Editorial Perspectives: Arts, Whiteness and Power in University 3.0

Carola Boehm
Staffordshire University

This special edition is a milestone, not quite an end, but certainly a marker in a much longer story that started with both my special issues co-editor Thushari Welikala and myself engaging in online informal but themed meet-ups, connecting with PaTHES members on topics around whiteness and coloniality within the academy.

As Thushari and I once mentioned, we came together, myself, with fears of having, at times, a white defensiveness and Thushari fearing to have a non-white one. We gingerly stepped into this sensitive, difficult and emotional theme by facilitating debates within a small group of scholars, exploring this topic from diverse, scholarly, but also very personal contexts.

This series of conversations, first in online meetups from September to January 2022 and then in the development of this special issue, resulted in extraordinary interdisciplinary and international perspectives on coloniality and decolonising, making visible the invisible, and shining a light on some of the unattended crevices of our social, epistemological and ontological fabric within our institutions; institutions that are a phenomenon of socially constructed learning organisations with its fallacies, vulnerabilities, prejudices and, yes, coloniality and whiteness.

The Journey of Creating This Special Issue

I often go back to the text from our initial invitation, containing a quote from Thushari, which states:

> Invisible and uncontested whiteness moulds the social-cultural and intellectual imaginaries within higher education (…), supressing alternative ways of perceiving the world. (Thushari Welikala, 2021)

This special edition is thus not only the result of scholars' individual critical treatment in a very particular context and time, but it is also a collective expression of a two-year-long process of debate and understanding, gaining a very personal experience of what it is to live in a world dominated by whiteness, or how this world is viewed by others that are not.

And here we are, at the end of this journey, at least for now. In the words of one of our scholars in this special issue, Hans Schildermans, we had gathered more like "wandering scholars, around texts to read and study together". Here our very own little "universitas did not refer to … some kind of universality, but to the collective of studiers that come into being around a shared matter of concern".[1]

We had created a space where contributors and participants critically engaged with their own practices, assumptions and theoretical understandings associated with whiteness and coloniality in higher education. And our shared concern was that we needed to address the timely and under-theorised area in higher education, contributing to the knowledge and understanding of the complexities, paradoxes, tensions, and possibilities of designing decolonial futures in higher education.

So in this Special Issue of PTiHE, some of these debates have formed their scholarly, written expression. They are writing about different contexts: South Africa, Ukraine, Sweden, Austria, Ireland and the UK. And they approach the subject matter from different perspectives: ontologically, epistemologically, linguistically, or autoethnographically.

And all of these perspectives gave me moments to stop and halt and rethink my own positionality in these contexts.

And so, in this editorial perspective, I share those moments of pause, those moments of internal struggle, and yes, those moments of doubt as what I think, and what I think I know, I now perceive as so enmeshed with Western-European thinking, that there might be no escape from it.

Here listed in little internal debates are expressed my intellectual and personal struggles, little conceptual and critical internal discourses that I encountered on this journey of being involved in this special issue, especially when allowing them to clash, bounce and join together with some of my own prior

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[1] Schildermans, 'Resisting the Ecology of Knowledges, Reclaiming an Ecology of Study. Some Notes on Decolonization in Higher Education'.

work on culture and higher education. They provide, I hope, yet another personal perspective to add to this complex but nuanced picture that this special issue represents.

Whiteness, My White Defensiveness and Culture 3.0

It would be true to say that at the beginning of this journey, I felt very much out of my comfort zone. Not so much because I am white, but that – surprisingly to me – as well, but more so because this was not my area of research, not my expertise.

My area of expertise is arts, culture and higher education. The closest that I have come to writing in a rigorous scholarly manner about race relations or coloniality is to consider which forms of cultural engagements actually level the (creative) playing field and how they do this by distributing power in a process that prioritises co-creation and co-ownership.

Put in the form of simple questions, why have graffiti, street arts, rap, urban dance, and Mehndi skin decorations generally not been considered art by the Western establishment (it does not appear anywhere in the Arts Council's categories of art forms), or worthy of public funding, whereas the classical Western concepts of arts all feature (dance, music, theatre). And increasingly over the past 100 years, until quite recently actually, forms of cultural engagements that attract less and fewer audiences (ballet, opera, classical music) have gained proportionally more and more public funding, but forms that are more accessible and which tended to have more diverse audiences (popular music, street festivals, mural art, street dance) have received less and less. This points towards our cultural institutions having a systemic whiteness built into their structures, definitions, ways of working, career trajectories and funding. The answer why this is, of course, is so human-typically complex, and is one of definition, conceptualisation, privilege, class, and yes, throw in some coloniality into the mix as well.

Put in more complex terms, we in the arts have had a conundrum for a very long time. In the arts, we laude ourselves as being ever so inclusive and self-reflexive in the ways we make, perform or talk about our art forms. We are used to reflecting back on some of the biggest challenges of our society, making our audiences rethink their positions, their beliefs and their stances on all sorts of existential truths. Art has the potential to disrupt our comfortable, entrenched ways of thinking. Sheila Trahar expresses it so nicely when she opens up her article on her own attempts to disrupt whiteness by a visit to a play, disrupting, as she says, her "whiteness by presenting me with white people who were black and black people who were white", which "provoked

me yet again to interrogate how I construct identities and perform my white-ness".[2] But what we in the art world have long ignored is that we were also entrenched structurally, conceptually and ontologically with whiteness. For a very long time, we have struggled to understand why it is that the arts sector in the West is anything else but diverse. Hidden power differentials seemed to be at play, which gave us moments of pause. When I in 2015 visited a large leadership symposium for arts-practice higher education leaders across Europe, that plenary of 300 happened to only have one single black person, who was our keynote speaker, speaking on – yes, you guessed it – on the diversity in the arts.

