of coloniality of knowledge. It is only possible after a successful, genuine epistemic decolonisation that honours everyone, including society’s contribution to knowledge production.

Concurring with this point of view, Fanon reveals that whatever should be done by colonised subjects before they are genuinely decolonised is going to be nullified. For Fanon, the only good time for colonised subjects to prove that they are valorised geniuses/intellectuals is when those who were previously colonised have been genuinely decolonised. Genuine epistemic decolonisation cancels the stereotypes and illusions of being modernised and unmodernised, or civilised and uncivilised. The problem is that all human beings have been obliged to embrace political modernity. Embracing political modernity means embracing the epistemic condition that Europeans created to distinguish the nation as civilised and thereby justify aggrandising the nation at the expense of the uncivilised (Mamdani, 2021, p. 2). Civilised people are those under capitalism. Capitalism is against pluriversity knowledge as it seeks to globalise and universalise the Euro-North American knowledge as the sole knowledge to be adopted by everyone in the world.

It is still critical to see that in the Global South, including South Africa, “as the university becomes more and more entangled with capitalism, its entanglement with capitalism and patriarchy becomes increasingly visible.” (Santos, 2018, p. 270). Capitalism is the cousin of modernity and the rival of genuine epistemic decolonisation. Capitalism assists in the industrialisation and monopolisation of knowledge production while pluriversity knowledge

seeks to destroy the commercialisation and privatisation of knowledge production by capitalists.

According to Mbembe (2019), capitalists are currently using high technologies, such as artificial intelligence, to promote universities to be more capitalistic than ever. This is preventing the naissance of pluriversity of knowledge in the same universities in the Global South that South Africa is part of. Thus, the fight against pluriversity knowledge is prevented as “the logic of reason is morphing from within machines and computers and algorithms” (Mbembe, 2019, p. 14). Here, Mbembe's concern is that Euro-North America is investing a significant amount of money in machinery rather than human beings in universities in the Global South. They intend to strengthen what I call human objectification, which means that colonised human beings are converted into objects, and this happens after serious dehumanisation. Thus, to prevent the burgeoning of pluriversity, they defensively prefer, at all costs, to use all means, including dehumanising students on campuses in South African universities, to decorate the project of capitalism linked to coloniality/modernity.

As Maldonado-Torres (2007) argues, “decolonisation aspires to break with modernity, which is built on one logic” (23), the logic that is justified by coloniality. Such one-sided archives mislead Black intellectuals who are engaged in dealing with the question of coloniality. The domination of European epistemology should be fundamentally criticised. Colonialism has obliged the world to turn to one compulsory way of life, orientation, knowledge, and politics based on Euro-North America. The decolonial epistemic perspective appeals to the destruction of such one-sided knowledge and permits the acknowledgement of the other sides of the world that have been hidden by the colonial enterprise of the cognitive empire.

Supporting Santos's argument, Zondi (2021) reveals that planetary epistemic struggles have been experienced by people of the Global South, including Africa, for a long time. Zondi's (2021) concern is that “in recent years, these struggles have become a call for the decolonisation, Africanisation and fundamental transformation of the university, its knowledge, and disciplines” (p. 2). Following the same steps as Santos, Zondi finds that pluriversity knowledge can only emerge from the engagement of the struggle for epistemic decolonisation in South African universities. Pluriversity knowledge is possible when each producer of knowledge can say no to those who have nominated themselves as the vanguards of knowledge production. Thereby, South Africa as a state should be aware that “a state which cannot tell the colonial or neocolonial rulers that it will act independently, despite what those

rulers think, is completely handicapped” (Museveni, 1992, p. 186). Such a handicap cannot be cured through negotiation between the coloniser and the colonised. Fanon’s disciple, Sartre, reveals that this must take a violent revolt *mutatis mutandis* as epistemic colonialism is violent by nature, thus “killing a European is killing two birds with one stone, eliminating in one go oppressor and oppressed: leaving one man dead and the other man free; for the first time the survivor feels a *national* soil under his feet” (Sartre, [1961] 2017, p. 55). For Sartre, European colonialists are the source of epistemic crises in colonised spaces. Colonised subjects may use whatever means required to uproot epistemic colonisation and injustice by the straight attack on the first launchers of epistemic violence.

Since Euro-North America has epistemologically been dominant for more than 500 years, the rest of the world seeks to create a genuine epistemic rupture that should help both worlds to share their knowledges. An epistemic rupture is like an interregnum, whereby a previously dominant epistemic order becomes exhausted, opening the way for a new one (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2016, p. 29). An epistemic rupture, however, must emerge from the political thoughts of great decolonial thinkers. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2016) asserts that “the decolonial thinkers are those who have chosen to take a position and refuse to remain neutral in a world that is not neutral” (p. 32). To Ndlovu-Gatsheni’s mind, choosing neutrality equals supporting endless colonialism. He encourages whoever has decided to be decolonial to stand firm and confidently show that he/she is against colonial epistemic violence.

However, the need for opposing the assumed dominant western epistemology must be a struggle with no return because, in the African context, the western “epistemology is not universal since there are those who are excluded and denied of it (Sithole, 2016, p. 113). The decolonial epistemic perspective reveals that shifting the geography of reason is a dialectical requirement for attaining pluriversity knowledge. While explicating the relevance of shifting the geography of reason while searching for the realisation of the pluriversity of knowledge in South African universities, Sithole (2020) puts it in the following words:

The shift of the geography of reason is the fracturing of reason as it is. The political disruption is inevitable in that the shift of the geography of reason and the insistence upon another form of thought that does not allow itself to be controlled by the Euro-American-centric thought shows that there is a necessity for Blackness to think for itself and on its own terms. (p. 249)

The rationale behind the adoption of pluriversity knowledge is that “As science becomes more ingrained in society, the society becomes more part of science” (Santos, 2021, p. 205).

Pluriversity knowledge is the realisation of diversified knowledges that emerges from different perspectives of knowledge production, including indigenous knowledges. Pluriversity knowledge disappoints the capitalisation and westernisation of the university. Santos (2021) reminds us that:

The university was created according to a model of unilateral relations with society, and it is this model that underlies its current institutionalism. Pluriversity knowledge supplants this unilateral notion with interactivity and interdependence, both processes enormously invigorated by the technological revolution of information and communication. (p. 205)

Mamdani (2019) emphasises that “not only the institutional form but also the intellectual content of modern social sciences and humanities is a product of the Enlightenment experience of Europe” (p. 17). Imperatively, “diversifying our practices as researchers and combining them with traditional research practices is the only way to promote a pluriverse which is nurtured by diverse knowledge systems on our way towards decolonisation” (Martinez-Vargas, 2020, p. 1). Therefore, pluriversity knowledge asks for permission from the decolonial epistemic perspective to intervene, so that all society members, university students, and staff members can positively evaluate its achievement. It is in that same perspective that Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2021) posits that “there can be no international higher education without decolonisation and globalectics/pluriversity” (p. 16). In 2015 protests, students demanded to open doors for pluriversity knowledge in South African universities.

Precisely, “in the RhodesMustFall movements particularly, there was a clear revolt against epistemological domination and cultural extroversion” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018, p. 224). Such epistemological domination can only be ended by accepting the principles and practicality of pluriversity knowledge in universities in South Africa. However, pluriversity knowledge is mandatory and possible after the application of decoloniality. “This is because decoloniality is the philosophy that is articulated at the moment of the struggle for the realisation of and attainment of [epistemic] freedom” (Sithole, 2016a, p. 21). Thus, pluriversity knowledge permits epistemologists from the South to rethink “an imagination of a world that has not one knowledge but an ‘ecology of knowledges’” (Mpofu, 2021, p. 74).

In his decolonial reading of Achebe, Mpofu (2021) reveals how Achebe proposed a dialogue of civilisations between the colonisers and their colonised subjects. Opting for dialogue has been critiqued by Mandela, who disagrees with Achebe in arguing that “only free men can

negotiate. Prisoners cannot enter [negotiated] contracts” (Mandela, 1994, p. 623). With the concept of prisoners, Mandela refers to oppressed and colonised people, but not prisoners who are in prison. Within the context of this study, this reference is in connection with university students and staff from universities in South Africa as prisoners because the coloniality of knowledge renders them fully epistemically controlled or simply people who live in what Mbembe ([2010] 2021) describes as “the house without keys” (p. 149). However, for the realisation of pluriversity knowledge, students must be aware that pluriversity knowledge is fought for.

In addition, it is important to recognise that “in light of these transformations, we can conclude that the university finds itself in the presence of opposing demands which have the convergent effect of destabilising its current institutionalism” (Santos, 2021, p. 205). Based on this point of view, the university is facing opposing demands as the homogeneous university knowledge production is being opposed by the growing demands of epistemic decolonisation, which is epistemically led by the concept of pluriversity. The time has come for university students in South Africa to realise that “decolonisation of being can only begin with decolonising epistemology – that is, decolonising ways of knowing and knowledge production itself” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2016, p. 41). For Ndlovu-Gatsheni, the time to adopt pluriversity knowledge has arrived, if not late, for those who have been oppressed by colonial epistemic violence to wake up and cut off from their ongoing sleep.

In a curative way, students and staff in South African universities should realise that pluriversity knowledge in Santos’s understanding must emerge from a perpetual epistemic struggle linked to the principles of the epistemologies of the South. Indeed, “the African struggle for decolonised knowledge involved not only engagement with fundamentalist socio-economic and political processes like imperialism but also with paradigms, theories, perspectives, and methodologies” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013b, p. 53). A significant message that should be addressed to university students is that they must be aware that “the aim of decolonisation in South Africa can be understood as rooted in the ideal of democratising the knowledge project” (Kumalo, 2021, p. 1) as this is still a lacuna in universities in South Africa.

The democratisation of knowledge that Kumalo proposes is only possible when students stand firm and fight for their rights to access their indigenous knowledges. These ought to be taught as the major knowledges in South African universities and are obvious in the whole Global South. The students’ dream of epistemic decolonisation can only be realised by those who

suffer the consequences of the colonisers' actions. Therefore, the following message is addressed to university students: "Don't allow people and things that have nothing to do with your dreams to derail or block you from reaching your destination" (Zondi, 2020, p. 100). Hence, giving up should not be an option for students who want their universities to be genuinely decolonised.

As this section approaches its end, readers are reminded that "decolonising the university is a task to be conceived of as articulated with other processes of decolonising social and cultural relations prevailing in society" (Santos, 2018, p. 270). Here, Santos advises that decolonising the university is a complex task. He underlines that decolonising the university as a single task is not enough and that it should be associated with other kinds of decolonisation. Decolonisation of society must be primordial because, without the decolonisation of society, he doubts the effectiveness of decolonisation of the university. Although its major principle is focussing on epistemic liberation, colonialism is the umbrella of all kinds of coloniality. Decoloniality should be considered the foundation for a multitude of ways to be used while attempting to genuinely free the colonised subjects, including students who are in the Global South, especially South Africa. Genuine epistemic decolonisation cannot happen by itself; it requires men and women with strong and audacious hearts who fearlessly engage in decolonial thinking. The genealogy of decolonial thinking is therefore pluriversal, not universal (Mignolo, 2011).

Finally, I would like to highlight that this thesis holds that the manifestation of epistemicide in South African universities permitted the domination of Euro-North American epistemologies. Such an epistemicide must be challenged by the deployment of decoloniality that licenses the *naissance* of pluriversity knowledge. As I will explain in detail in the following sub-theme, pluriversity knowledge is an inclusive knowledge. However, pluriversity knowledge remains unrealised in South African universities, unless once licensed by decoloniality—an epistemic justice that emerges from a struggle for epistemic freedom in most South African universities.

4.3 Pluriversity Knowledge: An Inclusive Knowledge

The concept of pluriversity knowledge is claimed by decolonial scholars to be an alternative to the perpetual epistemic injustices in the Global South universities generally and South African universities particularly. Pluriversity knowledge is also a dialectical requirement for students based in South African universities to achieve epistemic freedom. Contrary to university

knowledge, “pluriversity knowledge is a contextual knowledge insofar as the organising principle of its construction is its application” (Santos, 2021, p. 203). Santos critically assesses that pluriversity knowledge is “a transdisciplinary knowledge that, by its very contextualisation, demands a dialogue or confrontation with other kinds of knowledge, which makes it more heterogenous internally and allows it to be more adequately produced in less perennial and more open systems” (Santos, 2021, p. 203). The pluriversity knowledge in Santos’s writings is covered by the ecologies of knowledges. Thus, pluriversity knowledge emerges from a pluriversity of knowledges, and it challenges university knowledge that is dominated by a single angle of knowledge—that is, the Euro-North America episteme or what I termed as poor science above. Poor in the sense that it originates from a single space and a few thinkers. Conversely, pluriversity knowledge should then be defined as what I call rich science, as it accommodates knowledge from different places and thinkers around the world.

What is important and relevant here is that with university knowledge, society members are prohibited from questioning its truth and validity, while in contrast with pluriversity knowledge, the “society ceases to be an object of scientific questioning and becomes itself a subject that questions science” (Santos, 2021, p. 203). Thus, with pluriversity knowledge, a society member acts as the subject, while with university knowledge, the subject is acted upon and denied any power or chance to question. Considering Santos’s conception of pluriversity knowledge, it should be noted that with pluriversity knowledge, anyone can contribute to knowledge production regardless of his/her locus of enunciation. With the application of pluriversity knowledge:

The education system is part of society and the economy. It does not exist outside of them, producing knowledge, expertise, and skills in a vacuum. Societies nationally and globally are webs of institutions and institutional relationships that shape each other. (Allais, 2022, [What’s needed]. para. 2)

Like Santos above, Allais observes that the university shouldn’t distance itself or separate itself from society. She insists that on both a national and international level, societies should be taken into significant consideration as they are webs of institutions. For her, the university and society shape each other. Thus, the university cannot exist without the intervention of society, just as society needs knowledge produced by the university. Allais agrees with Santos that universities must accommodate pluriversity knowledge to reduce the epistemic crisis and student protests against the imposition of western curricula. What is important and relevant

about pluriversity knowledge is that it allows for multiple kinds of knowledge outputs. More importantly, the “multiple types of knowledge outputs, associated with different spillover mechanisms, can result from the universities’ knowledge production processes” (Lee & Graff, 2018, p. 1). Pluriversity knowledge thus intervenes in the construction of the knowledge that should be universal; hence, it is a kind of knowledge that emerges from different views, regions, and genders, wherever in the world, both within and outside of the university.

Relevantly, Santos’s concept of pluriversity knowledge is echoed by Mbembe (2015b) who states that “by pluriversity *knowledge*, many understand a process of knowledge production that is open to epistemic diversity” (p. 19; [Emphasis added]) and prevents the epistemic crisis. Mbembe above reveals that what is good about pluriversity knowledge is that such knowledge emerges from diversity and strives for the diversity of thoughts, regardless of where the producer of such knowledge is coming from. In his thought, Mbembe argues that pluriversity knowledge opens doors to epistemic diversity. Everyone is welcome to contribute to knowledge production, clarify and comment on such knowledge, and have the right to question the knowledge produced by others. The imperative is that the “theoretical discourses from the South need to be recognised as constituting valid forms of knowledge, even if their ontology and epistemology stances diverge from those of the United States and Europe” (De Matos-Ala, 2017, p. 2) that remain dominant everywhere in the world.

According to Santos (2021), “pluriversity knowledge has had its most consistent realisation in university-industry partnerships in the form of mercantile knowledge” (p. 204). It should be emphasised that “in multi-ethnic and multinational countries, pluriversity knowledge begins to emerge from inside the university itself when incoming students from ethnic and other minority groups understand that their inclusion is a form of exclusion” (Santos, 2021, pp. 204–205). Pluriversity knowledge challenges the idea that university knowledge is monopolised by the Euro-North American epistemic canon. It includes and reintegrates thinkers, scholars, staff, and students from the Global South who were previously not recognised in the world. In addition, pluriversity knowledge invites thinkers and scholars who were previously unrecognised to the table of discussion regarding university-related problems to find a lasting solution. Decolonising South African universities should not be generalised, but must be done through all faculties and departments. Taking the Wits Department of Political Studies/Sciences as a typical example, “the notion of decolonising the Political Studies/Science curriculum is a contested one by students, academics, and politicians, including the value of

decolonising the curriculum” (Dube, 2021, p. 1). Genuine decolonisation of the curriculum can, however, only be achieved after the acceptance and establishment of a pluriversal system of knowledge in South African universities.

Pluriversity knowledge is significantly relevant in universities in the Global South, including South Africa, because the pluriversity “knowledge is rather a dialogic process and can incorporate multiple views. This relates to the researchers becoming more aware of the societal consequences of their work (‘social accountability’)” (Hessels & Lente, 2008, p. 3). From this point, it means that pluriversity knowledge accepts multiple points of view from different critical thinkers and scholars. Once different views are accepted by South African universities, this shall prevent and uproot the epistemic crisis in all institutions. Pluriversity knowledge is supposed to replace university knowledge, and such a possibility can happen only if the university changes from university to what Santos (2021) calls the polyphonic university—a kind of university that privileges the accommodation of different knowledges that emanate from a diversity of epistemologists.

Fortunately, the good news for those who have been languishing in and experiencing epistemic violence is that from the adoption of pluriversity knowledge, they start to be visible because “the landscape of the pluriversities and subversities emerging all over the world is richer and more varied than one can imagine” (Santos, 2018, p. 291). Pluriversity knowledge is facilitated by the ecologies of knowledges, which are charted by the epistemologies of the Global South. These epistemologies are born from struggle and “the very African struggles for liberation are opened to new critiques and new affirmations informed by empathetic readings and keen revisions of the past” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni & Ngqulunga, 2022, p. 1). The result of the assessment of history serves as the bridge that helps to know the present conditions and how the future shall be dealt with. De Matos-Ala (2017) advises theory lecturers at different universities in the South to design their curricula. She warns that “unless theory lecturers are convinced of the importance of knowledge-plurality and design their curricula to facilitate this, knowledge-exclusive curricula will continue to dominate” (De Matos-Ala, 2017, p. 9). De Matos-Ala here calls for the practice of what Mignolo (2009) termed as epistemic disobedience. This involves encouraging scholars from outside Euro-North America to deny or reject western epistemologies that are not beneficial in the local milieu of the South in favour of their indigenous epistemologies that are relevant and adequate to their demands and identities.

