18 BRIDGES
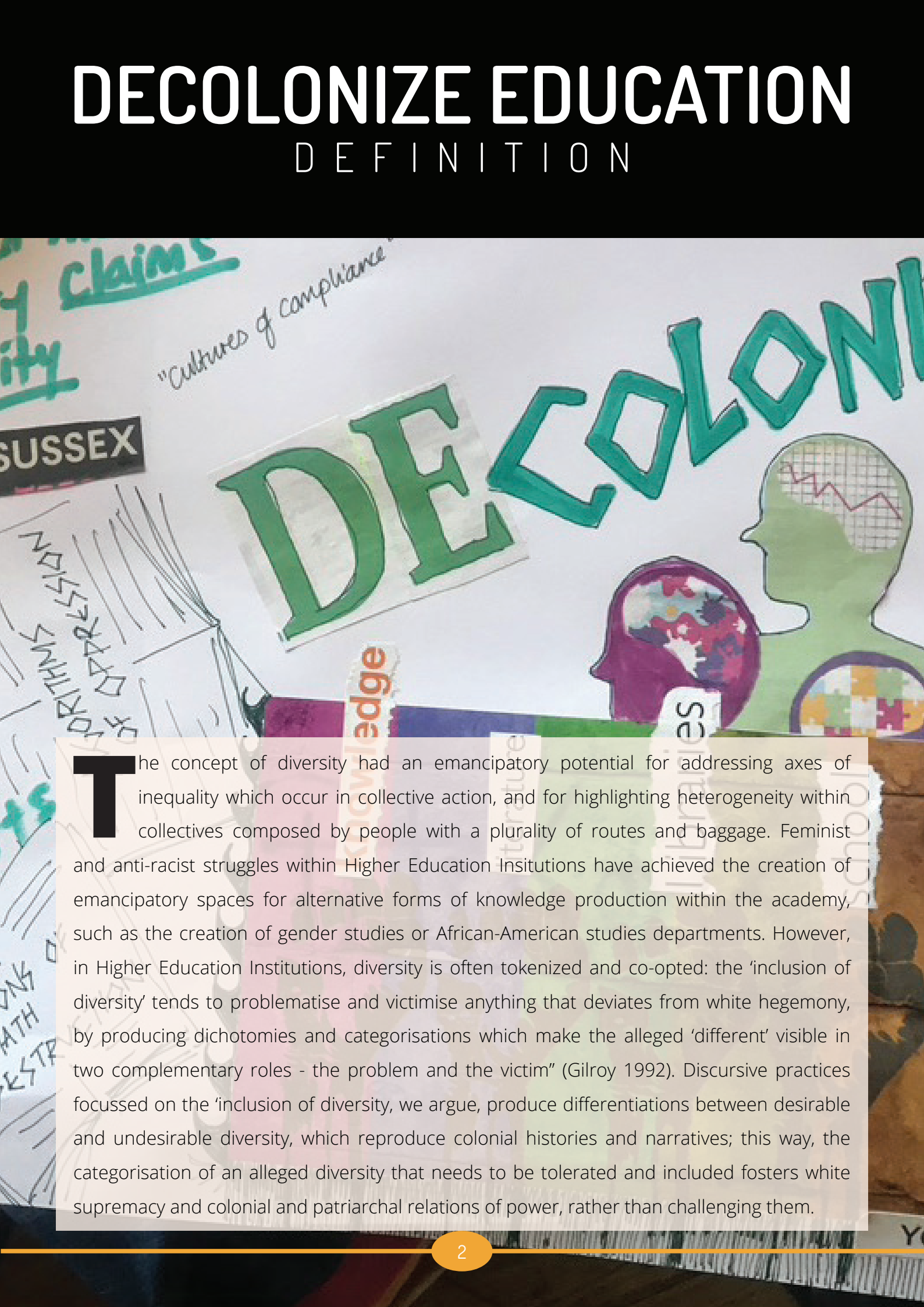
A **toolkit** for **diversifying knowledge** and **tackling discrimination** through **civil society participation** in universities.

DECOLONIZE

EDUCATION

DECOLONIZE EDUCATION
D E F I N I T I O N

The concept of diversity had an emancipatory potential for addressing axes of inequality which occur in collective action, and for highlighting heterogeneity within collectives composed by people with a plurality of routes and baggage. Feminist and anti-racist struggles within Higher Education Insitutions have achieved the creation of emancipatory spaces for alternative forms of knowledge production within the academy, such as the creation of gender studies or African-American studies departments. However, in Higher Education Institutions, diversity is often tokenized and co-opted: the 'inclusion of diversity' tends to problematise and victimise anything that deviates from white hegemony, by producing dichotomies and categorisations which make the alleged 'different' visible in two complementary roles - the problem and the victim" (Gilroy 1992). Discursive practices focussed on the 'inclusion of diversity, we argue, produce differentiations between desirable and undesirable diversity, which reproduce colonial histories and narratives; this way, the categorisation of an alleged diversity that needs to be tolerated and included fosters white supremacy and colonial and patriarchal relations of power, rather than challenging them.