I am reminded that this is what Gerry Dunne, in his article, calls out as potential "Epistemic Exploitation", or as one of his chapter subtitles suggests, "being at the table but still on the menu".[3] The extra burden of educating or calling out issues around race relations falls routinely on members of under-represented communities. It is a form of higher volume of 'epistemic labour'.

I could relate to this, as one of the few researching music-technology re-searching women, I have often been asked to speak on topics not to do with my research area (at the time, MPEG7, music informatics) but about women in music technology, which I happened to know nothing about. I have seen this also in our art schools when, with good intentions, we bring in underrep-resented communities to talk about their own underrepresentation to com-munities that are generally not. And full disclosure, I had to admit to myself, I have fallen for this simplistic concept of 'supporting' the cause of diversity myself, organising EDI-related talks by inviting speakers representing specific EDI communities. It is noteworthy here to highlight my own unconscious, knee-jerk reaction is to see structural exclusionary practices through the EDI lens, which has its own issues, one of which is that we do not critically, nor deeply engage in the discourses that are the topic of this special issue, white-ness and coloniality. There is a human fallacy here, a too lazy, or too simplistic way of thinking about identity and representation and voice.

I myself have felt confused encountering my own limits of thinking as part of my own journey leading to this special issue. But there are similar-ities with whiteness in the cultural spaces, and with it, whiteness in arts in higher education. My thoughts have long been informed and are still heavily influenced by my search for policy-relevant conceptual models for cultural

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[2] Trahar, 'Attempts to Disrupt Whiteness in the Academy: An Autoethnographic Exploration'.

[3] Dunne, 'The Neglected Legacy and Harms of Epistemic Colonising: Linguicism, Epistemic Exploitation, and Ontic Burnout'.

engagement that would help with the "whiteness" conundrum in the arts. And my solution was to bring in the concept of Culture 3.0.

In a nutshell, the Culture 3.0 conceptual model, developed by Luigi Sacco[4] in 2011, is all about minimising gatekeeping functionality, thus allowing power to be shared and distributed and co-owned. Culture 3.0 types of engagements are characterised by open platforms, democratic systems, ubiquitously available production tools, and individuals constantly shifting and renegotiating their roles between producing and consuming content. One moment you are the audience, the other, you have become the performer. It is more about creative living than attending a creative event. With boundaries of creative hierarchies being levelled, it considers the 'diversity and inclusion problem' to be one of definition and eligibility (e.g. gatekeeping and structural exclusionary practices) rather than a lack of cultural engagement.[5] With it, I would argue that it can help to neutralise the effects of power differentials of ingrained hierarchies, and with it limits the whiteness of a cultural space.

When the art world struggles to come to terms with the question of why its audience figures are simply so 'white' and EDI stats so poor,[6] it often fails to see the fact that it defines art in a very narrow, 'white' way. But it is not that non-white or minority communities are not engaging in the arts and culture; it is that they are not engaging in those arts that the general Western 'white' art world counts in its metrics. We predominantly have allowed us to count only those art forms that we, in the European-centric, predominantly white West, have defined as art, and which I would suggest is only one type of cultural engagement, that which is captured by the concept of Culture 1.0.

Think of an 18th-century flute court concert, and you have understood the concept; it circles around patronage. You can also think of BBC proms, and you get the sense of its modern version, with public patronage replacing aristocratic patronage. Culture 1.0 is all about patronage, and thus a high gatekeeping functionality is built in. It absorbs value, money needs to be invested in it that comes from outside of the cultural activity. And yes, Culture 1.0 types of cultural engagements are predominantly white, attract predominantly white audiences, and I would suggest exhibiting a 'whiteness'.

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[4] Pier Luigi Sacco, 'Culture 3.0: A New Perspective for the EU 2014–2020 Structural Funding Programming', 2011, http://www.interarts.net/descargas/interarts2577.pdf.

[5] Carola Boehm, *Arts and Academia: The Role of the Arts in Civic Universities. Great Debates in Higher Education* (Bingley, UK: Emerald Publishing, 2022).

[6] Orian Brook, Dave O'Brien, and Mark Taylor, *Culture Is Bad for You: Inequality in the Cultural and Creative Industries* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020); Boehm, 'Culture 3.0'.

Sacco, who advised the European Union on cultural policy for more than a decade, suggested at the time that Europe was hung up on Culture 1.0, and it is holding it back in terms of productivity, innovation, and general well-being. I have, on the other hand, suggested[7] that the UK is hung up on Culture 2.0, characterised by intellectual property rights (IP) and copyright. Think of the US film industry or the UK music industry, and you have the right idea in your mind. It still exhibits gatekeeping but reaches more audiences and therefore is more diverse than Culture 1.0. But the power relationships are still stark. Thus it comes with (artist) exploitation. The CEOs of the largest music industry organisations are thus still generally male and white, although artists are much more diverse and audiences even more so.[8] However, the neo-liberal tendencies of IP exploitation within Culture 2.0 create a power differential, as did the patronage models of Culture 1.0. Thus, having inherited these ways of structuring our cultural engagements from our white, European ancestry, be it through patronage (Culture 1.0) or IP exploitation (Culture 2.0), it has a 'whiteness' built in.

However, I believe Culture 3.0 types of cultural engagements are actually different, characterised by open platforms like social media, massive online gaming or Wikipedia, but also street arts and flash mobs. It exhibits ubiquitously available production tools like podcast technology or blogs or YouTube videos, but also socially engaging art forms that pop up on walls or in city corners, like the pianos appearing on the platforms and streets of some of our bigger cities. Individuals are thus constantly shifting and renegotiating their roles between producing and consuming content; they listen in one moment and play in the other.