Pluriversity knowledge opens doors to multiple views and knowledge producers and should be synonymous with the related concept of knowledge democracy, which acknowledges the importance of multiple knowledge systems, such as organic, spiritual and land-based systems, frameworks arising from social movements and the knowledge of the marginalized or excluded” (Hall & Tando, 2017, p. 1). Therefore, this conditionally shows that the absence of knowledge democracy in South African universities negatively affects pluriversity knowledge to be realisable in the same universities. The democratisation of knowledge thus opens doors to multiple kinds of knowledge systems, as Hall and Tando maintain. Pluriversity knowledge nourishes and cultivates all traditional and indigenous knowledge that has been erased by colonial epistemic dominance and hegemony.

Standing firm in his stirrups, Santos (2014) maintains that “the anticapitalist struggle must be fought side by side with the anti-colonial struggle. Class domination and ethno-cultural-racial domination feed on each other, which means that the struggle for equality cannot be separated from the struggle for the recognition of difference” (p. 27). Santos urges all those who are under epistemic domination to unite and espouse the philosophy of consciousness. This will enable them to confront the epistemic violence that the same capitalists are promoting while spreading the western culture of science. In the African context, Biko ([1978] 2017) asserts that “the philosophy of Black Consciousness, therefore, expresses group pride and the determination by Blacks to rise and attain the envisaged self” (p. 74). Students are encouraged to embrace the struggles laid down by the principles of pluriversity knowledge. Such principles are integrative and pluriverse. Contrary to university knowledge, pluriversity knowledge is the mediator knowledge; hence, it gathers many scholars and thinkers regardless of their locus of enunciation. With pluriversity knowledge, however, the racial problem loses its power and is disregarded as irrelevant or unimportant in the realm of knowledge production. The lack of application or acceptance of pluriversity knowledge in South African universities, still favours the epistemic crisis and epistemic violence in the same universities.

Agreeing with Biko’s political ideals, Santos philosophises that the epistemologies of the South are born in struggles, and the major task for pluriversity knowledge is to assist students “to the extent that these struggles are successful, access to the university increases, and new social strata are allowed entrance, thus enlarging the social heterogeneity and cultural diversity of the student body” (Santos, 2018, p. 269). However, Santos’s idea of the cultural diversity of the student body in South African universities is still critical and questionable, as such diversity

cannot coexist with the ongoing western science culture that is still dominant and at the forefront. That is why Oelofsen suggests that accepting pluriversity knowledge and diverse knowledge “is possible through providing an alternative framework for knowledge which ‘de-centres’ the assumed (western) centres of knowledge” (Oelofsen, 2015, p. 137). Oelofsen is recalling decoloniality as it is a potential tool that identifies and denounces the coloniality of knowledge that is strongly linked, supported, and protected by its umbrella - the dominant western science.

Thus, epistemic decolonisation in universities can address cultural diversity. If the epistemic decolonisation is genuine, it will be positive for the change in the cultural diversity of the student body. Otherwise, “the instability caused by the impact of these contrasting pressures in universities of South Africa, creates impasses in which it becomes evident that demands for larger changes often accompany equally large forms of resistance to change” (Santos, 2021, p. 206). While at the university, knowledge production is dominated by a single angle - western science. This totally differs from pluriversity knowledge because, with pluriversity, “knowledge production is heterogeneous in terms of the skills and experience that people bring to it” (Gibbons, 1997, p. 5). Pluriversity knowledge is thus a reunion of knowledges that come from different thinkers just to form a unique knowledge that emerges from the differences—a potential solution to the epistemic crisis in South African universities.

Importantly, with the adoption of pluriversity knowledge, “the university’s elitism, as the utmost exemplar of class, race, and gender discrimination in society and culture at large, has thereby been exposed” (Santos, 2018, p. 269) for examination. In its impartiality, pluriversity knowledge is thus decolonial by nature as it attempts to cure both sides: the epistemic oppressors and those who are epistemically oppressed too. Particularly, with pluriversity knowledge, the “transitions in research and teaching are positive. We must accept the fact that knowledge production has moved beyond the boundaries of the university” (Huff, 2000, p. 4). Huff observes that pluriversity knowledge is not only produced in the university, but it is also a mixed knowledge that emerges within and out of the university after an epistemic decolonial struggle. This invokes the very idea that epistemic “decolonisation in its total form offered far more than political independence” (Lee, 2015, p. 178). For Lee, epistemic decolonisation focuses on intellectual liberation rather than on political independence in Africa.

In contemporary times, pluriversity knowledge is highly demanded not only by the students and staff at universities but also by society itself because pluriversity “knowledge is produced

in a diverse variety of organisations, resulting in a very *heterogeneous* practice” (Hessels & Lente, 2008, p. 2). With the pluriversity of knowledge, knowledge production shifts from being produced homogeneously to heterogeneously. Pluriversity knowledge permits thinkers, authors, and scholars from the Global South to shift “from the epistemology of blindness to the epistemology of seeing” (Santos, 2014, p. 154). The epistemology of seeing has a strong relationship with the epistemologies of the South. Significantly, what is relevant to this thesis is that “the epistemologies of the South are at the core of the pluriversity [knowledge]” (Santos, 2021, p. 380). In favour of Santos’s argument, Masaka states that “the acceptance and respect for the diversity of the peoples of this world and their epistemologies are imperative if genuine epistemic at the global level is to be realized” (Masaka, 2017b, p. 1), the same as in universities in the Global South where South is located. The knowledge that is formed from a diverse group of epistemologists has a high chance of bringing durable peace to universities that are facing an epistemic crisis daily, including South African universities.

Masaka (2017b) argues that genuine epistemic decolonisation cannot happen in the absence of pluriversity knowledge as it strives for epistemic diversity. Denying some people’s indigenous knowledge means that their knowledges are not recognised as modern science that deserves respect. It is regrettable that in universities located in the Global South, including South Africa, modern science built itself against common sense, which it deemed superficial, illusory, and false. The term common sense was used to describe all forms of knowledge that did not meet the epistemological criteria established by modern science (Santos, 2014, p. 157). Pluriversity knowledge stands for the following slogan: “there is no a priori reason to favour one form of knowledge against another” (Santos, 2014, p. 157) or other forms of knowledges from the rest of the world. It should be kept in mind that, however, despite epistemic colonisation in Africa, “indigenous peoples still use indigenous knowledge to make sense of their world” (Meekosha, 2011, p. 13). This shows how resistant African subjects remained in rejecting the domination of western science. Some scholars may argue that epistemic colonisation could not be able to destroy all knowledges. Pluriversity knowledge intends to respect all kinds of knowledges from everywhere, unless there are important and needed by society, to avoid the dominance of one form of knowledge.

Such dominance of one form of knowledge provoked what Jansen (2019) observes as “the emergence of decolonisation as a political slogan on university campuses *in South Africa*” (p. 51 [emphasis original]). While protesting against the dominance of western knowledge in

South African universities, students were firmly determined as “in everyday speech and on protest banners, the solution was equally clear – formerly white institutions needed to be decolonised” (Jansen, 2019, p. 51). Pluriversity knowledge can be the main entrance to an epistemically decolonised university. However, it is important to note that “in the current knowledge society, students and scholars, particularly in non-research universities, should learn how to be active contributors to knowledge, rather than mere consumers” (Maldonado-Maldonado & Lee, 2019, p. 51). 2) of knowledge produced from Euro-North America.

Therefore, pluriversity knowledge is realisable only when the university is genuinely decolonised. According to Santos (2021), a genuinely decolonised university has the mandate of embracing epistemic diversity and cognitive justice. From this point, a genuine decolonised university is synonymous with what Santos (2021) called a new polyphonic university as he observes that if pluriversity knowledge is adopted,

The new polyphonic university will be a terrain in which ecologies of knowledges will find a home, in which academics and citizens interested in fighting against cognitive capitalism, cognitive colonialism, and cognitive patriarchy will collaborate in bringing together different knowledges with full respect for their differences, while also looking for convergences and articulations. (Santos, 2021, p. 388)

For the new polyphonic university to be set, it must coexist and open doors to pluriversity knowledge. With the integration of pluriversity knowledge, “the university must develop spaces of intervention that somehow balance the multiple, even contradictory and at times conflicting interests circulating in the society and are endowed with the power to summon and interrogate the university” (Santos, 2021, p. 237). Pluriversity knowledge, therefore, permits different systems of knowledge to cooperate or interrogate modern western science. It remains important to remark that “intercultural and postcolonial approaches have allowed recognition of the existence of plural systems of knowledge that are alternative to modern science or that engage with it in new knowledge configurations” (Santos, 2014, p. 199). For pluriversity knowledge to be realised, it must be claimed that “diversifying our practices as researchers and combining them with traditional research practices is the only way to promote a pluriverse which is nurtured by diverse knowledge systems on our way towards decolonisation” (Martinez-Vargas, 2020, p. 1) of the universities in the Global South, and particularly in South Africa, a remedy to the epistemic crisis in those institutions.

It should be anticipated that “the processes of decolonisation are complex” (Santos, 2021, p. 332). Although the processes of decolonisation are complex as Santos asserts, Fanon, who is still considered the father of decolonisation, reminds us that decolonisation “transforms the spectator crushed to a nonessential state into a privileged actor, captured in a virtually grandiose fashion by the spotlight of History” (Fanon, [1961] 2017, p. 64). It is also important to recall that pluriversity knowledge cannot be disconnected from the epistemologies of the South. This means that pluriversity knowledge strives for the recognition of different knowledges from different parts of the world, keeping the idea that “the possibility of the mutual enrichment of different knowledges and cultures is the *raison d’être* of the epistemologies of the South” (Santos, 2021, p. 371). Since the university has been created based on a model of unilateral relations, the “pluriversity knowledge supplants this unilateral notion with interactivity and interdependence, both processes enormously invigorated by the technological revolution of information and communication” (Santos, 2021, p. 205) and the promotion of heterogeneous rather than homogeneous knowledge that is arbitrarily supported and protected by the western episteme canon—a major cause of the epistemic crisis in South African universities.

Furthermore, as advanced by Chinweizu, pluriversity knowledge should not be considered as a concept that is only claimed by the Global South zone but also by western women who were strongly victimised by the western science culture. How does this happen as the Global South is still complaining that western science has committed epistemicide and the coloniality of university knowledge? Chinweizu responds quickly:

It is also important to remember that, as well as treating non-European cultures as different and inferior, the west had its own internal ‘others’ ... west Europeans often regarded Eastern Europeans as ‘barbaric’, and, throughout the west, western women were represented as inferior to western men. (Chinweizu, 1975, pp. 187–189)

Significantly, pluriversity knowledge emerges as “a collaborative and integrative praxis grounded in different ways of knowing, acting, and being” (Baptista & Vilsmaier, 2021, p. 1). In fact, the motivation behind embracing pluriversity knowledge is that “as science becomes more ingrained in society, society becomes more part of science” (Santos, 2021, p. 205). Science that is not used by a society or imposed on a particular society must be questioned. Pluriversity knowledge thus has the mandate to question any kind of science in favour of science for all and from all.

Furthermore, pluriversity knowledge provides keys to what Mbembe ([2010] 2021) describes as “the house without keys” (p. 149). Thereby, “the passage from university knowledge to pluriversity knowledge is, thus, a much ampler process than the commodification of the university and the knowledge it produces” (Santos, 2021, p. 206). An important remark is that pluriversity knowledge “has to do with the social struggles for the right to the university education” (Santos, 2018, p. 269). In Santos’s reasoning, this means that pluriversity knowledge is the knowledge that emerges from the struggle. This justifies why the epistemic freedom in South African universities cannot be given but must be fought for because, “[epistemic] freedom is not a commodity which is ‘given’ to the enslaved upon demand” (Nkrumah, 1963, p. xv). In Nkrumah’s observation, epistemic freedom cannot be brought about but must emerge from struggle. Santos (2014) makes a similar statement by saying that the epistemologies of the South are epistemologies that are born from struggle.

In his suggestion, Santos (2021) proposes that “decolonising research and pedagogy may enrich and diversify the university and render it far more polyphonic” (p. 339). However, for Wa Thiong’o (1993), genuine decolonisation of the university and pluriversity knowledge itself cannot happen while Euro-North America remains the main centre for knowledge production. He proposes that the centre of knowledge must be moved into two senses because “moving the centre in the two senses – between nations and within – nations will contribute to the freeing of the world [and its different science] cultures from the restrictive walls of nationalism, class, race, and gender” (Wa Thiong’o, 1993, p. 8). Pluriversity knowledge indeed permits us to discover the “new modes and methods of research and teaching; new ways of entering and leaving the archives of slavery” (Sharpe, 2016, p. 13). Particularly, “the aim of decolonisation in South Africa can be understood as rooted in the ideal of democratising the knowledge project” (Kumalo, 2021, p. 1). The democratisation of the knowledge project facilitates the plurality of ways of knowing, as Santos argues:

Accessibility to a plurality of ways of knowing and to new kinds of relations among them has been going on for some time with fertile results, especially in the global South, where the encounter between hegemonic and non-hegemonic knowledges is more unequal and the limits of each are more obvious. (Santos, 2014, p. 199)

Pluriversity knowledge not only strives for a higher consciousness of incompleteness and pluriversity but also renders different ways of knowing more porous and more aware of differences through intercultural translation (Santos, 2021, pp. 371–372). Here, Santos

elucidates that through the ecologies of knowledges, pluriversity knowledge acts as a light that has the potential to permit different ways of knowing and different knowers to present their different kinds of knowledge to society to check the impact of each knowledge in society. However, in Nkrumah's political thought, pluriversity knowledge cannot easily happen in Africa, and specifically in South Africa, in the absence of economic freedom and political unity as he argues that "when Africa becomes economically free and politically united, monopolists will come face to face with their working class in their countries, and a new struggle will arise within which the liquidation and collapse of imperialism will be complete" (Nkrumah, 1965, p. 256). Nkrumah encourages us to also think that pluriversity knowledge cannot be born in a world that is economically and politically struggling. His analysis may be based on the fact that thinkers who are financially struggling may easily be tempted to be corrupted. Decolonising the university obviously requires complex tasks to be completed together or to be accompanied by one another. However, Santos insisted that epistemic liberation should be considered as the first task while attempting to journey decolonising the university, as is highlighted by Ndlovu-Gatsheni in the paragraph to follow.

It is important to reflect on Nkrumah, who points out that there is a set of conditionalities. This is about the collapse of imperialism, which will also bring an end to the coloniality of knowledge that is ravaging the indigenous epistemic systems that should have been in action in universities in Africa, and South Africa in particular. What is more important is that pluriversity knowledge seeks to develop knowledge where different society members have the same rights to contribute to its production, regardless of their different views and heterogeneous analyses. That is the reason why Santos (2021) highlights that with pluriversity knowledge, it becomes possible to think of multiple forms of being contemporaneous. The time has come for the colonised subjects to realise that "decolonisation of being can only begin with decolonising epistemology—that is, decolonising ways of knowing and knowledge production itself" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2016, p. 41). Epistemic decolonisation must be the first task, according to Ndlovu-Gatsheni; decolonising epistemology serves as a bridge to ontological decolonisation. As I am about to conclude this chapter, I want to state that students in South African universities should continue to push for epistemic decolonisation that is realised through struggle. In addition, I think that the university in South Africa should not undermine the requests and demands of students if it wishes to survive. Once licensed by decoloniality, pluriversity knowledge is the right knowledge to be adopted by all South African universities, as it challenges the coloniality of knowledge.

4.4 Decoloniality Licenses Pluriversity Knowledge

The colonial matrix of power is central to decoloniality, decolonial thought, and activism. The colonial matrix of power refers to the way that decoloniality describes the problem of coloniality on a world scale. Decoloniality uncovers, exposes and deconstructs coloniality's matrices of domination that it uses to dominate countries and people around the world. It is important to note that the logic of coloniality or the colonial matrix of power operates in four sociohistorical domains: control of the economy, control of authority, control of gender and sexuality, and control of knowledge and subjectivity (Mignolo, 2011, p. 4). This shows that coloniality totalises all four of these forms of control and applies them to colonised subjects. However, the focus of this thesis is on the fourth form, which is concerned with control of knowledge and subjectivity, and it is here where the coloniality of university knowledge occurs.

In essence, the forms of control and domination described above apply to South Africa, which is currently ranked as the most unequal country in the world, with the widest gap between the rich and the poor. The World Bank recently reported that "South Africa is the most unequal country in the world, with race playing a determining factor in a society where 10 per cent of the population owns more than 80 per cent of the wealth" (World Bank, 2022, p.n.a). At this point, Steyn (2010) affirms that in South Africa, "the post-apartheid government's shift towards neo-liberal economic policies has left the majority [Blacks] in poverty" (p. 9). The poverty of most Black students affects the well-being of the university, as these students must apply for bursaries to continue their studies. Decolonising South African universities cannot be separated from the poverty of the Black majority. It is difficult for a child living in poverty to focus on their studies when they are struggling with hunger and homelessness.

While the economic domain and other domains are important for this thesis, this study is specifically focused on the control of knowledge and subjectivity. This control applies to the coloniality of knowledge, epistemicide, and colonial university knowledge. It is notable that "the key to African success in decolonising knowledge is dependent on successfully fighting for political and economic autonomy" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013c, p. 52). This means that successful decolonisation begins with a holistic understanding of the nature and structure of domination, including epistemic domination alongside economic, political, military, and cultural domination. Decolonisation requires the intervention of "decolonial thinking, therefore, appeals to the need for African universities and African intellectuals to overcome dependence, to Africanise global scholarship ... to produce knowledge that addresses and

explains the problems and possibilities facing the peoples, economies, societies, and cultures of Africa” (Zezeza, 2003, p. 97). Zezeza argues for the Africanisation of world knowledge, its domestication of Africa, and the globalisation of African knowledge, letting the world at long last hear and see from Africa. In fact, “there is a need for an African epistemological rebellion entailing putting the African experience at the centre of intellectualism and the African taking a leading role in the production of situated and relevant knowledge” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013c, p. 52). Ndlovu-Gatsheni’s view is that an epistemological rebellion is built on the principles of decoloniality. This is justified by the fact that “decoloniality is first and foremost liberation of knowledge, of understanding and affirming subjectivities that have been devalued by narratives of modernity that are constitutive of the CMP [colonial matrix of power]” (Mignolo, 2018, p. 146). Decoloniality is imperative for pluriversity knowledge to be realised, hence “decoloniality means first to delink (to detach) from that overall structure of knowledge to engage in an epistemic reconstitution” (Interview, Mignolo, 21 January 2017). Decoloniality severs the epistemic relationship that existed between the coloniser and colonised to reconstruct another knowledge that emerges from pluriversal literature.