DECOLONIZE EDUCATION
E L A B O R A T I O N

People of coulour and with a migration background continue to experience racial discrimination and exclusion in the context of education. Whilst Higher Education (HE) curricula and pedagogies often reproduce discrimination, they also have the potential to promote anti-racist practices. To do so, they need to review curricula to reflect diverse histories, achievements, and experiences of social groups subject to discrimination (Modood et al. 1999: 57).

Spain

In Spain, ethnic diversity has been primarily associated with the migrant population. Mainly due to the widespread discourse of racial homogeneity of the Spanish population. Ethnic minorities (for example Roma people) or non-white Spaniards are often absent when discrimination issues are discussed at the institutional level. In Higher Education Institutions there is little awareness about ethnic, cultural, or racial discrimination, and anti-discrimination policies are absent. Since 2015, responding to social alarm related to the so-called "refugee crisis" some projects have been implemented. For example, to give bureaucratic, social and academic support to refugees who were already university staff or students in their origin country. Currently, some researchers and Non Governmental Organisations are developing specific initiatives in this area. Nevertheless, a systematic and profound undertaking of racial, ethnic, and cultural discrimination remains a long term goal.

Greece

In Greece, Higher Education is public, and there are no tuition fees at the undergraduate level which, in theory, makes it universally accessible (Master's programs charge tuition, while doctoral programmes do not). Yet, the curriculum is overwhelmingly taught in Greek, and there is no infrastructure to integrate international students (except Erasmus exchanges) in degree programmes. University classrooms tend to be presumptively linguistically and ethno-culturally

homogeneous and suppressive of diversity of all kinds, including sexual and gender diversity. There appear to be no provisions for accommodations to eliminate barriers for students with disabilities. Despite numerous incidents of sexual harassment and sexual assault within universities, there have been to date no institutional initiatives to address gendered violence nor has a reporting mechanism been put in place (see Alldred & Phipps, 2018: 7, 29, 44). It is worth noting that the Greek state is not secular, and that HEI fall under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Religion. Students from minoritised ethnic groups (such as Afro-Greeks, Roma, Albanians, Syrians, Armenians, and other longstanding communities) face significant and often insurmountable barriers to higher education, given precarious legal status and widespread institutional and interpersonal racism. In the aftermath of the so-called "refugee crisis" (in 2015-2016) the integration of students with migration backgrounds and particularly those who experienced forced displacement gained a new urgency. Given all this, much of the nuanced discussion in this introduction concerning the co-optation and depoliticisation of "diversity and inclusion" by/in HEI and its harnessing to institutional aims does not emerge from or apply directly to the Greek context, wherein institutions remain aggressively monocultural, hostile to diversity of all kinds, and ideologically reproduce the dominant ethnocultural and religious group (which is presumptively heterosexual and cisgender).

Germany

In 2012 only 6% of total professorial positions in Germany had migration biographies (while that same year, the population with migration biographies was 20%, BAMF 2012: 135), and 80% of that percentage were white Europeans and 43% either Swiss or Austrians (Gutiérrez 2016: 170). While the first figure proves a predominance of cultural and racial whiteness, the latter points to language as a possible tool for selecting the educational elite. Higher education in Germany is still shaped deeply by postcolonial dynamics of inclusion and exclusion, as "universities reflect the inherent social inequalities within the nation state [and are] privileged sites for the reproduction of White national elites", fostering homogenization and assimilation (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2016: 168; Thompson and Zablotsky 2016: 82). In German higher education there prevails a paradox, contradictory discourse, that on the one hand reproduces a rhetoric of diversity, while at the other hand silences both those forms of institutionalized violence as well as those persons who are affected by this violence (Thompson and Zablotsky 2016: 89). The German HEI thus applies a double-standard that is invisible to majority society. Diversity policies to increase BPOC and migrant access to university in Germany are inserted in a neoliberal paradigm that works along racialized, gendered, and economic inequalities and through self-profiling and self-capitalization. In fact, in most German universities there are no institutional resources for students, faculty staff,

administrative and service staff who are confronted with racist, queer- and/or trans*-phobic forms of violence. Instead, German universities tend to reproduce themselves as mono-lingual, -cultural, -ethnic and -racial entities" (Xian & Yi, 2011, in Gutiérrez 2016: 174).