Importantly, one does not have to label it as art, which allows a completely different access to something that has been dominated by a white, socially constructed ontology of art. And definitions and labels matter here. The moment a funder or critic asks, "But, is this really art?", the power differentials are likely to manifest. And I now confidently say, "You do not have to call it art; call it … Culture 3.0".

And Culture 3.0 features some very society-friendly characteristics, including

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[7] Carola Boehm, 'The End of a Golden Era of British Music?' in *Innovation in Music*, ed. Russ Hepworth-Sawyer, Jay Hodgson, Justin Paterson, and Rob Toulson, Perspectives on Music Production Series, 1st ed. (New York: Routledge, 2019), https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351016711–31

[8] ACE, 'Creative Case for Diversity | Arts Council England'; UK Music, 'Measuring Music 2017 – UK Music', 2017; Brook, O'Brien, and Taylor, *Culture Is Bad for You.*

    – It supports more cultural engagement and participation
    – It generally has fewer gatekeepers
    – It supports diversity and is generally more scalable
    – It allows individuals to live more creatively
    – It produces both economic AND social value

And with all of the above, it simply has the potential to be more impactful in terms of well-being and health, but also by minimising any power differentials that usually appear between those who make art and those who consume it.

And why this is important for our higher education institutions is because we tend to use arts and culture as the interface between what is within our universities to our surrounding regions. We can connect through this magic ingredient, as it allows us to communicate beyond our boundaried spaces. And thus, it becomes one of the most effective tools for civic universities or universities who want to have a positive impact in their regions.

Examples for effective Culture 3.0 engagement I would suggest can be found in podcasting, where local communities, as well as researchers, have started to pick up the microphones (or just their smartphones) and produce content with, and often useful for, a specific community. Early digital collaborative tools such as Smule's Occarina (2008) or Leaf Trombone (2009) were successful attempts of globally socially experienced instrument-based collaboration and co-creation available on smartphones and were able to facilitate instantaneous live concerts involving hundreds of performers throughout the world.[9] "And there are, of course, non-technically mediated Culture 3.0 types of engagements, often found in street festivals and immersive street arts, such as Wild Rumpus's 2017 The Lost Carnival, where audience members found themselves becoming participants within a two-day festival, camping on the grounds and being immersed by stories unfolding around and with them over the duration of the festival. A small example is also the installation of various pianos in various civic spaces, from airports, train stations or outdoor urban parks. One of these I found in Luxembourg, clad in a woollen piano-sized jumper, with the sign 'Music keeps you warm' and inviting any by-passers to sit and play, just for a minute or for an hour."[10]

From a Culture 1.0 perspective, one may question whether this is really art. Culture 1.0 needs an artist or the composer, focusing on a form of

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[9] Wang et al., 'SMUE=Sonic Media: An Intersection of the Mobile, Musical and Social', in *SMULE = Sonic Media: An Intersection of the Mobile, Musical, and Social* (Montreal, CA: ICMA, 2009), 283–86.

[10] Boehm, *Arts and Academia*, 52.

individualistically conceptualised achievement for its own definitions of art. But from a Culture 3.0 perspective, these questions are less important. More important is the fact that individuals sitting down to play are culturally and creatively engaging, and it comes with all the benefits of any cultural engagement, and without the drawbacks of having value judgements or gatekeeping access issues or exclusionary individualistic notions of ownership.

Does Culture 3.0 within the Academy Disrupt Its Whiteness?

So how does Culture 3.0 address institutional, structural exclusionary practices? Or, in other words, how can it disrupt whiteness and thus attend to my sector's challenges with structural, systemic exclusionary practices?

Well, as I would suggest, Culture 3.0 starts off with the following premises, it breaks down or disrupts some engrained institutional ways of being or ways of seeing the world:

– Culture 3.0 defines art in the context of where cultural engagements are found, not where a selected set of curators suggest that audiences need to be present to experience it. Thus, including Culture 3.0 concepts in art and cultural education allows the discussions around what is art and what is of value in being financially supported.
– It defines audiences not as passive consumers but as potentially active producers and co-producers of cultural activities. It thus is participatory, disrupting some long-standing European-oriented role concepts existent in the arts, such as composer, artist, audience, etc.
– It is less there for a single transactional purpose of a ticket sale from a cultural producer to a cultural consumer, but a transactional ecosystem of cultural activity being networked into a community, a place and the experience of creativity in daily life. With it, it is more about creative living than a series of single-demarcated event experiences. It thus rearranges and devolves power differentials existent in the processes around engaging in arts and culture.
– And with all of the above, Culture 3.0 is a powerful contextualisation in which art pedagogy, learning environment design, researcher development and knowledge exchange activities can benefit through a levelling mediator that is creatively oriented and that helps in negotiating the power differentials between knowledge holders and knowledge receivers, as well as internal university communities and those in the surrounding neighbourhoods.

It resembles thus very much how Nuraan David, in this issue, describes decolonisation, which "implies the bringing into presence of identities, cultures, ethnicities, traditions, and languages. Its inclusive orientation implies its opposition to any constructions or discourses of exception or violence."[11]

The facts around lack of diversity in the arts thus can be seen much clearer as one not related to non-western, non-white audiences having a lack of engagement, but rather that a systemic, ingrained whiteness, and with it an exclusionary funding practice makes cultural engagement that does not conform to this less likely to be counted or eligible for funding or visible in any metrics. Shifting the conversation about what cultural engagements exist within various communities leads to a more honest debate around arts and cultural engagement. Its redefining of the concepts of arts, audiences, and art events – I would suggest – has the potential to neutralise the 'whiteness' and structural exclusionary practices that our art sectors, and with it our art schools, have exhibited for more than 100 years.
It thus attends to issues around coloniality and whiteness in the academy.