According to Mignolo (2020), “decoloniality is not a draft for a universal model, but an orientation to a praxis of living” (p. 4). Decoloniality facilitates Santos’s concept of pluriversity knowledge to shift from concept to realisation—praxis. Without our daily praxis of living, it would not be possible to make conceptual and second-order distinctions between thinking and praxis. Decoloniality is thus considered a field that accommodates and locates the thinking and doing of diverse ways of learning and diverse methods of knowledge accumulation, and it is from this perspective that it is considered a verification phase of pluriversity knowledge. Decoloniality creates a new memory of knowledges from various places around the world. Within the context of decoloniality, thinking and action are in a different terrain.

This terrain is rooted in the praxis of living in the idea of theory-and-as-praxis and praxis-and-as-theory, and in the interdependence and continuous flow of movement of both. It is in this movement that decoloniality is enacted and, simultaneously, rendered possible. Decoloniality, in this sense, is wrapped up with re-existence; both claim a terrain that endeavours to delink from the theoretical tenets and conceptual instruments of western thought. (Walsh & Mignolo, 2018, p. 7)

In Walsh and Mignolo’s understanding, decoloniality cannot happen or be applied in the absence of praxis. For them, praxis justifies decoloniality as a door to the application of

pluriversity knowledge. Without praxis, decoloniality would be meaningless and not interesting to pluriversity knowledge. Decoloniality calls for the delinking of western science. Decoloniality does not support the manoeuvres used by the *longue-durée* project of colonialism. Decoloniality disappoints and contradicts epistemic injustices as it disagrees with the epistemic colonisation agenda. Since the 1990s, decoloniality has been defensive of epistemic freedom. This is arguable—not only in Africa in general but in South Africa in particular. This shows that decoloniality has a record of history and praxis that dates back further than commonly thought; it has been heavily fought back by capitalist and radical western scholars who are defensive of western epistemologies. Walsh attests that “decoloniality has been a part of (trans)local struggles, movements, and actions to resist and refuse the legacies and ongoing relations and patterns of power established by external and internal colonialism” (Walsh, 2018, p. 16). Just as pluriversity knowledge stands for the establishment of a pluriversity of knowledge, decoloniality traces the way for a pluriversity of knowledge as it refuses and attacks coloniality of knowledge.

In essence, “decoloniality, without a doubt, is also contextual, relational, practice-based, and lived. In addition, it is intellectually, spiritually, emotionally, and existentially entangled and interwoven” (Walsh, 2018, p. 19). Mporu and Steyn (2021) are concerned that “the work of decoloniality in Africa, therefore, becomes a search for completeness through the recovery, restoration, and recognition of the equal belonging of Black people to the world” (p. 2). It means that decoloniality assists in the fullness of the colonised subjects who, because of decoloniality, are then able to recover, restore, and be recognised by the world which, from time ago, has been rejecting them. Decoloniality is not only a recommendation in a world lived by Black people, but by all colonised subjects, and that is why “each of us is responsible for our decolonial liberation” (Mignolo, 2018, p. 105). It is sad that “the modern university in Africa has very little to do with what existed on this continent before colonialism, and everything to do with what was created in modern Europe” (Mamdani, 2019, p. 17). The call/need for decoloniality in Africa, particularly South Africa is informed by the statement that holds that “the colonial model of the academic organisation of the university, based on western disciplinary knowledge, was entrenched during apartheid and has not been redressed in post-apartheid South Africa in any serious way” (Le Grange, 2019, p. 34). Consequently, it is this unresolved epistemic issue that continues to fuel the perpetual epistemic crisis in universities in South Africa.

Decoloniality, therefore, welcomes and advances the principles of Afrocentrism: “Afrocentrism is nothing more than a legitimate demand that African scholars study their society from inside and cease to be purveyors of an alienated intellectual discourse [...] when Africans speak for themselves [...] the world will hear the authentic voice” (Mafeje, 2000, p. 66). From this perspective, in the African context, epistemic decolonisation includes the Africanisation of knowledge production, which centres on African persons and African epistemologies in African universities, particularly in South African universities. Biko considers the Black Consciousness philosophy to be relevant as the first step towards realising Afrocentrism. In justifying his political thought, Biko ([1978] 2017) argues that the Black Consciousness philosophy permits the construction of a strong defensive mechanism based on what he recommended as Black solidarity. Here, Biko calls for Black students and staff who fight for the realisation of pluriversity knowledge to seriously be in solidarity and united. One of the major reasons why decoloniality has not yet been realisable in historically colonised universities is that there is a lack of solidarity among the colonised students and staff. Biko’s Black Consciousness teachings fall under decoloniality, “hence thinking along lines of Black Consciousness makes the Black man [and woman] see himself [/herself] as a being, entire in himself [/herself], and not as an extension of a broom or additional leverage to some machines” (Biko, [1978] 2017, p. 74). The study observes that Biko’s philosophy of Black Consciousness is consistent with the principles and recommendations of decoloniality.

The awakening of decoloniality happened during the epistemic crisis confronting the university in the Global South, resulting in protests and epistemic struggles. These epistemic struggles were informed by the fact that “to fight the beast of colonisation of ideas, we had to change terminology and to create concepts that spoke to African agency” (Asante, 2018, p. 9). Looking back, it is found that “historically, decolonisation provided an impetus within the Global South to imagine new relations to the past, present, and future; free of the political and intellectual teleologies imposed by the civilisational hierarchies of a colonial epistemology” (Menon, 2022, p. 1).

As for Mignolo (2018), “decoloniality is the exercise of power within the colonial matrix to undermine the mechanism that keeps it in place, requiring obeisance. Such a mechanism is epistemic and so decolonial liberation implies epistemic disobedience” (p. 114). Epistemic decolonisation is what is imperative for colonised subjects to reach their goals of decolonising the university. Through decoloniality, pluriversity knowledge acts as a dependent epistemic

theory that allows forgotten and rejected thinkers to be remembered and returned to the list of world thinkers. It is significant to keep that “decoloniality of knowledge became the site of the struggle without which there can be no decolonisation of the state nor the economy” (Mignolo, 2008, p. 4). Decoloniality empowers pluriversity knowledge to accomplish its mission and objectives, diversifying knowledge production in universities.

Challenging the coloniality of knowledge is central to challenging the coloniality of power and the coloniality of being. It is important to remember that “decoloniality seeks not only to rescue the university from [the] corporation but is also pushing for [the] restoration of African knowledge and languages” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2016, p. 43). Importantly, decoloniality allows all previously rejected thinkers to have a platform of discussion and strives to fight against the notion that knowledge production cannot always originate from a single site but from different sites across the whole world that include all society members. A main critique of decolonial approaches is that it is the west that needs renewal, that has exhausted itself of alternatives and now searches in the non-west for what will come to its rescue, or what again will offer riches for the profit of its educational institutions and tuition paying students (Altschul, 2022).

What is essential and relevant for engaging with the decolonial journey is that “decoloniality is a redemptive epistemology, a liberatory force, and an ethical-humanistic project gesturing towards pluriversalism in which different worlds fit” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2016, p. 43) without exception. Everyone is welcomed and respected, and that justifies why Ndlovu-Gatsheni argues that decoloniality is a liberatory force because “decoloniality is, therefore, the energy that does not allow the operation of the logic of coloniality nor believes the fairy tales of the rhetoric of modernity” (Mignolo, 2011, p. 3). Decoloniality thus prevents the spread of coloniality of university knowledge, making it weak enough for students to become aware of how to overcome the epistemic crisis in their respective institutions. Therefore, “‘decoloniality’ should be defined as ‘conditions of human existence free from coloniality, perpetrated by political, economic, social, intellectual, spiritual, and cultural decolonisation’” (Dong Gu, 2020, p. 24). Decoloniality cannot coexist with dehumanisation because dehumanised people cannot be counted among knowledge producers.

In *On Decoloniality*, Walsh (2018) reveals that “decoloniality necessarily evokes coloniality. It has its roots and reason in the modern/colonial matrix of power” (p. 23). She further emphasises that “decoloniality is not a done deal, a condition to be reached, or a stage of critical enlightenment” (Walsh, 2018, p. 99). Likewise, Mignolo agrees with Walsh that

“Decoloniality is a multifaceted global enterprise in the hands of the people who act and organise themselves/ourselves as decolonial thinkers, actors, and doers. If coloniality is all over, decolonial praxis shall be [all] over too.” (Mignolo, 2018, p. 125). Here, Mignolo insists that decolonial thinkers should act and confront coloniality, which is claimed to be all over the world.

What is still remarkable is that *On Decoloniality* is the first book in a series that explores decoloniality as expressions of thought and praxis that resist the ecological and racial violence reproduced by the rhetoric of modernity/coloniality (Lobo, 2020, p. 2). With the presence of decoloniality, coloniality is disappointed. Coloniality cannot hide when decoloniality is applied, and decoloniality automatically appears wherever coloniality is located. Relevantly, “the meaning of decoloniality is that though it produces a paradigmatic shift from the totalising and universalist approach to knowledge and life, it also opens up decoloniality for misuse and abuse” (Ndlovu, 2020, p. 2). Decoloniality cures the mind of the colonised to the point that he/she decides to fight for pluriversity knowledge.

Similarly, “decoloniality by definition is not a singular thing, but a plural and heterogeneous field of practice, thinking and praxis” (Radcliffe, 2020, p. 11). Radcliffe elucidates further that some decolonial works are very fruitful and gives a typical example: “*On Decoloniality* [that] provides fruitful starting points for those new to debates on coloniality and decoloniality, and a multifaceted engagement with ongoing challenges to thinking critically about knowledge production and emancipation” (Radcliffe, 2020, p. 13). As a concern, Mignolo reminds us that:

Whoever controls knowledge controls subjectivity, and whoever controls the money controls meaning. ‘To honour that legacy today, decoloniality provides an option, an orientation towards delinking and epistemic and aesthetic (subjectivity, sensing, emotions) reconstitution.’ The coloniality of knowledge goes hand in hand with the coloniality of being. Hence, ‘decoloniality of knowledge goes hand in hand with decoloniality of being.’ Decoloniality for me is an option, not a mission, to delink or extricate ourselves from its (CMP) dictates. (Mignolo, 2020, p. 5)

Mignolo is concerned that decoloniality should be assessed as an option rather than a mission. Such an option primarily serves colonised subjects to delink from the domination of the colonial matrix of power, which is also linked to the coloniality of knowledge—a concern of this study. What should be made known is that the existence of decoloniality does not justify the absence of coloniality because:

Decoloniality, as I am posing here, does not imply the absence of coloniality but rather the ongoing ‘serpentine movement toward possibilities of other modes of being, thinking, knowing, sensing, and living; that is, an otherwise in the plural’. In this sense, decoloniality is not a condition to be achieved in a linear sense, since coloniality as we know it will probably never disappear. Decoloniality is also not a condition of illumination or enlightenment that some possess, and others do not. Such an assumption sets the stage for intellectual disputes over who is more decolonial. (Walsh, 2018, p. 81)

Walsh believes that decoloniality is not a straightforward concept, but rather one that must be used to counteract coloniality, which seems resistant and never disappears. Decoloniality opens new and diverse possibilities for modes of being, thinking, sensing, resonating, and living. Decoloniality permits different ways of life and assists those who have been epistemically denied with the ability to learn to see the right direction to epistemic freedom—or pluriversity knowledge. This means that decoloniality has the potential to create epistemic freedom for colonised and oppressed subjects. The next section discusses decoloniality and justifies why pluriversity knowledge is yet realisable in South African universities.

4.5 Decoloniality and Justification of why Pluriversity Knowledge is Yet Realisable in South African Universities

In the context of this study, decoloniality enables one to find out why pluriversity knowledge in South African universities has not been realised yet. In countries such as South Africa, the educational system is repeatedly claimed to be colonised, as previously announced by South African President Cyril Ramaphosa. Ramaphosa argued:

The project of decolonising education in Africa is not just a matter of academic interest. It is a pressing need. We must challenge colonial theories and practices to build resilient education systems that are centred on African perspectives and experiences. This requires a shift away from a Eurocentric worldview to embrace a more diverse and inclusive perspective. We must acknowledge and value the knowledge systems of all peoples and integrate them into our curricula and knowledge selection processes. (Ramaphosa, 21 Novembre 2023)

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, above, is calling for genuine epistemic decolonisation in South African universities. Decoloniality is an essential tool for those who are epistemically oppressed to undertake a journey in search of genuine epistemic decolonisation. From this point, it means that:

Decoloniality is the interrelated process of healing colonial wounds that originate in each of us. Each of us, endorsing and embracing decoloniality, is responsible for our (own) decolonial liberation. The task is not individual but communal. It means that no one should expect that someone else will decolonise him or her or decolonise X or Z, and it means that none of us, living-thinking-being-doing decoloniality, should expect to decolonise someone else. (Walsh and Mignolo, 2018, p. 11)

Both Walsh and Mignolo agree that decoloniality is an interconnected process that objectively seeks to heal the colonial wounds experienced daily by colonised and oppressed subjects. In her (own) observation, Walsh (2018) states that “decoloniality seeks to make visible, open up, and advance radically distinct perspectives and positionalities that displace western rationality as the only framework and possibility of existence, analysis, and thought” (p. 17). Decoloniality intends to create another world that is free from epistemic domination—a world that recognises a diversity of knowledge production. From this point of view, it means that “decoloniality denotes ways of thinking, knowing, being, and doing that began with, but also precede, the colonial enterprise and invasion” (Walsh, 2018, p. 17). Importantly, it is dangerous “to perceive decoloniality as a point of arrival or an end in and of itself, a perception that works to negate and/or minimise the power of coloniality and its continual regeneration” (Walsh, 2018, p. 76). Decoloniality is a perpetual struggle that must be embraced and engaged to set scholars, students, and staff from South African universities epistemically free.

Decoloniality is primarily concerned with the epistemic liberation of the oppressed in their daily life experiences. It deals exclusively with the epistemic decolonisation required to confront the coloniality of knowledge, which is the concern of this study. Basically, “the task of decoloniality after decolonisation is redefined and focused on epistemology and knowledge rather than the state” (Mignolo, 2018, p. 121). Analysing using the African epistemic canon, context, or view, Mpofu states that:

Eurocentric scrambles for African knowledge and its distortions have been challenged and are still being challenged. From the Negritude movement to the larger pan-Africanist and nationalist movements, African intellectuals and political activists have been contesting Eurocentric cultural, political, and social domination, including the distortions of African history and the peripheralisation of African knowledge systems. (Mpofu, 2013, p. 7)

As a point of relevance, “the role of decoloniality [is] primarily concerned with undoing, disobeying and delinking from this matrix, thereby making it possible to construct and propose

other ways of living, doing, and thinking” (Ndlovu, 2020, p. 2). The major task of decoloniality is to delink from the colonial matrix of power, which is significant: “let me repeat: decoloniality aims are to delink from the colonial matrix of power (CMP) to imagine and engage in becoming decolonial subjects” (Mignolo, 2018, p. 125). With decoloniality in action, there is a possibility of creating a political ideal that serves to understand how colonised subjects must fully overcome the colonial matrix of power. Unfortunately, the colonial matrix of power continues to empower modernity, coloniality, and epistemic injustices in South African universities. Decoloniality intervenes as a tool that has the capacity and potentiality to minimise the speed and power of modernity and coloniality in the colonial world. Comparatively, decoloniality should be considered as an authoriser of pluriversity knowledge, as for pluriversity knowledge to be effective, it must first be licensed by decoloniality. Decoloniality, modernity, and coloniality attract one another, hence:

There is no necessity for decoloniality without modernity/coloniality. Modernity/coloniality engendered decoloniality. As far as the promises of modernity legitimise coloniality, that is, oppression, exploitation, and dispossession, decoloniality is the response of and from people who do not want to be oppressed, exploited, and dispossessed. Decoloniality emerges out of the need to delink from the narratives and promises of modernity, not to resist but to re-exist. (Mignolo, 2018, pp. 145–146)

Decoloniality engenders decolonial thinking, which is a pressing need in the contemporary period. Similarly, decolonial thinking emerges because of the negative consequences of colonialism. Here, Mignolo (2011) holds, “My thesis is the following: decolonial thinking emerged at the very foundation of modernity/coloniality, as its counterpoint” (p. 3). This should briefly mean that decoloniality cannot exist without the launch of coloniality, but both concepts coexist—one being opposed to the other: appearing like twins but with different genders or electric wires where one is negative while the other is positive. Decoloniality is portrayed by the mission to reveal and expose coloniality. From this point:

In general, the main thrust of this version of decoloniality is to illuminate the darker side of modernity, which is coloniality that is constitutive of modernity. This is a conception of modernity that has made it possible for the concept of ‘modernity/coloniality’ to capture the constitutive nature of modernity and coloniality as two sides of the same coin, namely, a brighter side and a darker side. (Ndlovu, 2020, p. 2)

Decoloniality, therefore, regulates and neutralises coloniality's goals, which are western domination and, especially, epistemic domination. While Asante (2018) does not deny the principles of decoloniality, he is more concerned with Afrocentrism. Asante (2018) is advancing the pursuit of the Afroecological march toward knowledge liberation more than decoloniality itself. Although Afrocentrism is important, it cannot replace decoloniality in this study. Decoloniality strives for a pluriversity knowledge throughout the whole colonised world, while Afrocentrism is more concerned with the decolonisation of African values and cultures than with epistemic decolonisation—the focus of this study. It is from such an angle of analysis that:

The ecology of knowledges assumes that all relational practices involving human beings and nature entail more than one kind of knowledge and, thus, more than one kind of ignorance. From this epistemological standpoint, modern capitalist societies are characterised as favouring practices in which the forms of scientific knowledge prevail. (Santos, 2014, p. 188)

Decoloniality is therefore relevant to combat the arbitrary epistemic injustices that have been committed and spread by colonialists in the colonised milieux. These places can achieve genuine epistemic freedom only through decoloniality. From this perspective, it is important to note that the denial of colonial knowledge by Africans is not a recent development, but a continual struggle that was initiated by our forefathers in the first days of invasion by white colonialists.

Built on the principles of decoloniality, this study engages with an African decolonial turn that entails the revolt of those who have been previously subjugated. Delinking from Eurocentrism epistemic knowledge means adopting decoloniality, which leads to genuine epistemic decolonisation in universities in the Global South, particularly in South Africa. Without the intervention of decoloniality, epistemic freedom cannot be realised in colonised universities in South Africa, because:

We would not talk of freedom, if there was no prior condition in which this was denied, we would not talk anti-racism if we had not been its victims, we would not proclaim Africanity if it had not been denied or degraded, and we would not insist on Afrocentricism if it had not been for Eurocentric negations. (Mafeje, 2011, p. 31)

Considering Mafeje's observation, it shows that Afrocentrism is a way to confront Eurocentrism and fight for the recognition of Africa as the centre of many realised oeuvres.