And even whilst writing the above sentence, I am conscious of the whisps of my own thinking processes wanting to justify my own research area. And although passionately believing that the concepts around Culture 3.0 have the potential to push forward solutions for an increasingly just, fair and sustainable society, I still feel out of my comfort zone. It feels like "white defensiveness" or as Sheila Trahar writes, it feels like I should also be asking if "I am simply indulging white guilt rather than disrupting, actively, my whiteness and the whiteness that continues to pervade the academy."[12]

And this feeling of dealing with an issue, that I personally simply do not have sufficient lived expertise in, is exacerbated by a frustration with the inability of our own universities to make – what I would consider – significant progress in this area. We all know our institutions exhibit an institutional 'whiteness', but we continue to wring our hands without (from my personal perspective) substantive commitment to really affect change. We fiddle around the edges, justify progress through statistics, and laude minor incremental improvements, and continually reaffirm pervasive meritocratic systems we were taught to believe in.

But sometimes, some institutions and policymakers surprise us, and progress is suddenly made in gigantic steps, as apparent in several US universities when creating high-profile fellowships eligible for minority community members only.

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[11] Davids, 'Decolonisation and the Risks of Exception in South African Higher Education'.
[12] Trahar, 'Attempts to Disrupt Whiteness in the Academy: An Autoethnographic Exploration'.

This structural step-change shift can be challenging for everyone concerned. I am reminded of the UK Arts Council (E&W) development of its inspiring, courageous and (to me) laudable Let's Create 10-year strategy that I find maps so well to Culture 3.0, and thus yes (!) it shifts its own institutional 50-year-long direction from focussing on excellence, quality art and top artists to the processes of making art in communities. To me, this is a shift from predominantly supporting Culture 1.0 to a more balanced inclusion of Culture 3.0.

But in the end, when this led to funding cuts to institutions (move investment out of London, move investment from large, established cultural organisations to smaller, less established ones situated more within communities), a public backlash forced it to make adjustments, giving the largest single pots of funding again to Culture 1.0 actors in the sector.[13] Even whilst this institution, ACE, was trying to push forward into a more equitable and fairer future, society, in its existential desire to maintain stability, can exhibit movements to push those institutions back into a comfy status quo, as these recent 2023 debates about the Arts Council's progressive and courageous plan to substantially reduce the London-based funding of English National Opera have demonstrated. And, of course, there are individual livelihoods impacted by each of these kinds of decisions, which makes a move to a more equitable distribution of limited resources always very challenging.

So, a journey towards fewer inequities and less power differential is never smooth sailing. Passionate about our collective, culturally rich, and socially just environmental futures, there have been quite a few moments for me where in the past few years, I have literally started to rip my hair and bang my head. But I have debated with myself and come to terms with why it is that many steps forward are often followed by not much fewer steps backwards; why do we get a Trump after an Obama, a Brexit after a Creative Industry Policy of the Blair Government, a 'no boats' policy after a period of rapid globalisation, and why social progress is so hard to achieve and the answer – for me at least – is simple, and very basic. But I am not sure if it is fair or just.

We are humans.

Nurran Davids expresses this in her article so much better than I when she says, "Decolonisation commences from the point of rehabilitation and

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13 Nicholas Hytner, 'The Arts in Britain Are Teetering on the Brink. Here Is My Plan to Save Them', *The Guardian*, 17 May 2023, sec. Opinion, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/may/17/arts-council-britain-plan-save-new-body; Jonathan Sumption, 'The Arts Council Is Doing Its Very Best to Destroy English Opera'. *The Telegraph*, 5 June 2023. https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/06/05/arts-council-doing-its-very-best-to-destroy-eno/.

healing, a rearrangement of spatial relations, which holds the potential for a democratisation of access and participation …. Decolonisation holds the potential for creating a different kind of world – one which holds no regard for hegemonies and centres and is attuned to what it means to be human and to act with humanity."[14]

We navigate our social constructs with care to not undermine a carefully grafted set of institutions, beliefs and values that hold our social structures together. And this is an act of carefully balancing social progress with stability. And when our stable institutions are found wanting, when they exhibit exclusionary practices, we push to move them into a more just future. But uneven progress often creates pressure points or crises. And when there are crisis points, this push can result in moments of quick change, or even revolution, when stability – for a moment – is lost and change or progress takes precedence. But the pendulum might swing back to retain stability and emotional safety.

But more often than not, the change or progress is rather slow and incremental, as it safeguards us from those more extreme swings or revolutions. And this stability underpins our social, institutional fabric on which we all rely on daily. And this is particularly true in the key anchor institutions of our social existence, the government, the law, the media, and the universities. It is a double bind, but one which is essentially human and essentially preserves a stable environment in which humanity inhabits its spaces.

Social progress thus often does not come without crisis points, and we have seen substantial shifts in our institutions, pushed by society pressuring to move forward with social justice campaigns, fighting against oppression, exclusion and exploitation, from #metoo, #blacklivematters, to smaller communities pushing for what is fair, such as the music industries' #BrokenRecord campaign. And one of the biggest recent crisis moments for the Western World, and one not yet over, is arguably the Russian invasion of Ukraine; it also raised awareness of how 'whiteness' even pervaded the treatment of this crisis. As Manel Herath points out in this special issue, "the flexibility demonstrated here by European countries in welcoming refugees and making their residence easier is noticeably in marked contrast to the treatment bestowed on Syrian, Afghan, Middle Eastern, South American and North African refugees, who were fleeing previous violent conflicts even more severe than the Russian-Ukrainian war when there was much hostility from some European countries to accepting refugees."[15]

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[14] Davids, 'Decolonisation and the Risks of Exception in South African Higher Education'.
[15] Herath, 'Ukrainian Refugees: (Un)Deservingness and the Politics of Exclusion'.

This is unjust, but crises like these I cannot help but see also as points of departure. I can see that these discourses in publicly available media are already shifting and raising awareness of the need for similar solutions for both the Ukrainian and the Syrian refugee crises, and polling suggests that the public is far more welcoming to refugees in general than the government and the tabloid media would suggest. Public opinion has already shifted, and it is to be seen if this will result in a new political reality at the next general election or if some moments of crises create new pressure points to affect change.

But it is food for thought to consider how pervasive entrenched coloniality and whiteness are, with Herath demonstrating that their findings "reveal that Europe typically imagines refugees from colonial lenses, constructing deficit identities".

The notion of deficit identified here is significant, and in my talks with Thushari I am only slowly beginning to understand how the concept of EDI can be seen as working only in a deficit mode. The concept of diversity, as understood within EDI, is defined as a state or quality of being different or varied (Collins English Dictionary), thus putting the focus on the person or entity that is different from a seemingly common norm, potentially asking them to shift in behaviour or being 'supported' in 'adapting'. However, 'whiteness' shifts the focus on the structure, the institution, that exhibits certain characteristics that exclude or disadvantage specific individuals. The focus is on the whole structure/institution to change or adapt.

And this causes tensions, as this needs to be built on a conscious and explicit knowledge of how and where 'whiteness' in our institutions pervades and endures, despite and sometimes because of institutional EDI efforts. EDI might create some form of stability at a time of crisis, but it also has the ability to hide how 'whiteness' has embedded itself in our processes, ways of working, and ways of thinking.

So tensions and conflict and points of crises are something to be welcomed, disrupting our comfortable perceptions of the world and our institutions within it. For our knowledge institutions, it is a similar journey full of tension points, progress and retraction to seemingly safe harbours. The way we imagine typical academic concepts, embedded with an inherent 'whiteness', informs how we support or judge our learners, researchers and academic communities.

So it is only now, only after I have accompanied various communities debating the issues of coloniality and whiteness in the academy, that I find myself often sitting in a committee and raising the issue about 'whiteness'. When sitting on a promotional academic committees, I find myself questioning evaluators' comments when it is suggested that the applicant lacks focus, as I now question a particular view on what good science, or good research,

or a good career looks like. For instance, is good science only that kind of science that, over 20 years, develops deep but generally mono-disciplinary insights? And that in a time when we have accepted that the greatest challenges to humankind are of interdisciplinary nature? This priority of deep mono-disciplinarity over broad interdisciplinarity is something I have written about.[16] But I have seldom linked it to coloniality or 'whiteness'.

But in my experience, I happen to know more female academics who have broader interdisciplinary expertise, and I happen to know more men who have deep mono-disciplinary expertise. I only recently started to wonder if that is also to do with the privileged positions that men more often inhabit than women. Women often need to be more agile in their academic career journeys, as due to childcare arrangements, carer responsibilities, and caretaker roles in professional positions, their careers are potentially more fragmented, and I wonder if statistics might evidence if they are often afforded to move around jobs more often than men. And add to this the intersectionality of non-white, non-European academic identities, which come with different ways of communicating, presenting, learning and structuring their knowledge, I find it consequently follows that the areas of attack within a recruitment or promotion process are potentially more plentiful. More plentiful, at least, than for those academic communities which feel comfortable in a mainstream, predominantly mono-disciplinary, linear research, classic scholarly output, traditional research council-funded model.

It is so easy to tick those boxes in a promotional form when the boxes have been created within a 'whiteness' informed system, and the candidates often are afforded to conform to this 'whiteness' (no matter their cultural origin). But the one thing we might want to ask is if that is the kind of academic practice that we need for society rather than a kind of practice that is perceived to be the 'right' one, judged by criteria established at a time where the work of academia was predominantly wite and male.

Moving back into my field of expertise, that of arts and culture, it comes back to the same process of how we define and question our established concepts. We continually need to ask who gets to say what 'art' is, and who gets to say what excellent art looks like. As in the cultural field, we need to ask in academia: who gets to say and define what excellent research or teaching looks like?

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[16] Carola Boehm, 'The Thing about the Quotes: ?Music Technology? Degrees in Britain', in *Proceedings of the International Computer Music Conference, New Orleans* (New Orleans: International Computer Music Association, 2005), http://eprints.staffs.ac.uk/5064/.

Why Is It That When Hearing 'Coloniality', My Mind Snaps to EDI?

As a person seeing the glass always half full, I am keenly aware that what depresses me (and most others) most is entrenched and systemic injustices that are difficult to shift. And I am very much aware that I attend to this topic from an already privileged position. And from the above chapter, it probably is easy to tell that I often fall into discussions of EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion), whereas our focus within these discussions should be on coloniality and whiteness.

This divergence has reoccurred through two years of us debating and exploring this subject matter, and it continues in this editorial perspective; me in a discourse with myself but bouncing off some of the conversations I remember from this journey and all of the articles in this special issue. My mind simply too often snaps to diversity, seemingly not wanting to deal with 'whiteness'.

Valcke et al. warn of this conflation, specifically in the HE sectors. "It must be noted that there is a risk that HEIs may conflate decolonisation efforts with Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity initiatives due to the assumption that they are interchangeable or that one necessarily leads to the other."[17] Valcke sees EDI as being a process on the surface level and risks ignoring or addressing "deeper power dynamics and structures that perpetuate systemic inequality".

And although I agree with the necessity of addressing deeper power differentials in our HEIs, I am not sure EDI is enacted always only at surface level, and that decolonisation is not. Having seen many university efforts where curriculum decolonisation is seen as the easy solution to the current social challenges, I think both concepts, EDI and decolonisation, can happen at merely surface levels, or both can happen with a much more deeper systemic change that affects power structures.