Decoloniality focuses more on challenging coloniality of any form, especially the coloniality of university knowledge in the context of this study. It is still necessary and relevant for genuine epistemic decolonisation. While Afrocentrism strives for Africanity and African values, myths, cultures, and humanity, decoloniality is still being called for as it is the saviour of denied knowledge produced in the rejected world. Decoloniality cannot be achieved through peaceful negotiations. Why? It requires a decisive struggle against western epistemic domination, because “Of necessity, under the determinant global conditions, an African Renaissance must entail a rebellion, a conscious rejection of past transgressions, and a determined negation of negations” (Mafeje, 2011, p. 32). With the conception of negation of negations, Mafeje means that colonised subjects, such as university students in South Africa, whose rights are daily denied, can only fight for their rights by rejecting the same colonial denials of their abilities.

However, some scholars are still arguing that “decolonisation is a political movement for national independence while decoloniality is a social movement for institutional changes and intellectual thought” (Dong Gu, 2020, p. 23). Dong Gu (2020) further warns, “I believe that if the people of former colonies and Third World countries cannot achieve material, intellectual and spiritual equality with the west, complete decolonisation will remain an unfinished task, and decoloniality will be forever beyond reach” (p. 25). In the contemporary period, colonised subjects located in the former colonies have not achieved material, intellectual, and spiritual equality with the west. This is tangible proof that complete decolonisation is still an unfinished task, but it does not necessarily mean that decoloniality will be beyond reach forever. Decoloniality engages in a perpetual epistemic fight to liberate those who are epistemically oppressed—indeed, colonised subjects. Decoloniality, therefore, serves as a torch that provides light to travellers in the night. While decoloniality does not immediately provide all/full solutions to problems caused by coloniality, at least it can uncover all its manoeuvres and render them visible for critical examination and further studies.

In addition, “decoloniality is the ideological and epistemic weapon of choice that will liberate the African imagination from the octopus grip of coloniality of knowledge and coloniality of power” (Mpofu, 2013, p. 13). Decoloniality is a rebellious concept that allows the pluriversity models of learning and unlearning, because “decoloniality seeks, ultimately, the emergence of possible decolonised models of social life that would constitute not just another universality but a radical pluriversity: a world where many worlds fit” (Restrepo, 2018, p. 5) without discrimination.

Decoloniality simplifies the ways to easily reach and understand how different ways of knowing are obtained and maintained. The use of decoloniality in the Global South, which includes South Africa, is imperative to restore and repossess the old knowledges robbed by white colonists. Decoloniality indeed identifies all epistemic injustices committed by Euro-North America in the Global South. Decoloniality aims to create more opportunities for changes and adaptations. New modalities are welcomed, as it is asserted that:

The decolonial turn reappeared in Asia and Africa because of the changes, adaptations, and new modalities of modernity/coloniality generated by the British and French imperial expansion starting from the end of the eighteenth century and continuing through to the beginning of the nineteenth century. (Mignolo, 2011, p. 4)

Mignolo (2011) affirms that “epistemic and decolonising potential is already present in the new ‘chronicle’” (p. 11). It is already present in the new ‘chronicle’; hence, with decoloniality, it is possible to find an answer to “who is speaking and from which body-politics of knowledge or geopolitics of knowledge is speaking from?” (Grosfoguel, 2013, p. 5). This means that decoloniality permits easily finding out the locus of enunciation of who is writing what and from where. This is an important issue in the context of decoloniality because knowledge producers defend their interests and where they come from. The importance of decoloniality is that it informs pluriversity knowledge on how to challenge epistemicide and the coloniality of university knowledge. It identifies, denounces, and disappoints epistemicide and the coloniality of university knowledge, the root causes of the epistemic crisis in universities in South Africa. Interestingly, decoloniality deals with all epistemic colonial apparatuses.

Decoloniality guarantees the colonised shift from being epistemically oppressed. Such a shift must be for the entire society and not just for the individual or the bourgeoisie’s benefits, as has been witnessed after the African political independence that caused many regrets. It is disappointing that Euro-North America works together to oppress the whole African continent, and decoloniality provides all the necessary means to the oppressed subjects for them to reach what Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018) termed as “*Epistemic Freedom in Africa*”. Decoloniality thus unifies weak colonised subjects to become strong and resist the coloniality of knowledge. However, Machyo w’Obanda regrets that:

The anti-colonial struggle was not directed at changing the colonially established socioeconomic system. The sole objective of those who marched ahead of the movement was to replace the white officials and run the system themselves. In other words, the leaders of the anti-colonial

struggle were anti-imperialists, but they were not anti-imperialism. (Machyo w'Obanda, 1996, p. 38)

In most African former colonies from the 1960s, the bourgeoisie class played a role in grooming capitalism. They served as the bridge that connected the old type of colonisation (white administration) to the new type of colonisation, which led to the continuation of colonialism (absence of white faces and presence of Black-white officials). This has been the case in the domains of economy, education, and currently with globalising technology. Epistemic freedom and decolonisation oppose any manoeuvre that seeks to perpetuate epistemic injustice and domination. They also expose the bourgeoisie officials who want to remain puppets to maintain epistemic injustice in formerly colonised countries. Decoloniality is critical to epistemic bourgeoisie officials who continue to facilitate western science domination in South African universities. Decolonial principles invite western thinkers and philosophers to a pluriversal epistemic forum for all without exception, and decoloniality “has become an academic buzzword in the western academia, particularly among scholars keen to think with and illuminate the living worlds of Indigenous peoples who ‘go on’ even though they continue to be wounded ... by the brutality of colonialism” (Lobo, 2020, p. 1). There are many reasons why decoloniality is the right phase of verification of pluriversity knowledge. Pluriversity knowledge will automatically become inactive if decoloniality is absent in any institution or centre for knowledge production.

Pluriversity knowledge stands for indigenous people who continue to experience the wounds of brutal and violent epistemic colonisation daily. Western programmes are forcibly expanded into the colonies without consulting indigenous people. The main reason for these programmes being propagated is to fully colonise their minds through epistemic alienation, which heavily affects the inner and outer bodies of the colonised subjects, causing them to become mere carcasses. The call for decoloniality is thus imperative as “decolonisation of ‘the mind’ cannot be detached from the decolonisation of the body unless the modern distinction between mind and body is retained” (Mignolo, 2020, p. 2). Decoloniality is not only concerned with freedom of knowledge production but also with the ontological questions related to the dehumanisation of colonised subjects—dehumanised people cannot be counted in the list of knowledge producers. Decoloniality thus justifies pluriversity knowledge in the Global South universities generally and South African universities particularly. The next subsection discusses the decolonial epistemic perspective as an asset of decoloniality.

4.6 Decolonial Epistemic Perspective: Decoloniality's Asset

The decolonial epistemic perspective is a concept of decoloniality that unmasks coloniality. According to Santos (2014), this perspective emerges “from the epistemology of blindness to the epistemology of seeing” (p. 154). Here, the importance of the decolonial epistemic perspective is that it sheds light on how epistemicide as an existential problem in South African universities can be unmasked and understood. It quickly executes orders from decoloniality, and the latter annihilates the coloniality of university knowledge skilfully. In his political thought, Santos (2014) suggests that to confront the violent epistemic injustice, a shift from the epistemology of blindness to the epistemology of seeing is required because:

An epistemology of seeing is one that inquires into the validity of a form of knowledge whose point of ignorance is colonialism and whose point of knowing is solidarity. Whereas in the hegemonic form of knowledge, we know by creating order, the epistemology of seeing poses the question of whether it is possible to know by creating solidarity. (Santos, 2014, p. 156).

The decolonial epistemic perspective, therefore, enforces or empowers the spirit of solidarity among those who were/are epistemically denied. The decolonial epistemic perspective stands for those who were epistemically discriminated against to find their agency. It strives for knowledge for all and avoids epistemic discrimination that occurs in sites of knowledge production, such as universities.

As a point of suggestion, Santos (2014) is concerned with the epistemological break as it has the potential to expose and defeat the hegemonic western thinking, which he refers to as the lazy reason. From this point, he proposes to envisage the emergence of a “prudent knowledge for a decent life, a knowledge that, by going from colonialism to solidarity, opens the space for a new kind order, a noncolonialist or decolonial order bounding current experiences and expectations about the future, actions, and consequences” (Santos, 2014, p. 163). The decolonial epistemic perspective allows for the creation of a guaranteed future for those who have been experiencing epistemological injustices for a long time. Ndlovu-Gatsheni argues:

The decolonial epistemic perspective aims to critique and possibly overcome the epistemological injustices put in place by imperial global designs and questions and challenges the longstanding claims of Euro-American epistemology to be universal, neutral, objective, disembodied, as well as being the only mode of knowing. (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013, p. 7)

According to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2016), “a decolonial epistemic perspective is rooted in African resistance to such oppressive processes as the slave trade, imperialism, colonialism, apartheid, and neo-colonialism as well as the disempowering effects of the globalisation process” (p. 42). The decolonial epistemic perspective permits the exposition of apparatuses trapped by the ruse of colonial epistemic injustices. As for Sithole:

Decolonial epistemic perspective ... means the political intervention that seeks to challenge injustices and inhumanity brought by coloniality, thereby placing African subjects at the centre, to understand their subjectivity as ways to counter subjection and imagine possible *worlds* and *knowledges*. It is the epistemic system that privileges epistemologies that have been distorted, bastardised, ignored, and rendered irrelevant by the Euro-North American episteme. (Sithole, 2014, p. vi).

Therefore, the study maintains that the decolonial epistemic perspective permits the *coming to pass* of pluriversity knowledge and challenges the monopolisation of university knowledge production by the western epistemic regime. The decolonial epistemic perspective welcomes “critical thoughts emerging in the colonies and ex-colonies” (Mignolo, 2007, p. 155) to balance the Euro-American (dominant) episteme. It is important to consider that “even though the meta-reflection about the decolonial epistemic shift is a recent development, epistemic decolonial arose ‘naturally’ because of the formation and implementation of structures of domination—the colonial matrix of power or the coloniality of power” (Mignolo, 2011, p. 4). The decolonial epistemic perspective audaciously questions and reverses the western epistemic hegemony and, on that account, “if we want to respond to the expectations of our peoples, we must look elsewhere besides Europe” (Fanon, [1961] 2017, p. 300). Thus, the decolonial epistemic perspective encourages views from a new way of thinking for those who are epistemically colonised. It is held by Fanon (1961 [2017]) that “for Europe, for ourselves and humanity, comrades, we must make a new start, develop a new way of thinking, and endeavour to create a new man” (p. 300). As a result, this new man or woman will have to be someone who thinks outside the western envelope.

In Fanon’s understanding, for the decolonial epistemic perspective to be realised, “let us decide not to imitate Europe and let us tense our muscles and our brains in a new direction. Let us endeavour to invent a man in full, something which Europe has been incapable of achieving” (Fanon, [1961] 2017, p. 297). Fanon’s political ideology is concerned with the creation of new humanity without maintaining or imitating the European conceptualisation of humanity. A

human being under the western protocol cannot be an inventor, but a full follower or imitator. The western canon of episteme dominance justifies its injustice and violence against thoughts from non-western areas. Hence, it is known that “the epistemological difference that does not recognize the existence of other kinds of knowledge besides scientific knowledge contains and conceals other differences—capitalist, colonialist, sexist differences” (Santos, 2014, p. 200). The decolonial epistemic perspective can rely on Santos’s concept of the ecology of knowledges that allows the reciprocal epistemic recognition between colonised subjects and colonisers with the application of intercultural and postcolonial approaches. Santos justifies:

Intercultural and postcolonial approaches have allowed for the recognition of the existence of plural systems of knowledge that are alternative to modern science or that engage with it in new knowledge configurations. Accessibility to a plurality of ways of knowing and to new kinds of relations among them has been going on for some time with fertile results, especially in the global South, where the encounter between hegemonic and nonhegemonic knowledge is more unequal and the limits of each are more obvious. (Santos, 2014, p. 199)

Hegemonic knowledge in Santos’s understanding is the knowledge that comes from the western canon, whereas non-hegemonic knowledge is the denied, marginalised, and rejected knowledge. In his understanding, Ndlovu-Gatsheni insists that “decolonial epistemic perspective privileges insights and knowledge cascading from African societies within the continent and in the diaspora without necessarily throwing away progressive aspects of Euro-American epistemology and the best of modernity” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2016, p. 42). The employment of the decolonial epistemic perspective in this study allowed us to identify and challenge the factors that drive Euro-North America’s epistemic dominance in South African universities. It also assists with reviving the thoughts and knowledges that have been rejected and denied by western thinkers. According to Hlabangane (2021), “central to decolonial epistemic perspectives is to shift the geography of reason away from the fundamentals of Eurocentric thinking to include other knowledge systems” (p. 166). However, the shifting of the geography of the reason is realised once the principles of decoloniality are applied. Hence, decoloniality opens doors to what Santos called the ecologies of knowledges through which pluriversity knowledge is covered and justified.

What is more important is that through the decolonial epistemic perspective, “our task is not simply to teach but to discover through research and create the intellectual infrastructure that will generate conferences, seminars, books, research projects, journals, and professional

discourse among Africologists” (Asante, 2018, p. 10). This study is just one part of Asante’s suggestion for challenging the dominance of Euro-North American knowledges in the Global South universities generally and South African universities particularly. According to Santos (2014), “in order for deep changes to occur in the structure of knowledge, it is necessary to change the form of reason that presides over knowledge and its structure” (pp. 166–167). Santos wants to explicate that lazy reasoning must be confronted by restructuring knowledge.

In addition, the decolonial epistemic perspective opens doors to silenced people and strives for a diversity of ways of knowing. The decolonial epistemic perspective has the necessary capabilities to point out where epistemicide and coloniality of knowledge are happening, making it easier for decoloniality to have a full picture of where these phenomena are occurring. The decolonial epistemic perspective provides relevant information to decoloniality, making it quick and easy to deconstruct the coloniality of knowledge and epistemicide wherever they occur. After facilitating the defeat of the epistemic colonisation construction, the decolonial epistemic perspective now moves on to fight for the accommodation and integration of other knowledge that was not accounted for—support of pluriversity knowledge.

Before I move on to the next section, I would like to highlight that the main goal of the decolonial epistemic perspective is to “search for other possible knowledges and worlds” (Walsh, 2007, p. 234). Indeed, what is important here is that according to Mignolo (2011), “the genealogy of decolonial thinking is pluri-versal (not uni-versal)” (p. 20). Hlabangane (2021) is concerned that knowledge in South African universities is a mechanism for justifying domination and conquest. From this point of view, “knowledge is an important place to start to understand the relations of differently positioned people, nations, and continents in the Global South” (Hlabangane, 2021, p. 166). From this perspective, decoloniality is a cousin of the epistemologies of the South that permit the plurality of knowledges while the latter emerges from the ecologies of knowledges; soon to be detailed.

4.7 Decoloniality, Epistemologies of the South and the Search for Pluriversity

While the concept of epistemicide is occurring daily in universities in the Global South, especially in South Africa, Santos (2014) proposes the epistemologies of the South as a response against epistemicide. In his understanding, epistemologies of the South are the justice against epistemicide, meaning that such epistemologies permit and open doors to the plurality of knowledges through their application of the ecologies of knowledges.

The introduction of epistemologies of the South serves as an exposition of the danger of western epistemic domination in the rest of the world. University knowledge (discussed in Chapter 2) is not supposed to be dominated and monopolised by the western episteme. Instead, it should be balanced by allowing knowledge production from all parts of the world, the same as for its validation. Hence:

The university is charged with the responsibility of creating rich learning conditions that prepare learners for their place in society by providing access to scientific knowledge of high quality, and an environment that bridges knowledge generation and the application of such knowledge in society. (Ndofirepi & Cross, 2017, p. 1)

When considering Ndofirepi and Cross's views from such a perspective, universities must be careful about what kind of knowledge is being transferred to students. University knowledge production must be inclusive and diverse to accommodate knowledge from a diverse spectrum of societies, both in the Global North and the Global South. Universities from the Global South should recognise the epistemologies while keeping in mind that the university is the justified and certified centre for knowledge production in the present westernised model. A clear understanding of this regard should be obtained from the following message:

The epistemologies of the South concern the production and validation of knowledges anchored in the experiences of resistance of all those social groups that have systematically suffered injustice, oppression, and destruction caused by capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy. The vast and vastly diversified field of such experiences I designate as the anti-imperial South. It is an epistemological, nongeographical South, composed of many epistemological Souths having in common the fact that they are all knowledges born in struggles against capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy. They are produced wherever such struggles occur, in both the geographical North and the geographical South. The objective of the epistemologies of the South is to allow the oppressed social groups to represent the world as their own and on their terms, for only thus will they be able to change it according to their inspirations. (Santos, 2018, p. 1)

For Santos, university knowledge production must integrate the epistemologies of the South to balance the thoughts and knowledges produced in the universities. This shall reduce the hegemony of western epistemologies to remain as the supreme epistemologies. He insists that the epistemologies of the South are born through a struggle against epistemic capitalism. Epistemologies of the South are not necessarily only produced by epistemologists who are from

or located in the South, but also by those from the North who believe that the coloniality of knowledge should be confronted with epistemic justice.

In essence, “the epistemologies of the South deal with knowledges present in or emerging from the resistance to and the struggle against oppression, knowledges that is, therefore, embodied in concrete bodies, whether collective or individual” (Santos, 2018, p. 87). The ongoing epistemic injustice that is still increasing in universities is caused by the fact that the world of knowledge production is built by one western side, to the detriment of the Global South, which is marked by new epistemologies born in struggles. In Santos’s political thought, teaching materials and methods must be decolonised in the Global South and, especially, in South Africa. “Since the epistemologies of the South is more epistemic and political than geographical, it is imperative to decolonise teaching materials and methods in every society in which socioeconomic inequalities combine with racial, ethnocultural, epistemic, and sexual inequalities” (Santos, 2018, p. 271). The decolonisation of methodology in South African universities can revive the relationship between the university and society. Relevantly, “the core idea of the epistemologies of the South lies in the fact that there is no global social justice without global cognitive justice” (Santos, 2021, p. 373).

Despite decoloniality being a challenge to western epistemic domination in South African universities, the coloniality of knowledge through western epistemologies remains rampant. Euro-North America significantly sponsors and supports western epistemologies, while the epistemologies of the South are born through struggles. It means pluriversity knowledge in South African universities is confronted by Euro-American capitalism, or liberalism that is in full support of western epistemologies. According to Menon (2022), “Euro-American *thought* provides our existing academic interpretations of the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change them” (p. 1). The Euro-American thought is in rivalry with decoloniality, as it opposes the epistemologies of the South.