There is a bit of a terminological quagmire, with some concepts having been defined precisely and others not so. For instance, coloniality and colonisation should not be considered the same. In Thushari's definitions, building upon Madonado-Torres (2007):

> *Colonialism* denotes a political and economic relation in which the sovereign of a nation or a people rests on the power of another nation, which makes such nation an empire.

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[17] Valcke, 'Global Health and Decolonisation in Higher Education: Examining the Attitudes, Perceptions and Possibilities of Educators'.

> *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.

Thus, and this is the pernicious part of this nuanced difference, and as Thusharwi writes, coloniality survives colonialism. Whiteness is thus not an aspect of being white but still enacting power structures, practices and identities that have been formed as part of white-dominating colonialism. And this dominating power can be so entrenched in our institutions, our cultures, and our sense of selves that 'whiteness' can long endure beyond and without white power.

In our discussions, though, I often snapped back and relate to examples around diversity issues. I, for instance, compared the perniciousness of long-lasting whiteness in our institutions with the perniciousness of endurance of male leadership traits. The academic discourses on feministic leadership meander a similar path that non-males often feel that they have to embed male leadership qualities to succeed in a male-conceptualised world. Although not comparable with the pain and suffering of racial minorities under severe oppression, this was the simile my mind snapped to. I thus asked if not coloniality and whiteness are not phenomena that represent the extremes or at least a category of diversity issues that we humans have to deal with.

And it always struck me how vehemently this was batted down, that EDI is so very different from coloniality and whiteness. And trying to understand Thushari's words correctly, I can still not help seeing the difference as largely one of intensity. If an EDI crisis is a single storm, then coloniality is the hurricane that drowns ships, that kills people, that obliterates cultures and continues to do so.

So from my safe (and yes, white) harbour, I mentally watch this debate as one of experiencing pain from the continuing might of a white oppressor culture and all that it results in, calling for a reaction that represents that scale of that pain. Our discourses around coloniality thus contained words that denoted this scale of this pain, such as 'neocolonialism plot', 'cultural paralyses', 'politics of despair', 'trapping and silencing us', with experiencing 'identity destruction' and 'epistemic violence'.

And in our community's frank discussions, when debating the differences between EDI and 'whiteness', I often witnessed scholars listing various imperial atrocities that had happened or that were still being enacted, and this difference of category was perceived as a difference in the ontology. Coloniality was perceived to be a different category by those who experienced its detrimental effects of it, whereas I perceived it as a matter of scale and intensity,

having not or rarely experienced it explicitly. There was a difference in our perception of how similar or how different these concepts, in effect, were.

But being aware of my own thinking continually snapping from concepts of coloniality to concepts of diversity, I was beginning to understand why my own cognitive processes seem to need this EDI hook.

It was in my ever-so-human desire to relate to others, enacting a process of searching for ways of relating to experiences that were outside of my scope to experience. From Tushari's point of view, I was making a category error; from mine, it was a matter of scale.

I have never experienced racial injustice on my self. But as a white woman, what I have experienced is ongoing, ever-present, never-stopping gender-related injustices. It is ever-present, like white noise in the background, in every place I inhabit or every hour I live. My trajectory as an academic has been affected by it; my self-worth has been shaped by it. And like constant white noise that is endured and fades into the background, the gendered disadvantages that I, as a female academic, endure are seldom at the forefront of my thinking. They are always there, and one finds strategies to deal with them. But one accepts them as part of the daily lives of an academic, not necessarily attaching them to my female-ness.

However, that is not to say that they do not have an effect. Like white noise creates a constant pressure point on your senses, providing a constant level of distraction, continually experiencing biases also provides a constant slow disadvantaging process that adds up over the lifetime of a career. Not noticeable in the early career stage, where female and male academics often demonstrate similar salaries or career trajectories, but by the time you get to a professor or senior management, it all has added up to a substantial disadvantage, making – in my opinion – merit-based performance systems simply unfair and unjust.

This, I have indeed experienced.

Yes, as a white academic I am privileged. But if I were able to pinpoint the right statistics, would I not likely find that, as a female academic, I have moved institutions more than the average male academic? Would I not find that, as an active female researcher, I have received my professorship later than comparable average male researcher? I would probably also find that, as a senior female leader, I have taken on more 'caretaking' managerial roles as a researching academic than the average male researcher. And as a consequence, I would probably find that I, like many female researchers, have a research portfolio featuring more broader interdisciplinarity, whereas my male equivalents likely feature more, deeper, focussed mono-disciplinarity (and yes, there is also a university class system at play between research-intensive

and teaching-intensive institutions, which I will ignore here). I don't have statistics to prove this (and why do we not collect these), but my professional experience provides me with substantial circumstantial evidence that this is likely to be the case. Having been an Associate Dean for Students at two different institutions, both had more females in this post than males. Having chaired institutional research committees in various institutions, most have been chaired by men. Going to conferences, I have seen more research carried out by male academics being deeper and more female research being broader.

This all adds up.

But this is EDI, not coloniality.

However.

Here is the thing.

And this will be controversial.

Is it not the same human trait that causes us to even have 'whiteness' in the academy, as the trait that causes us to have 'maleness' in the academy? Is it not the same long-standing constructions of norms, concepts and institutional structures from a time in which a largely privileged male leadership shaped – and continues now to shape – the institutions we are still inhabiting today?

We, humans, shape our institutions to our needs and in our image. This happens in communities and societies, and when these communities and societies change in their shape and make-up, we begin to notice that the institutions are failing to serve us as they feel they are not shaped like us.

Where 'whiteness' and 'coloniality' differ from this is in their attachment to the historic and modern brutality of colonialism, a scale seldom comparable to the historic and modern misogyny.

But it should never, ever be an argument of #BlackLivesMatter trumping #MeToo.

Being someone who often desires to see the big picture, the big solutions, I cannot help but come back to the issue of who holds power and what the structural solutions are that might enable us to distribute voice and power.