The principles of decoloniality that have been detailed in the subthemes above recall and communicate well with the epistemologies of the South. Thus, decoloniality welcomes the epistemologies of the South, especially when it comes to the promotion of pluriversity knowledge in the Global South universities generally and South African universities particularly. Decoloniality challenges the monopoly of western science by its coloniality of knowledge, while the epistemologies of the South strive for the ecologies of knowledges in advancing the plurality of knowledge.

Decoloniality is, however, criticised for its weaknesses. Unfortunately, decoloniality is still criticised for lacking practical application because practising decoloniality in the colonised universities equals confronting death and spreading the concept:

Decoloniality is not an academic discipline, which doesn't mean that it cannot be enacted in academia. It comes from decolonisation, and decolonisation was not a known disciplinary trend or a new method. By enacting it in academia (Cathy and I), we attempt to reverse the trend and take decoloniality as a disrupter in academia. (Mignolo, 2018, p. 106)

Taking Mignolo's statement into consideration, decoloniality should not be confused with decolonisation or decolonial studies. For him, reducing decoloniality to decolonial studies is misleading for those who want to embrace decoloniality and its principles. In his opinion, decolonial scholars are the disrupters in academic spaces as they challenge the western colonial epistemic project. Decolonial scholars are mostly judged as disrupters. However, his main point is that decoloniality should not be limited to any academic department, but a concept to be used by all schools and departments, including mathematical departments in different universities.

Despite its values and strengths when it comes to epistemic decolonisation, the concept of decoloniality is regrettably not welcomed by everyone. Some scholars have questioned and challenged the concept of decoloniality, suggesting that it has some remarkable points that deserve to be interrogated. In such a perspective, Dong Gu (2020) warns that "the concept of decoloniality is not a done deal but an open topic that merits further discussion from multiple perspectives" (p. 22). Dong Gu (2020) believes that decoloniality requires further examination and conceptualisation. In contrast, Dong Gu differs from Santos and others who are optimistic about the concept of decoloniality. Dong Gu believes that decoloniality is not a concept that can be achieved or completed. Instead, he proposes that decoloniality requires thorough examination and conceptualisation and continues to contend and oppose:

I have found this capacious and vague way of conceiving decoloniality both appealing and a bit wanting. It is appealing because it leaves open the scope of the topic, but it is dissatisfying because it seems hollow. If decoloniality is a way of thinking and living, coloniality is also a way of thinking and living. So are colonisation, decolonisation, colonialism, postcolonialism, and many other human activities. It, therefore, does not tell us much about what decoloniality is. (Dong Gu, 2020, p. 23)

Dong Gu remains critical of decoloniality and for him, the concept of decoloniality is not discussed fully. He takes it as an incomplete concept that requires further examination and conceptualisation. He is more concerned with decoloniality being dissatisfying, meaning that it seems hollow. He insists that if decoloniality is a way of thinking and living, we should also be aware of or recognise that coloniality is another kind of thinking and living. Dong Gu also seems to ignore the negative impact of coloniality, especially when it comes to controlling knowledge and knowledge production. From my point of view, I think decoloniality is the best hoster of pluriversity knowledge, which strives for genuine epistemic decolonisation in South African universities. However, a major concern is that universities and governments do not provide financial support for decolonial projects, which discourages decolonial scholars from continuing their work. There is also a lack of communication, or what Maluleka (2023a) refers to as decolonial love, between and among decolonial scholars. Doubting about decoloniality too, Naiker (2023) harmonises with Dong Gu above and holds that decolonial theory is contradictory and self-defeating because it replicates metaphysical errors in western philosophy and supports political values closer to the far right than leftist ideals of universality and a common world. Here, Naicker is not supportive of the defenders of decoloniality.

According to Santos (2021), “the abyssal line would be made visible through the ecologies of knowledges, the co-presence of different knowledges, each one validated by its criteria, brought together, and jointly discussed in light of the pragmatic needs of social struggles” (p. 372). What motivated the emergence of the ecologies of knowledges from different parts of the world is that “in many areas of social life, modern science has demonstrated an unquestionable superiority over other forms of knowledge” (Santos, 2014, p. 201). From this point of view, “what makes epistemologies of the South valuable for Santos is that they provide practical solutions for everyday problems encountered by communities” (De Matos-Ala, 2017, p. 6). This is a good sign that gives hope that South African universities can overcome the epistemic injustices if they embrace Santos’s epistemologies of the South, which support the pluriversity knowledge in universities located in the colonised world. The intervention thereof is welcomed by the local universities, which always rely on western epistemology to resolve their local issues. That is why “Santos urges scholars from the South to rediscover and utilise relevant local knowledge to address local concerns more effectively as they speak to local realities and experiences” (De Matos-Ala, 2017, p. 9). As this thesis assesses, decoloniality intervenes in the deconstruction of the epistemic colonial system that is operative in the Global South universities that include South Africa. With decoloniality, the coloniality of university

knowledge that glorifies western science culture at the expense of indigenous knowledge ceases to be dominant and becomes challenged by the introduction of pluriversity knowledge in the milieu of knowledge production.

From the above-mentioned perspective, Wa Thiong'o (2016) recommends: "We [Black Africans] must reconnect with the buried alluvium of African memory—that must become the base for planting African memory anew in the continent and the world" (p. 76). The reconnection with the buried alluvium of African memory means that Africans must adopt decoloniality to question and challenge the domination of western science and the epistemologies of the South as the agent of decoloniality in action. Importantly, what makes the epistemologies of the South not detached from decoloniality is that "the epistemologies of the South are built on two main procedures: ecologies of knowledges and intercultural translation" (Santos, 2014, p. 188). Santos's thought on decolonising the university cannot be separated from decoloniality as the ecologies of knowledges harmonise with Santos's concept of pluriversity knowledge. What is relevant here is that "Santos calls for societies to embrace epistemological diversity" (De Matos-Ala, 2017, p. 9) and dares to question the west's domination of epistemology.

With the same deep idea of ecologies of knowledges, Santos further posits that "the ecology of knowledges confronts the logic of the monoculture of scientific knowledge and rigour by identifying other knowledges and criteria of rigour and validity that operate credibly in social practices pronounced non-existent by metonymic reason" (Santos, 2014, p. 188). Confronting the logic of the monoculture of scientific knowledge here means to dare to question or challenge the "genocides, ontolocides, epistemicides, culturecides, and linguicides committed by the imperial/colonial foot soldiers on the ground [and] became rationalized within the modern westernised university intellectually" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018, p. 161). Supported and protected by decoloniality, the epistemologies of the South force any westernised university to allow the ecologies of knowledges to be realised. This immediately opens doors for the pluriversity of knowledge. It is crucial to keep in mind that "such an ecology of knowledges permits not only the overcoming of the monoculture of scientific knowledge but also the idea that non-scientific knowledges are alternative to scientific knowledge" (Santos, 2014, p. 189). Decoloniality accommodates the ecologies of knowledges, defending the pluriversity of knowledge and disappointing western epistemic domination. Santos's concept of pluriversity knowledge advances that university knowledge should not be monopolised by the western

science culture but must accept other kinds of knowledge from the rest of the world. This is what the ecologies of knowledges are fighting for—the integration of other forms of knowledges in universities. It should be underlined that “at every step of the ecology of knowledges, it is crucial to ask if what one is learning is valid and if what one already knows should be forgotten or unlearned and why” (Santos, 2014, p. 188). Decoloniality embraces the ecologies of knowledges that Santos’s epistemologies of the South are striving for. It is imperative to recognise that the epistemologies of the South are based on and supported by the principles of decoloniality.

4.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I showed that pluriversity knowledge is the inevitable concept responding to the renewed calls for decolonising South African universities. I explicated that contrary to the university knowledge that is exclusive and not accommodating, pluriversity knowledge was fortunately explained as an inclusive knowledge. I argued that pluriversity knowledge stands for the diversity and invites multiple forms of knowledges to participate in the knowledge production. I underline that pluriversity knowledge becomes the umbrella for all knowledge producers, including society members. Pluriversity knowledge strives for epistemic justice and epistemic freedom. In this chapter, I revealed that Santos’s concept of pluriversity knowledge, being recommended to set the epistemic freedom in South African universities, is only possible when guided or driven by decoloniality. I argued that decoloniality is an imperative tool for pluriversity knowledge to be realised in South African universities.

Decoloniality was therefore explained as the prerequisite for pluriversity knowledge to be effective in South African universities. For good effectiveness of pluriversity knowledge, it must be licensed by decoloniality. The chapter engaged with the decolonial epistemic perspective as an asset of decoloniality. I explained that the decolonial epistemic perspective acts in favour of pluriversity knowledge. The chapter also explicated decoloniality in relation to the epistemologies of the South and epistemic pluriversity.

CHAPTER 5

GENERAL CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a general conclusion of the entire thesis. It is the last chapter that sums up the statements. Generally, in the conclusion chapter, the researcher is given the opportunity and granted permission to freely provide reflections and suggestions on the investigated topic. This chapter explains that the understanding of Santos in this thesis is not about his biographical explication, but Santos as an intellectual and the contribution of his concepts to the understanding of how the university in general and South African universities in particular should genuinely be decolonised. Santos's thought thus remains consultative, not only for epistemic decolonial scholars but also for university and governmental decision makers.

First, this chapter reflects on some statements that are particularly thought-provoking and worth repeating. It is in this same vein that the findings of the preceding chapters are summarised. Second, the chapter provides the novel's thesis contribution to the corpus of knowledge. I argue that this thesis may contribute to existing decolonial thought, such as Negritude, decolonial thinking, and African politics, Black studies, to mention but a few. Third, the chapter justifies the argument behind my thesis. At this point, I demonstrate that based on Santos's idea, the epistemic injustices in South African universities are a reality. Fourth, the chapter explains the thesis's uniqueness. Its distinctiveness is marked by this thesis being the first study done on Santos's tri-dimensional concepts of epistemicide, university knowledge, and pluriversity knowledge; concepts that permitted us to clearly comprehend how South African universities should genuinely be decolonised. Fifth, in this chapter, I also provide my personal reflections on the thesis. Sixth, I critically assess Santos' accusations regarding his accusations of sexual harassment. Here, though I found it wise to provide my views on his sexual harassment accusations, I, however, hold that in this thesis, the main motive was to value Santos' intellectual works and concepts that assist us in a quick understanding of how South African universities should be genuinely decolonised. Before the concluding remarks, I provide suggestions for future research.

5.2 Meditative Restatements

Enthusiastically, this thesis explicated how Santos's thought on decolonising the university is contemporarily relevant as it recalls our present times. It is an open secret that "in recent years, South Africa has become one of the most visible and most polarised contexts for decolonising the university" (Santos, 2021, p. 364). Decolonising South African universities has always been a debate of interest in academia, television news, social concerns, and youth debates, to mention but a few. Based on Santos's ideas, South African universities can only be genuinely decolonised with the respectful use of tri-dimensional concepts, namely: epistemicide, university knowledge, and pluriversity knowledge.

Based on the Soweto student protests against Afrikaans as a compulsory language of learning in 1976, the RhodesMustFall and FeesMustFall movements in 2015, and what is still happening in South African universities, including the fact that the atmosphere is not good: students are still unhappy as they continue to face these or similar problems daily at campuses, therefore, "we can conclude that the university finds itself in the presence of opposing demands which have the convergent effect of destabilising its current institutionalism" (Santos, 2021, p. 205). In South African universities, due to the legacies of apartheid or, may I say, neo-apartheid, the thesis has argued that Black students are still struggling to be heard by university authorities and decision makers. When there is a strike or protest at South African universities, the white masters quickly come and start to suggest solutions, but "they could not possibly be problem solvers since they were the problem" (Santos, 2014, p. 240). This thesis has maintained that Santos's texts on decolonising the university communicate with the difficult moments being experienced by students in South African universities. Apart from being dehumanised, the thesis has demonstrated that Black students, in particular, are targeted more than others by epistemicide and the coloniality of knowledge ravaging universities in South Africa.

Moreover, based on Santos's ideals and considering of what is happening in contemporary periods, this thesis holds too that "the university in the 21st century will certainly be less hegemonic but no less necessary than it was in previous centuries" (Santos, 2021, p. 249), as there is an increase in demands and continual protests against the domination of western epistemology in the Global South universities. It is still critical that "many of those working in universities or engaging in their study are victims of the image of institutional rigidity and resistance to reform that the university tends to project of itself" (Santos, 2018, p. 291). Due to the daily rampant and repetitive epistemic revolts that occur in various universities and mostly

in the Global South, being a university student or an employee at a university nowadays equals residing in a military camp where everyone is always ready to be attacked by the enemy at any time. In other words, the thesis argued that the atmosphere that prevails in the current university is critical and not trustworthy. This thesis has shown that the university has been converted into a battlefield as student protests against the domination of western science are not an issue to be finished now, but a continual struggle.

This thesis was eagerly concerned with the imperialism of Euro-North American epistemology that has been and is still dominant in universities in Africa, particularly in South Africa. It is from this point of view regarding how western epistemology is behaving in universities that Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Zondi have warned that:

Epistemologically speaking, the modern world is at a crossroads, dominating rather than leading in the domain of knowledges. The Euro-North American epistemology that underpinned the imperial and colonial processes of usurpation of world history by Europe and North America, and which succeeded in appropriating and displaying other knowledges is now facing its deepest epistemic crisis. (Ndlovu-Gatsheni & Zondi, 2016, p. 8)

This thesis has critiqued Euro-North America's epistemic domination as an endless problem occurring in South African universities, which has also been assessed as the trigger of the daily epistemic revolts happening in the same universities. Thus, this thesis has shown that, based on Santos' writings on decolonising the university, epistemicide and coloniality of university knowledge are still instigators of epistemic injustices that have become the students' *kila siku* challenges.

South African universities will be genuinely decolonised, if pluriversity knowledge is adopted. Santos's decolonial concept of pluriversity knowledge is the strongest tool that has the potential to cure the epistemic injustices witnessed in South African universities, once the latter concept is guaranteed and licensed by decoloniality. As this thesis was concerned with the idea of epistemic decolonisation of the university, I, therefore, challenged the sadism that is manifested by the producers of university knowledge because "most of the knowledge that circulates in the world and is relevant for the lives of people is oral and artisanal. However, our universities and research centres value written and scientific knowledge almost exclusively" (Santos, 2018, p. 297). There are other knowledges orally produced that deserve to be included in the university programmes. The thesis was concerned with the arbitrary nature of university

knowledge producers. These producers do not want any knowledge not produced in the university to be recognised or permitted in or outside of the university.

Consequently, this thesis has highlighted that “the public university is, thus, a permanently threatened public good, which is not to say that the threat comes only from the outside, it comes from the inside too.” (Santos, 2021, p. 249). The threat comes from within and from outside, as epistemic imperialism also targets the full control of the world’s knowledge production. That is why universities are major targets to be fully controlled by epistemic imperialists from the Euro-North American canon. Nkrumah claimed that epistemic imperialism is still alive in the universities in the Global South, and, of course, in the South. He posited that “imperialism is still a most powerful force to be reckoned with in Africa. It controls our economies. It operates on a worldwide scale in combinations of many different kinds: economic, political, cultural, educational, military, and through intelligence and information services” (Nkrumah, 1963, p. xvi), to mention but a few. Nkrumah’s argument is still relevant, as witnessed by the contemporary daily issues experienced by Black South Africans and especially Black South African students.

Therefore, with harmonious support to Santos, Nkrumah (1963) highlighted that for Africa to be epistemically free, those who are exposed to daily epistemic injustice and violence must not give up as “education is the key to our liberation and advance” (p. 44). From this point, the epistemic decolonisation of South African universities will open up other doors for those who have been previously oppressed. Knowledge is power and the key to this locked world. Decolonising the university is thus a pressing need in South Africa, even though it is not an easy task. It is argued that “decolonising the university nowadays requires, on one hand, a geographic imagination to conceive of the university beyond limits of the state and, on the other, an epistemological imagination to open the university to the epistemological diversity of the world” (Santos, 2021, p. 367). In this context, the thesis has proposed pluriversity knowledge as an alternative/solution to the lack of diversity that is remarkable when it comes to knowledge production in current South African universities in particular, and the Global South universities in general. The thesis has critically assessed that western epistemology must be seriously confronted by the decolonial thought that is built on pluriversality. The thesis has shown an interest in incorporating the idea of epistemic insurgency as a complement to the application of pluriversity knowledge. As for Gosfoguel:

This epistemic insurgency was a key to the opening of spaces in universities for professors from ethnic/racial groups suffering discrimination and/or with non-western epistemologies in areas that were up to that point monopolized by white professors and students and Eurocentric epistemologies privileging the Cartesian ‘ego-politics of knowledge.’ (Gosfoguel, 2016, p. 27)

With the idea of epistemic insurgency, the thesis has critically assessed that the oppressed subjects are motivated to negate the dominance of western epistemology and to propose that their knowledges must be considered in curricula. The thesis has argued that the epistemic insurgency allows individuals to learn to unlearn and dare to say ‘No’ whenever it is necessary.

Another remark is that the history reveals that “European university colonialism started at the beginning of European expansion in the 15th century and was first significantly established in the universities created in Spanish America from the mid-16th century onwards” (Santos, 2021, p. 357). This thesis observed that epistemic colonialism as a *longue-durée* project is still ruining universities in South Africa. Its defeat cannot originate from the colonisers but is a task for colonised subjects who suffer negative consequences. This point reminds us that “from our knowledge of the history of man, from our knowledge of colonial liberation movements, [epistemic] Freedom or Self-government has never been handed over to any colonial country on a silver platter” (Nkrumah, 1973, p. 7). In Nkrumah’s understanding, epistemic freedom cannot be gifted, but something that oppressed subjects must fight for.

From the above opinion, the thesis argued that students in South African universities must stand up for their rights and avoid imitation from western science. Fanon ([1961] 2017) recommends: “Let us decide not to imitate Europe and let us tense our muscles and our brains in a new direction. Let us endeavour to invent a man in full, something which Europe has been incapable of achieving” (p. 297). Fanon insisted that the oppressed subjects, including students and staff, are not supposed to imitate the European style of education but to teach or be taught programmes that are more related and communicative to our daily life experiences.