And this is where my concept of University 3.0 comes in.

University 3.0, High Individualism, Higher Education and Coloniality

There is a shift already beginning to emerge in how our higher education institutions facilitate learning within their learning communities. So to understand this trajectory over the last two to three decades and to be able to

imagine a university future that is able to adapt to contemporary challenges on structural, pedagogical, technological and social levels, I have started to use a conceptualisation of an evolutionary journey from University 1.0 to University 3.0.[18]

> In this conceptualisation, "*University 1.0* represents more predominantly those periods and institutional cultures associated with an inherent perception of 'knowledge ownership', including, for instance, modern aspects of institutionally owned IP and copyright. This 'knowledge patronage' model influences how content is managed, taught, protected and produced. Typical teaching practices include processes that represent a knowledge exchange from those employed within the institution to those who don't (such as large lectures)."[19]
>
> University 2.0 moved into the era of massification of Higher Education, characterised by expanding and fragmenting knowledge domains[20] and the use of metrics to personalise mass-produced and marketed learner products. Like a box of assorted chocolates, we were able to personalise through learner analytics to the extent that learners felt they received what they needed whilst experiencing a 'mass-produced' service. We see the emergence of quality assurance products (e.g. validations); standardisation of content (e.g. QAA benchmark statements); and concepts around students as consumers and universities as businesses. But a key aspect remains – that knowledge is central. We academics were (and still are) curating the knowledge for our learners as we navigated these fragmented fields of content, the fragmentation of knowledge resulting out of expanding knowledge fields. That is to say that knowledge had become expanded to such an extent that deep knowledge domains increasingly appeared as unconnected fragments within larger subject areas. This fragmentation is what Sperber[21] reconceptualised as 'brittleness', and consideration of how to connect these domains took on a new momentum with an increase of scholarly work and practices into interdisciplinarity in Higher Education. With this fragmentation comes the debate of value, e.g. University 2.0 conceptual models have an inherent friction between knowledge depth and knowledge breadth, the transactional purpose of knowledge/skills vs the basic need of humans to pursue a better understanding of our role in the world.[22]

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[18] Carola Boehm, 'Environment Trumps Content: University in the Knowledge Society', *Wonkhe* (blog), 2019, https://wonkhe.com/blogs/what-is-of-value-in-our-universities/.

[19] Boehm, *Arts and Academia*.

[20] Carola Boehm, 'A Brittle Discipline: Music Technology and Third Culture Thinking', in *Proceedings of the Sempre MET2014: Researching Music, Education, Technology: Critical Insights*, ed. Evangelous Himonides and Andrew King (London: International Music Education Research Centre [iMerc], 2014), 51–54, http://www.sempre.org.uk/conferences/past-sempre-conferences/42-researching-music-technology-in-education.

[21] D. Sperber, 'Why Rethink Interdisciplinarity?' *Rethinking Interdisciplinarity*, interdisciplines, no. Journal Article (2005).

[22] Boehm, *Arts and Academia*.

University 2.0 models have the same pressures that all highly marketised, highly neo-liberal associated economic systems have; they tend to be divisive and exaggerate inequalities within the institution itself, but also in the sector. It creates increased and sometimes excessive stratification. Thus, Oxford and Cambridge are Universities with a richness beyond the usual academic imagination. On the opposite end, many new universities struggle to cope with fluctuating student numbers and, therefore, incomes. The system has been increasingly destabilised by various HE reforms to make the 'market' more competitive.

However, and this is where I do get excited, I would suggest that many HE professionals and academic staff already feel that we are now entering an era of University 3.0 (see Table below) without being able to label it as such. This is often not well understood by current policymakers, who seem to still have an image of the university from the time they received their degree 30–40 years ago.

University 1.0	
	•Owners of knowledge •Focus on knowledge
Universities 2.0	
	•Curators of the knowledge, teachers and researchers as professions •Mass higher education, mass products •QAA products, standardisation, students as consumers, CMA, etc •Linear research to commercialisation routes
Universities 3.0	
	•Facilitator of learning •Curators of interfaces between knowledge and society •Developers of environments where learning happens

In University 3.0, education is becoming more of a process of curation of interfaces between knowledge and society. In this, the quality of a learning environment is becoming more important than specified and static learning content. Permeability of the university system is more important, and learners and researchers more often co-own, co-produce and co-create.

And co-creation of knowledge production becomes really important in University 3.0, as this learning environment more readily and structurally facilitates that learners coming into this environment, and being at different levels of their subject learning, can learn from each other as they progress to the next stage of knowledge. Different levels of learners thus move in parallel

but learn from each other, vertically as well as horizontally, but using this environment to progress.

It is similar to the environment that Valcke sketched out for her Global Health-related article: "In this space, educators must create an environment conducive to creative abrasion of hierarchies and power structures. Learners must be able to question and be challenged by their learning in an environment favourable to the co-creation of possible futures."[23]

In University 3.0, we position various interfaces between different levels of learners, different types of communities and different disciplines. This careful positioning is a process of curating interfaces, with the facilitation of learning being at the heart of this process rather than the acquisition of specific knowledge content itself. And this gives the opportunity to deal with traditional academic power structures and processes for addressing exclusionary processes or decolonisation. Because in this learning environment, where we all have the same role of bringing in our knowledge and expertise, we can support more effectively the process of decolonisation by, again, in Valcke's words, "recognising and valuing the multiple ways in which people experience and understand the world."[24]

The University 3.0 classroom thus becomes that environment to explore new epistemologies, ontologies, and methodologies.

Partnerships are key for this type of university learning.[25] The design of environments as permeable partnership ecosystems is necessary, and as we can see from Table 1, future-oriented study practices are already demonstrably adapting to this new learning environment. The importance – and challenges – of partnership-rich learning ecosystems feeding into forward-looking sustainable learning environments foregrounds the need and current trajectories within higher education to move away from 'content' to 'environment'.