The thesis warned that the current university will be exposed to peril if it continues transforming from a university to a corporation where knowledge is no longer at the service of each society member. Thus, this thesis has advised that if the university wishes to survive, it must return to its roots, to be at the service of society and not a place where society member is only questioned, dictated, and, to some extent, sold to the corporations. In his analysis, Santos was careful when he cautioned:

I am more than ever aware that a university socially ostracised for its elitism and corporate tendencies and paralysed by the inability to question itself in the same way it questions society, is easy prey for the proselytes of neoliberal globalisation. This is why the emergence of a university market, first, a national market, and now a global one, by making the public university's vulnerabilities more evident, constitutes such a profound threat to the public good it produces or ought to produce. (Santos, 2021, p. 250)

Taking the above quotation from Santos into consideration, this thesis was concerned with the university's misbehaving in its tendencies to question society and refusing to be questioned by society too. This shows that the university in the Global South, and especially here in South Africa, is involved with no recognition of the students it should honour and respect. It loses its status as a public good and becomes a market or an organisation that is merely occupied by business, rather than being a terrain where knowledge must be produced. It is questionable that “the university is a public good intimately connected to a newly defined, more inclusive and anti-chauvinistic country's project” (Santos, 2021, p. 252). The thesis has shown, however, that it is still questionable to affirm that the university is a public good in the Global South, which includes South Africa. This is because the university in this region is not at the service of society, but rather a corporate entity that sells out the society that it should protect. The thesis has argued that the university must be challenged by pluriversity knowledge for it to become a polyphonic university that can recognise different views from different thinkers.

The university should be questioned in the same way it questions society. This thesis observed that it is still remarkable that South African universities are dominated by the proclaimed western epistemology as universal, even if, such an “epistemology is not universal since there are those who are excluded and denied of it” (Sithole, 2016, p. 113), a root cause of revolts at South African universities. In fact, “in the RhodesMustFall movements particularly, there was a clear revolt against epistemological domination and cultural extroversion” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018, p. 224). Santos's call for the university to be epistemically decolonised was concerned with the domination of western epistemology over other epistemologies from the Global South, including South Africa. The thesis maintained that students' lamentation that South African universities are westernised is a justifiable argument. The point of justification was that these universities only rely on western epistemology at the expense of other indigenous epistemologies that are rejected, destroyed, and murdered.

The epistemologies of the South that favour the pluriversity knowledge were advanced as challengers of the dominant western epistemology. The thesis has clarified that South Africa cannot delay adopting the principles of the epistemologies of the South because such epistemologies trace a way out from its internal colonialism which is still a very real concern of external colonialism, as Santos posits that:

In Africa, the contexts of decolonising education in general, and university education in particular, vary widely, even if we restrict ourselves to sub-Saharan Africa. Many factors account for such diversity, from differences among societies before European colonialism to the different colonialisms and different processes and struggles of liberation from colonial occupation. One factor is common to virtually all of them: the recent liberation from foreign occupation, colonialism, and, in the case of South Africa, internal colonialism. (Santos, 2021, p. 361)

As Santos elucidates, this thesis warns that South Africa is one of a few countries in the Global South where Black subjects are still experiencing dangerous and structural internal colonialism. The thesis highlighted that students in South African universities continue to suffer a double form of colonialism (internal and external) daily. This thesis exposed that South African Black students are still forced to learn in Afrikaans or English to the detriment of their mother tongue languages, such as IsiZulu, Tshivenda, IsiXhosa, Setswana, Sesotho, IsiTsonga, IsiNdebele, Sepedi, to mention but a few, not regarded as fit languages to be used in universities. From this concern, the thesis critically analysed that, from time immemorial, the university has been a qualified centre for racial discrimination through linguicide (language death) under its name. It is from this analysis that this thesis shows that if the university is not genuinely decolonised, it will always be a place for daily violence, as students will continue to resist and reject the dominance of western epistemology. The westernisation of the African university has turned it into a market rather than a place where knowledge for all is supposed to be produced. From this point, decolonising the university is the point of no return, because “according to a popular line of thought, we should decolonise knowledge, science, and our university curricula for relativist reasons” (Mitova, 2021, p. 24), which allows everyone to produce knowledge and have access to knowledge without any epistemic discrimination.

Moreover, with the efforts from different decolonial works, it should be asserted that “the university is undergoing, as much as the rest of contemporary societies, a period of paradigmatic transition” (Santos, 2021, p. 254). However, the thesis has maintained that paradigmatic transition is only possible after adopting pluriversity knowledge and accepting

the polyphonic university. The thesis has shown that students in universities in South Africa do not have to delegate any other person than themselves when it comes to fighting against epistemicide and the coloniality of knowledge. With these concepts in mind, the thesis has advanced that in the Global South, which includes South Africa, we have capitalist universities.

To find a way forward, this thesis illuminated that the struggle for a genuinely decolonised university must be done both inside and outside the university, as Santos has stated:

The struggle for an anti-capitalist university, a decolonised university without patriarchy, a university free from authoritarian, religious or political bondages and actively involved in the epistemologies of the South, such a struggle must be conducted both inside and outside the university. (Santos, 2021, pp. 435–436)

The struggle for anti-capitalist universities must be conducted both inside and outside the university. This is because both society and the university are still colonised and dominated by the west. This thesis has observed that while the university is facing epistemicide and the coloniality of knowledge, society members are still experiencing the coloniality of being and power daily. This does not mean that the coloniality of being and coloniality of power are not being experienced by university students, but this thesis focuses on the coloniality of knowledge as a major cause of the epistemic crisis in South African universities. All these heavy forms of coloniality render them so weak that they are unable to realise how deeply they have been oppressed until they regard it as normal. Therefore, decolonising the university must go hand in hand with decolonising society, as Maldonado-Torres advised:

The struggle for the decolonisation of the university cannot be disconnected from the larger struggle to decolonise society. This means that the struggle to decolonise knowledge cannot be disconnected from the struggle to end the outsourcing of jobs, just like it cannot be disconnected from the struggle to change how land and resources are distributed. (Maldonado-Torres, 2016, p. 31)

In most of the colonised countries, the call for the decolonisation of the university is not a new concept, but an old demand that has not yet been attended to or adequately responded to. Indefatigable work has been done to genuinely decolonise the university, which is the reason why there is “a long list of African thinkers who have not stopped making this call for decolonisation and the Africanisation of knowledge and education” (Muchie, 2021, p. v). Such a long list of “decolonial thinkers are those who have chosen to take a position and refuse to

remain neutral in a world that is not neutral” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2016, p. 32). This thesis argued that South African university students and staff may stand firm to ensure that decoloniality becomes a reality in their schools and departments. Decoloniality is the real *muthi* (medicine) to the epistemic crisis and the westernisation of South African universities. The thesis, however, warned that decoloniality is risky because fighting or opposing the imperial project of colonialism is like fighting a ferocious lion with bare hands. This thesis has insisted that it requires one to be audacious and decisive to engage in this risky task of decolonising the university, trying to change the impossible into the possible.

Taking into consideration of the university itself as a western project and the power exercised in the Global South that still emanating from Europe, this thesis considered that “the European game is finally over, we must look for something else. We can do anything today provided we do not ape Europe, provided we are not obsessed with catching up with Europe” (Fanon, [1961] 2017, p. 297). Epistemic decolonisation of the university must be an intellectual response to the western epistemic domination, and this must be done uniquely by those who suffer from it and not by being told by the coloniser how the university in Africa must be decolonised.

This thesis encouraged society members from the Global South to “create conditions for a cooperative university in solidarity with its own global role” (Santos, 2021, p. 252). However, while explaining how university knowledge has been monopolised by the western science culture, this thesis has shown that it is still difficult to create conditions for a cooperative university that is in solidarity with its global role unless the university is genuinely decolonised and not dominated by western epistemology. In addition, this thesis insisted that what matters in the Global South is not only the university’s global role but what it contributes to a particular society where such a university is located. The thesis has argued that decolonising the university is not a matter of cutting off from the west but ensuring that the university is at the service of each society member. Importantly, decolonising the university must remain a continual action/struggle to ensure that the perpetual coloniality of university knowledge is challenged equally, because in our contemporary times, “the struggle to decolonise the ‘university in Africa’ to create an ‘African university’ is still on course in the twenty-first century” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018, p. 191). This thesis demonstrated that decolonising the university is not a new concept in Africa. It is an incomplete task that is still ongoing until epistemic freedom is reached.

Due to the epistemic injustices that have remained daily problems in universities in Africa, and particularly in South Africa, therefore:

It comes at a time when there are growing calls for decolonisation and Africanisation of knowledge and education in Africa. These are coming from young people protesting in the streets, and revolutionaries in academia who are concerned about the continued colonial traditions in education and knowledge production. (Muchie, 2021, p. v)

This thesis was also concerned with the fact that “in the past 40 years, however, for different reasons, in various parts of the world the university has become, rather than a solution for societal problems, an additional problem” (Santos, 2021, p. 255) that is still challenging society. As this thesis has explicated, the university has become a problem rather than a solution. It is driven by western principles and interests that clash with other society members’ interests, particularly those who are not located in Euro-North America. It is argued that the university has become the problem rather than the solution as it is currently producing biased knowledge, and as a result, we are still witnessing an increasing number of students in African countries who graduate without knowing where they are going to work—a consequence of studying programmes that are not related to their culture or lived experiences. This has led to an increase in unemployment, which is now a duty accomplished by universities in Africa, particularly in South Africa.

Therefore, considering what the university should stand for, this thesis has analysed that it remains critical that the university trains students who later find themselves unemployed. Santos’s thought helps one to understand that the university would be a solution rather than creating problems. This thesis has critiqued that the university copies and pastes programmes from Euro-North America and imposes them on South African students. Students blindly accumulate these programmes just to find later that they were designed for white students in Europe and North America, but are not necessarily important or relevant for those in Africa. Therefore, this thesis has alerted that South African universities must be genuinely decolonised, otherwise:

Most universities will suffer the consequences of a rapid decrease in public funding; many universities will be forced to close down. As is happening in other levels of education, the wealthy students and their parents will search throughout the world for the best quality/price ratio, as they are already doing in the commercial malls which universities are becoming, while the poor

students and their parents will be confined to the poor universities existing in their poor countries or neighbourhoods. (Santos, 2021, p. 270)

This thesis has asserted that the university's credibility is currently doubtful, as wealthy students and their parents ensure that they search for high-ranked universities as a destination to further their studies. Consequently, universities in the Global South, including South Africa, found themselves engulfed in problems as they try to convince society that they are still fighting for quality, and, simultaneously, they compete to import new programmes that are being taught at the top-ranked universities in the Global North. Such universities fail to recall that these programmes are not at all necessary or applicable in the Global South. It is shameful that a student from Africa must learn how to farm bees from a white man from Europe or North America. Since time immemorial, our grandfathers have been able to farm bees without consulting the white man from Europe or America. This thesis has defended that it is not necessarily true that every kind of knowledge must come from or be imported from Euro-North America, but knowledges from other worlds must be considered and respected.

Indeed, “the decolonisation of the university must be carried out both in the global South and in the global North, even though the tasks and processes in question may be different in each case” (Santos, 2021, p. 313). Although this thesis has focused on the Global South, it is important to mention that the epistemic decolonisation of the university is not only a concern for students from the Global South but also for students from the Global North. Regardless of where the university is located, as long as it is not at the service of society, it must be genuinely decolonised. Relevantly, “to decolonise the university today and rethink the university of tomorrow calls for a clear understanding of its present situation” (Olivier, 2021, p. 154). This thesis has clarified that daily student protests have become a culture in South Africa, as for them, by the decolonisation of the university, “students meant among others structural changes: curriculum changes; epistemological paradigm shift from Eurocentric knowledge to Africa-centred knowledge” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni & Zondi, 2016, p. 4) that honours and responds to Black students' need—a genuine epistemic decolonisation.

The decolonisation of the university, as this thesis explicated, does not only mean the change of a curriculum as many refer to, but an assemblage of many demands that must be met for a university to be genuinely decolonised. Decolonising university culture is an important point that students in (South) Africa have always been fighting for. The culture of the university is a mere appearance of western traditions and rituals that differ from African beliefs, values, and

myths, though the focus of this thesis was on epistemic decolonisation of the university in South Africa. For instance, during the graduation ceremony, students are recommended to wear gowns designed in western cultural style. The same students find themselves celebrating and expanding the culture that they are not sure about. For this reason, I insisted that when it comes to decolonising the university, it must be done in different domains such as the university's culture, curriculum, design, architecture, rules, gender, race, time frame, examination styles, dressing mode, and role to society, to mention but a few. Borrowing from Santos, this thesis has hammered that “decolonising knowledge represents an immense task because it must take place on different levels and because the decolonising processes must be different, not only according to the contexts in question but also according to the kinds of knowledge to be colonised” (Santos, 2021, p. 340). From this perspective, this thesis is critical to any university that does not care about the society it was called to serve, but not to question. Such universities, as the thesis has advanced, need to be genuinely decolonised.

Relatively, this thesis criticised that coloniality of knowledge, university knowledge has unfortunately been converted into authoritative knowledge. In fact,

Authoritative knowledge is typically subscribed to by white, male, and professional individuals. Anyone outside these categories is not regarded as a person with equal forms of knowledge. They are not invited or valued in the process of knowledge generation or knowledge production, and, therefore, we argue that society is much poorer for it. (Renkin & de Beer, 2017, p. 3)

Therefore, as this thesis argued, the authoritative knowledge is maintained by the domination of the Euro-North American episteme, which is built on white males, which means that it is racist and discriminatory based on gender. The thesis has explicated that such a type of knowledge must be challenged by the epistemologies of the South that, through the ecologies of knowledges, permit the issuance of pluriversity knowledge—a fruit of decoloniality (epistemic decolonisation).

This thesis stated that a decolonised university must guarantee the future of those who have been experiencing epistemological injustices for a long time. However, we should note “that not only the coloniser, but the colonised too must be the object of decolonisation, though the methods used will be different in each case” (Santos, 2021, pp. 333–334). It sounds confusing that the coloniser needs to be decolonised too, but scholars such as Fanon ([1961] 2017), Santos (2021), Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018), and Mudimbe (1994) insisted that the coloniser must be decolonised too, or, otherwise, decolonising only the colonised should be considered a half-

done task. Fanon ([1961] 2017) went further by stating that if colonial violence is launched back at the coloniser, it simultaneously heals both the colonised and the coloniser. Keeping with the context of this thesis, it has been demonstrated that decolonising the university must not only deal with the colonial epistemic violence happening in South African universities but also with the uprooting of the coloniser's mind of domination.

Furthermore, “the work of epistemological decolonisation implies distinct social and cultural processes in the regions that were the victims of historical colonialism, on the one hand, and in the regions that were responsible for colonisation, on the other” (Santos, 2021, p 346). At this concern, Fanon ([1961] 2017) reminded Santos that “decolonisation is always a violent phenomenon” (p. 63) because the colonial epistemic violence that is daily committed by colonialists has been arbitrarily imposed to the oppressed and not negotiated. From Santos's thought, this thesis has harmoniously stated that both the knowledges of the colonised and the coloniser must pass through the decolonial lens. As discussed towards the end of *Chapter 4* of this thesis, Santos's concept of pluriversity knowledge serves as a curative as it has the potential to create a better future for South African universities. Decoloniality was argued as a challenger to both the epistemicide and coloniality of knowledge. The thesis has evaluated decoloniality as a microscope that can zoom out to the extent to which the epistemology of the North is dominating the rest of the world. From there, it draws on how such domination should be defeated. The thesis considered decoloniality as a concept mentor of pluriversity knowledge, hence the latter cannot be successful in its objectives without the intervention of decoloniality.

In South African universities, the Africanisation of the curriculum is recommended if the South African universities are to be saved from epistemicide. Masaka (2017a) suggests that the Africanisation of the curriculum in universities in Africa is necessary to reverse epistemicide. This thesis has argued that a respective combination of Santos's concepts of epistemicide, university knowledge, and pluriversity knowledge is informative and consultative for researchers who are interested in the epistemic decolonisation of South African universities. Decolonising the university must be a continuous project led by audacious and serious students and staff in the Global South, including South Africa. “When we consider the colonised world as perceived by the colonised, the difficulties in decolonising knowledge and culture are equally serious but different” (Santos, 2021, p. 352). This thesis has stated that the epistemologies of the South focus more on the decolonisation of knowledge and the politics that accompany it, and not on the locus of enunciation. This is why the thesis advanced that “It

is imperative to decolonise the teaching materials and methods in every society in which socioeconomic inequalities combine with racial, ethnocultural, epistemic, and sexual inequalities” (Santos, 2018, p. 271). This thesis has also underlined that the coloniality of knowledge in South African universities is a reality that does not need to be debated and, of course, in these universities, the “coloniality of knowledge must be met with decoloniality of thinking and knowing” (Mpofu & Steyn, 2021, p. 15). As discussed in *Chapter 6*, decolonial thought cannot be born through mediation or negotiation. It must emerge from a struggle and denial of continual epistemic violence and injustice characterising South African universities.

According to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2016), “in African universities, Africa must be privileged as a legitimate epistemic site of research, and African people should not be treated as objects of knowledge but must be enabled to regain their lost epistemic virtue as repositories of knowledge” (p. 40). African thinkers must not be considered meaningless and judged as people who deserve to stay at the periphery. The thesis alerted us that we are approaching a stage where African students will find themselves without having a history due to an intense consumption of western science and culture. This thesis also underlined that the peripheral knowledge attributed to the oppressed subjects from the Global South is knowledge that does not deserve any recognition. According to the radical advocates of western science, people from the periphery and their knowledge do not deserve national or international recognition. However, the production of knowledge should be a collective but also diverse work, regardless of our differences and different areas of origin. Santos explained why some philosophers should not consider themselves superior to others:

Since constantly reinterpreting the world while changing it is a collective work, there is no room for philosophers conceived of as vanguard intellectuals. Instead, the epistemologies of the South call for rearguard intellectuals, intellectuals who contribute their knowledge to strengthening the social struggles against domination and oppression to which they are committed. (Santos, 2018, p. ix)

Humiliated and most of the time rejected, decolonial scholars and especially radical African political thinkers are daily discouraged and judged as unworthy scholars or thinkers. Choosing to be a decolonial scholar is synonymous with choosing to be minimised or undermined by the promoters of coloniality of knowledge.

Western science erected an abyssal line between itself and other knowledge systems, casting itself as a superior kind of knowledge while castigating these other systems (Hlabangane, 2021,

p. 176). As Hlabangane has highlighted, it is still critical that thinkers from Euro-North America have nominated themselves as the alpha and the omega when it comes to knowledge production because:

Western science has assumed the role of both player and arbiter, in that it prescribes a particular view of the world. Also, it imposes its view of what constitutes credible and worthy knowledge. It is a master signifier—the alpha and the omega of knowledge systems. (Hlabangane, 2021, p. 176)

Departing from Fanon ([1952] 2008), it has been posited that there is nothing comparable when it comes to the Black man. He has no culture, no civilisation, and no long historical past. This may be the reason why “one who becomes a Black intellectual is highly problematic” (West, 1985, p. 2). However, it does not mean that Black people are the only ones who have requested that “the power of universities needs to be broken down” (D’Silva, 2018, p. 4). What was pertinent to this thesis is that “decolonising the university is a task to be conceived of as articulated with other processes of decolonising social and cultural relations prevailing in society” (Santos, 2018, p. 270). This thesis argued that if the university ceases to be at the service of society, it will invite society members to engage in a serious struggle to genuinely decolonise the same university. The thesis has been strongly concerned with the westernised university that strives for capitalism rather than cognitive justice. Finally, this thesis asserted that with the westernisation of the university, there is a lack of global epistemic justice because “the core idea of the epistemologies of the South is that there is no global justice without global cognitive justice” (Santos, 2021, p. 373).

5.3 Thesis’ Novel Contribution to the Corpus of Knowledge

This thesis uniquely contributes to the literature on Afrocentrism, Pan-Africanism, Negritude, African futurism, African political thought, Black studies, and decolonial thought, among other scholarly works, by employing relevant concepts from Santos’s three texts: *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against Epistemicide* (2014), *The End of the Cognitive Empire: The Coming of Age of Epistemologies of the South* (2018), and *Decolonising the University: The Challenges of Deep Cognitive Justice* (2021). Considering the renewed calls for epistemic decolonisation in South African universities, this study is poised to contribute immensely to current debates in South Africa and the Global South more broadly.

This thesis mostly represents the African opinion and voice. Unfortunately, colonial and racial western scientists consider indigenous African knowledge as irrelevant or even void. Taking this as a point of departure and using the African context and view, this thesis contributes an “appositional” opinion (Moten, 2013) that helps rejected scholars to practise what Mignolo (2009) coined as “epistemic disobedience”. This term encourages scholars from the Global South to refuse and reject western epistemologies and knowledges that do not help resolve local issues. Instead, they should use their indigenous knowledges to find potential solutions to their societies’ problems. As a typical example, Biko’s book, *I Write What I Like* (1978), is a rebellious and disobedient work that welcomes and accommodates the practice of Mignolo’s (2009) epistemic disobedience in South Africa. This thesis falls under and contributes to the literature on radical African political thought and decolonial thought. This category of literature is not welcomed in the western perspective and forum of knowledge because, as argued above, the knowledge that emerges from peripherised scholars is mostly prejudged as irrelevant and not contributing to knowledge.

Fundamentally, from an African and Black perspective, this thesis contributes to the understanding of what the white masters call knowledge and what they do not. This is precisely the *problem* that appears in the report of *Harvard International Review*, where a group of United States experts believe they can really decide what is good and what is bad for developing countries (Mignolo, 2009, pp. 15–16). To prevent a small group of people from continuing to decide what must or must not be taught in South African universities, this thesis greatly contributes to the promotion of the shifting of the geography of the reason that allows those who are epistemically suppressed to think from where they are (rooted). The shifting of the geography of reason permits practising the epistemic decolonisation of universities in the rest of the world outside the Euro-North American zone. Driving from the concept of decoloniality, the thesis has designed how the Global South universities generally and South African universities particularly must shift from the coloniality of university knowledge to pluriversity knowledge, the latter having the potential to challenge epistemicide in these universities. The thesis is of importance when it comes to understanding what Mudimbe (1988) called the ‘colonial library’ in his great book, *The Invention of Africa*. What does ‘colonial library’ mean? Colonial library refers to the body of texts and epistemological order that constructs Africa as a symbol of otherness and inferiority (Mathews, 2018).

The thesis provides a significant contribution to the epistemic freedom and liberation of the Black body in particular and the oppressed subjects from the Global South in general. This thesis is particularly relevant to those who have been oppressed by the *longue-durée* project of colonialism. It critiques western epistemic injustice and domination and proposes the adoption of the pluriversity of knowledges in South African universities. The research greatly contributes to the understanding that students and staff in South African universities are mobile epistemic prisoners because they are obliged to consume western science and are not allowed to exercise their indigenous knowledges. It is from such a kind of life that describes them as mobile epistemic prisoners that ontological questioning emerges, such as “oh my body, always makes me a man who questions!” (Fanon, [1952] 2008, p. 206). In this prayer, Fanon’s concern is that all subjugated students and staff must force themselves to question, challenge, deny, reject, refuse, negate, and learn to say ‘No’ to western science’s imposition in South African universities.

Therefore, the exceptional contribution of this thesis to knowledge is basically through its use of De Sousa Santos’ conceptual intervention. This is a unique study that provides a clear understanding of how Global South universities generally and South African universities particularly may overcome the prevalent epistemic injustices through Santos’ tridimensional concepts of epistemicide, university knowledge, and pluriversity knowledge. The use of Santos’ concepts above maps out how Global South universities generally and South African universities particularly should genuinely be decolonised. For the first time, a study is contributing distinctively to the understanding of how epistemicide and coloniality of university knowledge are challenged and potentially resolved once exposed by decoloniality, which later opens doors to the use of pluriversity knowledge in South African universities. The originality and unique contribution of this thesis are found in and justified by the fact that this is the first and only study on Santos that explains how a combination of three concepts (epistemicide, university knowledge, and pluriversity knowledge) exposes the root causes of the epistemic injustices in South African universities and how to overcome them. This study has not been undertaken by anyone else to date.

Santos has been the object of many works. However, this is the only study that has been conducted from his tri-dimensional concepts of epistemicide, university knowledge, and pluriversity knowledge as concepts that help one to clearly understand how to genuinely decolonise the Global South universities generally and South African universities particularly.

Once licensed by decoloniality, Santos's concept of pluriversity knowledge has the power to introduce different types of knowledges in the universities located in the colonised places. Furthermore, it is the only study that proved that for South African universities to be genuinely decolonised, they must consult Santos's works, with a focus on the trio of elements, namely epistemicide, university knowledge, and pluriversity knowledge. Epistemicide was assessed as the root of epistemic injustices that are rampant and repetitive at various South African universities. Pluriversity knowledge annihilates both epistemicide and coloniality of university knowledge as it accepts and accommodates a pluriversal niche of knowledge from different thinkers and different loci of enunciation. This thesis is unique in that it was the first to demonstrate that Santos's concept of pluriversity knowledge remains a requirement for genuine epistemic decolonisation in South African universities. However, the thesis highlights that for pluriversity knowledge to be realised, it must obtain permission from decoloniality, which later provides strengths and opens doors for scholars and thinkers to enter endless epistemic decolonial struggles. In the African context, pluriversity knowledge, through decoloniality, provides what Ndlovu-Gatsheni termed as "epistemic freedom in Africa".

Since there has been an increase of epistemic injustices in different universities in the Global South, this study sheds light on how epistemic freedom shall reign in academic spaces. The study reveals that the imposition of the western science culture in South African universities continues to justify epistemicide and the coloniality of university knowledge that has remained. In contrast, while searching for potential solutions, this study demonstrated that decoloniality facilitates pluriversity knowledge in universities in the Global South, particularly in South Africa. With pluriversity knowledge, western science loses its self-proclaimed universality and, by obligation cohabits, with other indigenous knowledges. The incorporation or inclusion of African indigenous knowledges means valuing and recognising the voices of forgotten African thinkers. This thesis contributes to the centring of forgotten African thinkers who have been pushed to the periphery and are not considered worthy thinkers.

This thesis motivates those who have been epistemically oppressed for the last 500 years to see other new possibilities and facilities that help them to unlearn western science and relearn to bring back and value the indigenous knowledges that is locally important and in demand. The study greatly contributes toward questioning and challenging the monopoly of western science (culture) in South African universities.

From a Santosian perspective, the study enlightens readers that the ontological freedom of thinkers from the Global South cannot be successful without epistemological liberation. This was highlighted by both Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Mignolo. The thesis reminds thinkers from the Global South to negate and refuse whatever and whoever undermines them and rather claim their full integration in the list of university knowledge producers—the same as it is for those in charge of western science propaganda. Unfortunately, those in charge of western science propaganda have proclaimed themselves as the only knowers of the world. This thesis contributes greatly to exposing and challenging the notion that assumes that only “the knowing subject maps the world and its problems, classifies people and projects into what is good for them” (Mignolo, 2009, p. 1). In this thesis, ‘them’ refers to a group of Euro-North Americans who have proclaimed themselves as the only knowers and thinkers of the world. This study was supportive of Mignolo’s political and epistemic de-linking from the west. In essence, “the need for political and epistemic de-linking here comes to the fore and decolonising and decolonial knowledges, [as] necessary steps for imagining and building democratic, just, and non-imperial/colonial societies” (Mignolo, 2009, p. 1). The core input of this thesis is epistemic decolonisation in South African universities. The thesis significantly highlights that western science must be given the same respect as indigenous knowledges in South African universities to form a niche of knowledges that is rich in its diversity.

It is important to note that the study contributes more to the field of epistemic decolonisation in general and decolonising the university with a particular focus on South African universities. This thesis contributes to justifying that South African universities remain colonial, westernised, and capitalist institutions, and use a curriculum that is western, with the use of English as the teaching language at the expense of many other indigenous languages. The thesis argued that a westernised university, through its domination of western science, treats peripheralised scholars as reservist thinkers. From this perspective, the thesis is critical to the group of western thinkers who treat African and mostly Black scholars as footnotes that do not deserve to be part of the body of the text. The thesis attempted to make an epistemological intervention from a decolonial epistemic perspective that may allow the integration and inauguration of other forms of indigenous knowledges in South African universities. The next section demonstrates what is philosophical about this study.

5.4 What is Philosophical about this Thesis?

Any thesis is called so because of the unique philosophy behind it. According to Maluleka and Mathebula (2022), “philosophy is the body of knowledge that encourages divergent views on what we claim to know, and how we claim to know what we claim to know” (p. 1). Particularly, in this study, my thesis argues that epistemic injustice has become rampant in South African universities due to the epistemicide and coloniality of university knowledge. Similarly, the thesis observes that pluriversity knowledge may be the key element that has the potentiality, capacity, and values to challenge epistemicide and the coloniality of university knowledge in South African universities. I believe that pluriversity knowledge may be the potential solution to the epistemic injustice in South Africa by assessing a trio of elements, namely epistemicide (problem), university knowledge (problem), and pluriversity knowledge (potential solution).

Reviewed literature from different angles generally demonstrated that “epistemicide occurs when one knowledge is exalted at the expense of local or indigenous knowledge systems, leading to the demise of such knowledge systems” (Sonkqayi, 2023, p. 1). This is the case in South African universities as western science is exalted at the expense of South African indigenous knowledges. Consequently, the production of university knowledge that should emerge from pluriversal milieux is limited to a single locus of enunciation, the only glorified Euro-North America, considering that “within this knowledge, concepts are presented systematically, cumulatively, and concerning one another” (Maluleka, 2023b, p. 89). It, therefore, becomes very easy to identify knowledge that is not of western origin, and such knowledge is immediately ignored, silenced, denied, rejected, and not recognised in the realm of knowledge production.

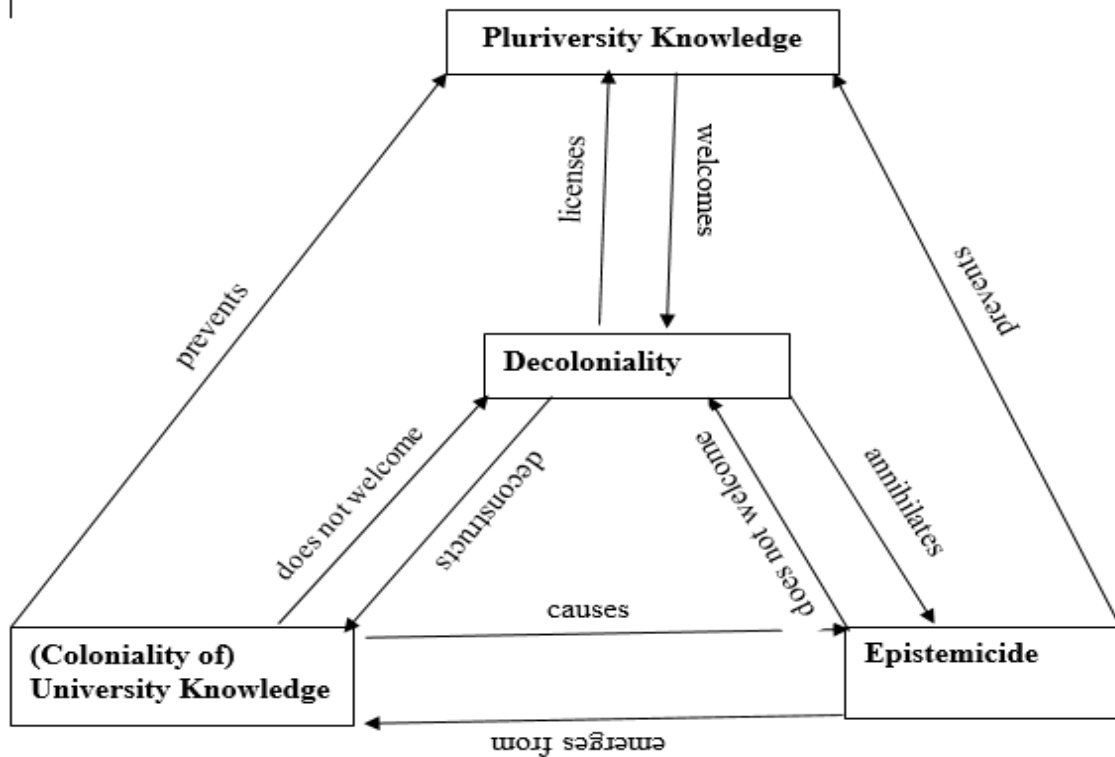
With the claim of the introduction of pluriversity knowledge in South African universities, this thesis strives to recognise the “sage philosophy, which is practised by indigenous knowledge producers, influenced by learning from their culture and other cultures” (Maluleka & Mathebula, 2022, p. 8). The adoption of Santos’s concept of pluriversity knowledge thus marries and accommodates the philosophical sagacity claimed by this thesis. Pluriversity knowledge seeks the recognition of pluriversal epistemologies to be adopted in different universities around the world. This is informed by the fact that the more we delay introducing pluriversity knowledge, the more we encourage and support the rampant epistemic injustices happening daily in different universities. Being the victim of a rampant and repetitive epistemic injustice, South African universities that are taken as the unit of analysis seem to be doubtful of their future if pluriversity knowledge is completely ignored and not adopted. However, as I

have explained in this thesis, Santos's concept of pluriversity knowledge cannot be realised in South African universities without the intervention of decoloniality. Different fallism movements and protests for epistemic decolonisation that happen at South African universities are triggered by the lack of recognition of inclusive and pluriversal voices.

In South Africa, the university has become a place of epistemic oppression, although it should remain a site of knowledge production for all. The university is questioned daily by those who feel that they are at the periphery in that the university continues to be more capitalistic than a site of knowledge production. The idea behind this thesis is that with the tendency of capitalistic nature, the university chooses to practice epistemicide and coloniality of knowledge and ignore whatever comes as a suggestion to accommodate pluriversal knowledge. This thesis reveals that, through whatever means, the western science that is dominant in South African universities is colonial. Conversely, the realisation of pluriversity knowledge cannot be achieved without a continuous struggle by those who are epistemically oppressed and ignored. This thesis matters since it is the first conceptual piece that politically observes that Santos's tridimensional concepts of epistemicide, university knowledge, and pluriversity knowledge are recommendable to challenge the rampant epistemic injustices in South African universities, with the condition that his idea of pluriversity knowledge is guided by decoloniality.

After a careful examination and analysis of Santos' three concepts of epistemicide, university knowledge, and pluriversity knowledge, this thesis argues that Santos is among existential thinkers and philosophers who mapped how the university should be decolonised. However, this thesis originally demonstrates that Santos's idea of pluriversity knowledge is consultative but realised if only decoloniality is engaged. The application of decoloniality means that oppressed thinkers and scholars are called to engage in an endless epistemic struggle. Thus, epistemic decolonisation in South African universities cannot happen through compromise or negotiation but through what Mignolo (2008) termed epistemic disobedience. Therefore, decolonising the university is a continual process which all decolonial scholars, students, and thinkers are called to join—to join the epistemic revolt. This is the only thesis that has covered Santos' tridimensional concepts of epistemicide, university knowledge, and pluriversity knowledge as ideas that may assist in understanding how South African universities should genuinely be decolonised.

As a point of illustration, the following conceptual schema justifies how pluriversity knowledge remains inactive unless licensed by decoloniality:



This schema summarises what my thesis’s argument is about. It shows that both the coloniality of university knowledge and epistemicide prevent pluriversity knowledge from happening. Consequently, pluriversity knowledge cannot challenge the coloniality of university knowledge and epistemicide without the intervention of decoloniality. In its full capacity, decoloniality deconstructs the epistemic colonial system in the Global South universities, including South African universities. Simultaneously, it also annihilates epistemicide. It is from such a perspective that neither the coloniality of university knowledge nor epistemicide welcomes decoloniality. Decoloniality is welcomed by pluriversity knowledge, and the latter is licensed by decoloniality. In the next section, I further explain what makes this thesis unique.

5.5 Thesis’ Uniqueness

Santos has been the subject of many works. However, this is the only study that has been conducted from his tri-dimensional concepts of epistemicide, university knowledge, and pluriversity knowledge—a conceptual schema that helps one to clearly understand how to genuinely decolonise the Global South universities generally and South African universities particularly. Once licensed by decoloniality, Santos’s concept of pluriversity knowledge will have the power to introduce different types of knowledges in the universities located in the colonised places. Furthermore, it is the only study that proved that for South African

universities to be genuinely decolonised, they must consult Santos's works, with a focus on the trio of elements, namely epistemicide, university knowledge, and pluriversity knowledge. Epistemicide was assessed as the root of epistemic injustices that are rampant and repetitive at various South African universities. Once licensed by decoloniality, pluriversity knowledge annihilates both epistemicide and coloniality of university knowledge as it accepts and accommodates a pluriversal niche of knowledge from different thinkers and different loci of enunciation. This thesis is unique in that it was the first to demonstrate that Santos's concept of pluriversity knowledge remains a requirement for genuine epistemic decolonisation in South African universities. However, the thesis highlights that for pluriversity knowledge to be realised, it must obtain permission from decoloniality, which later provides strengths and opens doors for scholars and thinkers to enter endless epistemic decolonial struggles. In the African context, pluriversity knowledge, through decoloniality, provides what Ndlovu-Gatsheni termed as "epistemic freedom in Africa". The next subsection is my reflections on this thesis.