With the focus away from content patronage, it becomes more agile and flexible to handle different truths, different perceived valued knowledge, and different categories of knowing. We see that our pedagogical concepts have largely already moved to accommodate this agility, as can be seen in Table 1.

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[23] Valcke, 'Global Health and Decolonisation in Higher Education: Examining the Attitudes, Perceptions and Possibilities of Educators'.

[24] Valcke.

[25] Carola Boehm, 'Academia in Culture 3.0: A Crime Story of Death and Birth (but Also of Curation, Innovation and Sector Mash-Ups)', *REPERTARIO: Teatro & Danca* 19, no. 2 (2016): 37–48.

Table 1. Common concepts displaying characteristics of a University 3.0

Well-known educational concepts	
	Problem-based learning
	Work-based learning
	Collaborative learning
	Peer learning
	Personalised learning
	Socially constructed Learning
	Authentic/work-based learning
	Inquiry/research-based learning
Increasingly commonly used concepts.	
	Grand challenge-led learning
	(Simulated +) real-life learning
	Experiential learning
	Community learning
	Radical learning
Still considered new….	
	Flipped classroom
	Just in time learning
	Phenomenon-based learning
	Live briefs

And it strikes me that many of the above pedagogical concepts fit in with Hans Schilderman's re-conceptualisation of the wandering scholar. And his article, with his focus on reclaiming an ecology of study, is very similar conceptualisation of the act of learning as is within my University 3.0 conceptualisation.

As he states that actual knowledge is the problem, as knowledge content is subject to coloniality (Schildermans), University 3.0 learning environments are not in danger of being trapped in this fallacy, having solidly moved away from knowledge ownership (University 1.0), and also safely from knowledge curation (University 2.0), but moving towards centring not knowledge, but the learning environment in which knowledge is brought in from all learners that come with their own lived expertise and sources of knowledge. It neutralises the dominance of a university that is– in Schildermans words – "a knowledge producer and knowledge proclaimer" to "an ecology of study that gives shape to a plurality of worlds."[26]

His reclamation of a "university as an ecology of study, (…) shifting the focus from the knowledge being produced at universities to the practices of

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[26] Schildermans, 'Resisting the Ecology of Knowledges, Reclaiming an Ecology of Study. Some Notes on Decolonization in Higher Education'.

study that happen within universities" maps so easily to the University 3.0 concepts, which affords us to focus on the learning environment.

And with that focus on the process of learning, the focus on the ecology of study, or the focus on the learning environment where we all equally bring in various knowledges to allow learners to meet, mind to mind, perspective to perspective, experience to experience, with all that comes a co-creation process of this environment which levels power and gives voice.

And co-creation of knowledge here is not only empowering, but it is also essential. In the words of Schildermans, "study, in this sense, is never the achievement of an individual – whether it be a professional or a critical one – but it is always a collective endeavour." With it, it is able "to undermine the hegemonic role of the Western idea of knowledge to give way to a variety of different ways of knowing that were disparaged as belief, opinion, or superstition before."[27]

Conclusion

So we come to an interim point in our journey as learners, as scholars, as individuals and collective communities. But from my own personal perspective from the world of higher education, what is happening in our so very human evolution at this moment, is that we are seeing two trajectories that push forward and sometimes clash with concepts around whiteness, race, gender and diversity.

One trajectory is that we are beginning to understand ourselves more as collaborating, co-creative beings, moving away from understanding that freedom and equal power distribution is not only attached to high individualism but needs to be fostered by a high amount of collectivity, and collective perceptions of selves. This happens as much in our art schools[28] as it does outside of our boundaries. This is part of the Culture 3.0 narrative, with its emphasis on co-creation and co-production.

The other trajectory is that we understand that knowledge cannot remain central to our learning institutions. If we want our universities to be a force for good for everyone, the centring of knowledge as a tangible thing allows there to be knowledge owners and thus always has a tendency to exclude. So focusing on the process of learning, or the environments in which learning

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[27] Schildermans.

[28] Carola Boehm, 'Collective and Individual Identities in an Era of Cultural Co-Creation', *Studies on the Value of Cultural Heritage* (Il Capitale Culturale) 14 (1 January 2023), https://riviste.unimc.it/index.php/cap-cult/article/view/3140.

happens, as in a University 3.0 conceptualisation of the academy, I find is crucial for ensuring that our universities are supporting the transformation of our societies and allowing individuals to engage without detrimental power differentials.

As scholars, we have transformed ourselves, from being owners of knowledge (Uni 1.0) to curators of knowledge situated within an expanding and increasingly fragmented set of multi- and interdisciplinary knowledge fields (Uni 2.0). But as our knowledge society really took off, with its open platforms, its digital connectivity and its mass distribution without mediators, the focus increasingly shifted to our learning environments (University 3.0), our processes of learning, and our study practices.

With that, it levels all sorts of playing fields, and from my perspective, which might be a white one, but a perspective that I hope is continually in the process of shrinking its 'whiteness', it is likely to allow us to make explicit power differentials and neutralise them. It holds the potential for a democratisation of access and participation, and "for creating a different kind of world – one which holds no regard for hegemonies and centres and is attuned to what it means to be human and to act with humanity", as Nurran Davids calls for in this issue. It minimises "gatekeepers to authoritative forms of knowledge", as Gerry Dunne does. And it provides an environment that allows much more easily than the present structures do, for us all to "unlearn and relearn", "deconstruct personal biases", and "partner with students", as Valcke writes.

It features, I would suggest, something that Trahar highlights, and that is so elementary, but so important: allowing the crucial elements of humanness and interconnectedness to influence any learning.

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