5.6 Reflections

A respective combination of Santos' tridimensional concepts of epistemicide, university knowledge, and pluriversity knowledge allows us to comprehend how South African universities should genuinely be decolonised. As a white scholar, students and staff from the colonised world may have reason to doubt Santos's body of work. However, regardless of his geographical location, Santos's works have recently been very informative and consultative for researchers interested in how to genuinely decolonise universities in the Global South generally and South Africa, particularly. Santos may be listed among the few existential scholars who have greatly contributed to the literature related to the epistemic decolonisation of the university. Prior to 2021 I did not know about Santos. It was early in 2021 that I started to read some of his works on decolonising the university, and I was very interested to see a white scholar who dared to criticise the western science culture—I found him similar to Paul Sartre with reference to the preface written in Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*. Mathematics teaches us that there is always an exception. When it comes to decolonising the university, Santos' three concepts of epistemicide, university knowledge, and pluriversity knowledge make him an exception, a scholar who deeply criticizes the domination of western science in the colonised milieux.

Very interested in his concept of epistemicide, which I was eager to research deeper from the beginning of this research, I continued to read his works and later found that his concept of

university knowledge was very informative and helpful in comprehending to what extent the coloniality of university knowledge exists in South African universities. In this thesis, it was argued that the production of university knowledge is dominated by western men from a few countries. Scholars from the Global South, generally and South Africa particularly, are from the periphery—or without the capacity to produce knowledge.

I was also very interested in Santos's concept of pluriversity knowledge, which, once licensed by decoloniality, has the power to challenge epistemicide and the coloniality of university knowledge. I was lucky to read Santos's works before I did the PhD, because, doing a PhD that uses his concepts (epistemicide, university knowledge, and pluriversity knowledge) to understand Global South universities and South African universities made this study unique. I was very self-motivated to do this unique thesis—there was no influence from anybody, I did it with willingness. The next subtheme briefly explains Santos' accusations that happened when I had already started this PhD journey.

5.7 Whither Boaventura De Sousa Santos?

In this thesis, I was interested in De Sousa Santos' concepts of epistemicide, university knowledge and pluriversity knowledge which intellectually helps one to clearly understand how South African universities can genuinely be decolonised. However, as of April 2023, Santos was accused of sexual harassment. I found it to be fair to comment before the thesis reached its conclusion because avoiding commenting could confuse the reader's understanding of my position and comments regarding these rape allegations against De Sousa Santos. The purpose of this section is to discuss my standpoint on this matter. I still recognise Santos's intellectual contributions to the corpus of knowledge, especially his concepts of epistemicide, university knowledge, and pluriversity knowledge that are very informative and consultative for one to comprehend how to genuinely decolonise the university in the Global South, and especially South African universities. However, this does not mean that I support him in any case of sexual harassment, sexual assault, or sexual misconduct if he is found guilty by law. I am not a De Sousa Santos fanatic. I am only interested in the (decolonial) concepts found in his texts. As I early mentioned, the accusations of rape against Santos came when I had been working on his concept of epistemicide, university knowledge and pluriversity knowledge for more than a year. Thus, I saw his rape allegations when I already had a first complete draft of the thesis of more than 200 pages. I took the time and read all the allegations, and I decided that the major task should be given to the court, which has the power to assess if he was guilty

or not. I do not support anyone who does sexual harassment. I think we should respect our colleague sisters and all females in general. This study stands for the oppressed Black students and staff, and from this perspective, I cannot support any behaviour related to sexual harassment, keeping in mind that due to colonial violence and dehumanisation, our female Black students and staff also daily suffer many reported and unreported sexual harassments at the universities. Thus, I cannot support Santos for the sexual harassment accused against him. After hearing and seeing that he was accused of sexual harassment, I did the research to find out what kind of allegations, and the paragraphs to follow provide some details.

According to Matamala (2023), “in the past week [of 18th April 2023], a group of Portuguese students have accused him of sexual aggression and Brazilian member of congress Bella Gonçalves has added her testimony, as has the well-known Mapuche activist, writer and screenwriter Moira Millán”. During the interview with Matamala, Millán responded with an angry voice and narrated what happened to her on the day she visited Santos:

We went into an apartment, and he got comfortable and began to drink whisky. I wanted to leave, but he told me to sit down. I did, but across from him. When I did, he leaned into me and started touching me, trying to kiss me. I got angry and pushed him, and I said: ‘No!’ I was upset, but I stayed calm. He pushed himself onto me again, and I got very angry and even pushed him harder. I wasn’t going to let anyone rape me, not even Boaventura. (Millán, 2023, n.p.)

My position remains that Santos should be respected for his contribution to the decolonial concepts that are informative and consultative for decolonial scholars. However, if he makes the above accusations to Millán, I think it will affect his personality and dignity. This thesis strives for epistemic decolonisation of South African universities, which cannot be searched for outside or after rejecting the voices of women. Without fighting for the protection of women, there shall be no reason for us to search for genuine decolonisation of South African universities. Pluriversity knowledge through decoloniality fights for both genders. Similarly, the decolonisation project cannot discriminate against the female gender as patriarchal colonialists did.

In addition, Millán (2023) regretted, “well, I lacked self-esteem at that moment, and many Indigenous women continue to lack self-esteem. We normalise that things like this can happen to us because we don’t matter to anybody, we’re rapable and killable. And we’re tired” (n.p.). However, Santos “considers that Millán’s accusation is ‘slanderous’ and that she lacks evidence” (Constenla, 2023, n.p.; [originally translated from Portuguese]).

Attempting to defend himself, Santos (2023, p.1) replied: “I need to have detailed knowledge of the facts that are imputed to me so that I can adequately defend myself against accusations that I consider unfair”. In his understanding, a person shall be condemned only if found guilty, and all the accusations addressed to him/her may not be true until the court finds him/her guilty. However, the number of those who have accused him of sexual harassment rose. It is sad and critical that “the sociologist has been accused by five women of taking advantage of his position as CES (Center for Social Studies) director and his great intellectual prestige to sexually harass several researchers and a lecturer” (Constenla, 2023, n.p.; [originally translated from Portuguese]). Should the court find Santos guilty of having harassed women, then he must be condemned. Women are pillars of the decolonial projects, they deserve to be well protected rather than being sexually harassed.

However, one should ask why I continued to write about Santos while he was accused of sexual harassment. As I said above, when I started this section, I highlighted again that I started researching on his concepts of epistemicide, university knowledge, and pluriversity knowledge towards the end of 2021, while I was compiling my PhD concept note to be attached to my PhD application. In early January 2022, I registered for my first year of study. By April 2022, I had completed the first draft of my PhD research proposal. The bad news about Santos’s rape allegations started to spread when I was busy with the research components and had completed my first PhD draft. From the beginning, and as mentioned in the proposal stage, my PhD thesis was only concerned with Santos’ concepts of epistemicide, university knowledge, and pluriversity knowledge; concepts that are very relevant to the decolonial discourses about how South African universities should genuinely be decolonised.

It should be highlighted that despite many accusations of sexual harassment, Santos’s intellectual reasoning on how the university should be decolonised remains an invaluable work for researchers interested in decolonising universities in the Global South. Thus, without reversing, Santos’s political thought on decolonising the university should be recommended as an adequate mechanism to be adopted and developed in universities in the Global South, and particularly in South Africa, because “Boaventura de Sousa Santos is one of the most brilliant and original thinkers on theories of knowledge” (Wallerstein, 2021, n.p). De la Cadena, too, agrees with Wallerstein above that “Boaventura de Sousa Santos’s political analysis in *The End of the Cognitive Empire* offers an alternative that steers political analysis away from the usual alternatives” (De la Cadena, 2018, p.n.a). All these testimonies harmonise with the thesis’s

position that De Sousa Santos' concepts of epistemicide, university knowledge, and pluriversity knowledge are invaluable for decolonial scholars who want to comprehend how the university should be decolonised in the Global South generally and South Africa particularly.

Considering the epistemic decolonisation of South African universities, Santos's texts are informative while exploring the possibility of alternative sciences. He argues that non-western sciences have the right to express their contribution to the present status of knowledge in universities. This offers a unique understanding to students and educators interested in critical thinking and decolonisation (Takrimi, 2021). Santos's *Epistemologies of the South* is a brilliant testimony about today's tensions within our inter- and transcultural spaces" (Mudimbe, 2014, p.n.a). Santos has greatly contributed to the development of epistemologies of the South—epistemologies contemporarily considered as the alternatives for oppressed scholars and thinkers. Nevertheless, de Jong (2022) assesses Santos as someone with a double persona:

De Sousa Santos hence straddles different positions. On the one hand, the orientation of his work towards the former Portuguese colonies and his interest in Indigenous epistemologies align him with other decolonial thinkers. On the other hand, he is influenced by the critical theory underpinning postcolonial thought. (de Jong 2022, p. 4).

However, Santos' concepts of epistemicide, university knowledge, and pluriversity knowledge are helpful for researchers interested in the epistemic injustices, crisis, and the westernisation of universities in the Global South generally and South Africa particularly. This makes him an existential philosopher. While doing social research on decolonising the university, Santos' writings are consultative and imperative because "Sousa Santos is a uniquely productive critical thinker, having dealt with issues such as the epistemology of modern sciences, the social movement of the Global South, multiculturalism, and anti-hegemonic forms of knowledge production, among many others" (Bortoluci, 2015, p. 1). Besides the subject of decolonisation, Santos has made a significant contribution to the broader subject of social justice and liberation. Santos is evaluated as "One of the most original world social thinkers of our time" (Elizaga, 2014, p. n.a) and especially when it comes to how Global South universities should genuinely be decolonised.

As I am about to conclude this chapter, I underline once again that if Santos is found guilty of the sexual harassment allegations, the court should decide on what must be done to him. However, his intellectual works published before he was found guilty remain consultative,

especially his respective three concepts of epistemicide, university knowledge, and pluriversity knowledge, which are important to understand how to epistemically decolonise the university in the Global South, particularly in South Africa. The next subtheme briefly provides suggestions for future research.

5.8 Suggestions for Future Research

Santos has written extensive scholarly works on different concepts such as epistemologies of the South, abyssal thinking, sociology of absences, intercultural translations, post-abyssal methodologies, and many others. All his concepts cannot be unpacked in a single thesis or a book. This thesis was underpinned by three concepts, namely epistemicide, university knowledge, and pluriversity knowledge, as the most applicable to the understanding of the epistemic injustices prevalent in the Global South universities generally and South African universities particularly.

Critically, this thesis has suggested that deep research on Santos's positionality regarding Portugal's invasion of Africa and its epistemic injustices will help readers understand whether he is supportive of Portuguese colonialism in Africa or not. In Africa, critiques are mostly addressed to France, England, and the United States, while Portugal tends to consider itself innocent regarding the damages caused by colonialism. From this point, there are still fewer comments and less literature on Santos's positionality on Portuguese epistemic injustices. Santos was too critical of the damages caused by colonialism with a focus on France, England, Germany, and the United States, and less on his country of birth, Portugal. However, his writings on epistemicide, coloniality of university knowledge, and pluriversity knowledge were and are still relevant and consultative to the understanding of how epistemic decolonisation should be a reality in the Global South universities and South African universities, especially.

This thesis admitted that Santos's whole works on how the university shall be genuinely decolonised cannot be captured only by the trio of elements that are epistemicide, university knowledge, and pluriversity knowledge. The thesis suggested that more research on Santos' thoughts on decolonising the university will complement and be a necessity to this work, especially research that may assist in shifting Santos's thoughts from concepts to action and practice. There have been many different writings, readings, and interpretations of Santos's literature. This thesis contributed to that body of work, particularly from an African perspective. This research suggested that different topics, such as reading Santos and his

positionality on Portugal's negative impacts on the epistemic colonisation and injustices in Africa, could be undertaken to understand Santos from different angles, views, and perspectives. Santos is originally from the colonial world, which means that despite his great writings on decolonising the university, this cannot stop or confuse scholars from Africa, who continue to criticise the negative impact caused by Portugal's epistemic colonisation and injustices that are still witnessed in Mozambique, Angola, and Guinea-Bissau.

Santos's concept of pluriversity knowledge, referred to as a potential solution to the epistemic injustices and the westernisation of South African universities, merits further research as it does not provide enough literature, especially on how such a concept can shift from conceptual imagination to practice. It requires the intervention of decoloniality for pluriversity knowledge to shift from theory to practice. The thesis explained its potential and how it would be beneficial if engaged, but the focus has been more on the concept itself. The thesis also encouraged critical examination of Santos's idea of decolonising the university using other angles that differ from the three concepts—epistemicide, university knowledge, and pluriversity knowledge. This will generate diverse ideas to fully understand what Santos meant by decolonising the university in the Global South. As this thesis used South African universities as a case study, the thesis encourages more research on Santos' views on decolonising the university to be done in other areas of the Global South. This will be a checkpoint to verify the extent to which universities in other places in the Global South are negatively affected by epistemicide and the coloniality of university knowledge.

This thesis suggested that the university should treat students well because, without students, the university should be connoted with another name, not the 'university'. As Santos (2021) highlighted, a university that does not care about the students cannot care about society. This thesis has further suggested that the domination of western science culture in universities in the Global South, which includes South Africa, must be challenged by pluriversity knowledge. Students may insist that they want to study a curriculum that is relevant to their daily life experiences or society.

This thesis suggested too that students and staff from universities located in the Global South, and particularly in South Africa, should know that as the English proverb says, "time is money", knowledge is gold, knowledge is platinum, knowledge is power, and all in all, the one who possesses the knowledge has everything. In contrast, the person who is robbed of his/her knowledge is robbed of everything. Therefore, as soon as possible, students are urged to

reclaim their knowledge that has been murdered by the epistemicide and coloniality of knowledge.

This thesis suggested that universities in the Global South, including South Africa, should cease the importation of western science culture into their countries as soon as possible. Instead, they should introduce indigenous knowledges, which must be studied in students' mother tongues. If this is not possible, there is a possibility that African students may learn Swahili as an international language that originates in Africa and not English, French, and Portuguese, as advised by Wa Thiong'o. There must be a transition from western science to indigenous knowledge, and governments from the Global South countries are encouraged to assist in this regard, even though such governments are still disempowered by the coloniality of power. For all costs, saving knowledge is saving the future, saving for power, and saving for sovereignty. When it comes to decolonising the university, this thesis appreciates Santos's contribution. Audaciously, he stands as a Fanonian, and his writings are crucial for those who are epistemically oppressed or dominated.

For students and staff who are especially touched by the negative impact of epistemicide and the coloniality of university knowledge, this thesis is a must-read for all whose indigenous knowledges have been arbitrarily deleted, rejected, denied, destroyed, and murdered. The universities built in Africa are there to firstly profit us Africans and not Europeans or North Americans. These universities must serve our societies and not behave like extensions of Euro-North American universities. In Africa, as in South Africa, universities must not behave in a manner where they are here to satisfy western interests to the detriment of African interests and the interests of their students. As Nkrumah (1973) instructed, all colonised and denied subjects must know that "*The Struggle Continues*" until victory.

5.9 Concluding Remarks

This chapter delivered a general conclusion of the complete thesis that summarised the arguments and statements. Particularly and exceptionally, as a researcher, this concluding chapter permitted me to express my thoughts related to the investigated topic freely. The arguments and statements on Santos' thoughts on decolonising the university and some other relevant statements from other thinkers were restated. Santos' three concepts—epistemicide, university knowledge, and pluriversity knowledge—were used as tools to easily understand the causes of the epistemic injustices at the university, the westernisation of South African

universities, and how to overcome these problems. This chapter began with meditative restatements of thoughtful ideas, as the thesis found it worthy to restart some important and relevant arguments. The chapter provided the thesis's novel contribution to the corpus of knowledge. The distinctiveness, the uniqueness of this study was due to it being the first study to investigate Santos' concepts of epistemicide, university knowledge, and pluriversity knowledge—concepts that are imperative for decolonising South African universities. In this chapter, I also commented and explained on Santos' accusations of sexual harassment that happened when I had already started the PhD studies. This chapter allowed me, as the researcher, to provide my reflections and suggestions on the thesis. Finally, the thesis ended with these concluding remarks. All used references are listed on the next page. The last two pages are appendices. *A Luta Continua!*

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APPENDIX A: ETHICS WAIVER APPROVAL LETTER



HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)

Registration number: REC-101114-044

14 July 2022

Re: Mr. Zenon Ndayisenga (2628210)

Waiver letter number: HRECNMW22/08/01

To whom it may concern,

Mr. Ndayisenga is a registered student at the School of Social Science at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. This letter is to confirm that, at the time of writing, Mr. Ndayisenga does not need ethical clearance for his study entitled '*From Epistemicide and University Knowledge to Pluriversity Knowledge: A Decolonial Examination of Boaventura de Sousa Santos's Political Thought on Decolonising the University*'. This decision has been reached based upon a description of the project supplied by Mr. Ndayisenga to the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), which has been evaluated by the Chairs and Deputy Chairs. If, however, if Mr. Ndayisenga changes the methods of data collection and analysis for this study, this decision may no longer be valid. If such changes take place, this should be communicated to the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical) as soon as possible. This waiver letter is valid until 13 July 2025.

Please feel free to contact me should you require any further information.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,
S Schoeman



Shaun Schoeman (Administrative Officer)

Solomon Mahlangu House, 10th Floor, Room 10004, Jorissen Street, Braamfontein, Johannesburg
Private Bag 3, Wits 2050

T + 27(0)11 717 1408 | E Shaun.Schoeman@wits.ac.za | hrec-medical.researchoffice@wits.ac.za

www.wits.ac.za/research/about-our-research/ethics-and-research-integrity/

APPENDIX B: COPY-EDITING CERTIFICATE



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EDITORIAL CERTIFICATE

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THE VALUE OF DE SOUSA SANTOS' CONCEPTS OF EPISTEMICIDE,
UNIVERSITY KNOWLEDGE, AND PLURIVERSALITY TO THE DECOLONIAL
DISCOURSE IN/ON SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
at the
University of Witwatersrand
by

Zenon Ndayisenga

Gaynor Paynter
Editor
Date 19 May 2025

The author has the authority to accept or reject our comments, suggestions and changes. I can be contacted for comment at gaynor@typewritetranscription.co.za