UK

In the UK,'Diversity and Equality Charts' have been put in place in order to address racism and discrimination. These are important milestones to achieve social, cultural and political transformations. However, British universities remain key sites for the production and reproduction of colonial knowledge, and they form part of a continuum of the hostile environments against migration and ethnic minorities. Only only 0.6% of UK professors are black: the lack of Black teachers and the Euro-centric perspectives thought in the curriculum make HE education unattractive in the first place or, for many, lead to the desire to leave this hostile environment and to withdraw from their studies. Moreover, Higher Education employees must comply with border control measures to report anomalies in migrant students' attendance to the Home Office, and those migrant students who have a low attendance record are at risk of deportation. HE employees also have to monitor and report students considered at risk of radicalisation in line with the counter-terrorism Prevent policies. The 'Prevent duty', introduced in 2015 as part of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act, seeks to prevent and minimes the prolieferation of what the policy defines as 'extremist ideologies', addressed as any form of opposition to fundamental British values. These values are vaguely defined and open their selective interpretation opens the door to multiple forms of repression against anyone who deviates from the UK-centric norm. Turned into border guards and counter-terrorism officers, how can teachers bring anti-racist and anti-discriminatory practices within the classroom? It does not come as a surprise, then, that within this context a large part of Black and ethinc minority students feel that their voice is unheard or unwelcome in the classroom, and that **a quarter of ethnic minorities students in HE institutions have reported racialised attacks in 2019**.

Anti-discrimination policies are necessary but not sufficient (Ahmed, 2012; Tate & Bagguley, 2018; Mirza, 2015). In these policies, discrimination is commonly understood as resulting from the behaviour of individuals. Yet, institutions can indirectly discriminate against groups who have been excluded by design, but not necessarily by intent. The persistence of indirect discrimination in HEI not only affects who has access to HE, but also what is taught, and how (Arday et al. 2020). Accordingly, it is necessary to intervene in HEI to tackle discrimination in its indirect and direct

forms. As Tate and Bagguley have argued, more work is needed "in order to develop a maximal, transformative approach to institutional change, rather than a minimal meeting of legal obligations in those countries where an anti-discrimination framework exists" (2018: 290).

Increasingly, educators within European HEI are asked to design programs that take 'diversity' into account and to produce teaching resources that 'include diversity' and foster equality. This challenge is twofold. On the one hand, there is a growing consensus that educators lack the appropriate training, resources, and time to successfully transform the curriculum or produce anti-racist pedagogies. On the other hand, whilst the notion of diversity has a liberatory potential, it can easily be tokenized, failing to dismantle the ways in which 'theoretical models and Eurocentric histories continue to provide intellectual materials that reproduce and justify colonial hierarchies' (Bhambra et al, 2019: 6).

This toolkit seeks to address these problems by producing tools and suggesting practices to strengthen the competencies of HEI educators, as well as by foregrounding perspectives that emphasise the historical processes underpinning contemporary social exclusions, and the significance of HEI in transforming unequal societies (Gutiérrez Rodríguez, 2018; de Jong et al., 2018; Icaza Garza & Vázquez, 2017). This is done by bringing together epistemic communities both inside and outside the academy. By proposing anti-racist feminist practices, the toolkit seeks to dismantle the assumptions that theory must be derived from a process of abstraction that is detached from everyday struggles (hooks, 2014). Instead, the toolkit fosters processes of reflection and collective analysis on the role of racism, colonialism and discrimination from a feminist decolonial perspective, from the situated experiences within and outside universities.

In the following elaboration, we discuss how the concept of diversity has had an emancipatory potential for addressing axes of inequality which occur in collective action, and for highlighting heterogeneity within collectives composed by people with a plurality of routes and baggage. Feminist and anti-racist struggles within HEI have achieved the creation of emancipatory spaces for alternative forms of knowledge production within the academy, such as the creation of gender studies or African American studies departments. We also discuss how in HEI, diversity is tokenized and co-opted: the 'inclusion of diversity' tends to problematize and victimize anything that deviates from white hegemony, by producing dichotomies and categorisations which make the alleged 'different' visible in two complementary roles - the problem and the victim" (Gilroy 1992). Discursive practices focussed on the 'inclusion of diversity', we argue, produce differentiations between

desirable and undesirable diversity, which reproduce colonial histories and narratives; in this way, the categorisation of an alleged diversity that needs to be tolerated and included fosters white supremacy and colonial and heteropatriarchal relations of power, rather than challenging them (Ahmed 2012).

SOCIAL POLITICAL STRUGGLES AND THE EMANCIPATORY POTENTIAL OF DIVERSITY

HEI in Europe currently play an important role in the construction of the West as liberal, tolerant, and democratic. Establishing diversity and equality goals in universities can be understood as an important element of this process. Nevertheless, critical approaches point to the fact that these goals coexist with processes of assimilation of the university members into the academic power hierarchies, as well as with the perpetuation of institutional and relational racism on a daily basis (Guitérrez, 2016; Hill Collins, 2017).

In managing diversity, institutions contribute to generating and reproducing differences as well as asymmetries. Following Brah (2007), "difference" is systematically produced and organized through economic, cultural, and political discourses as well as through institutionalized practices, a process in which specific power regimes are articulated. Decolonial author María Lugones (2010) argues that contemporary power regimes work following categorial, dichotomic, and hierarchical logic, and that this logic has been central to modern, colonial, and capitalist thinking about race, gender, and sexuality.

In opposition to the "management of diversity", antiracist feminist perspectives depart from recognizing diversity - and the challenges that it entails - in order to build intellectual and political solidarities across differences. This use of 'diversity' differs from the depoliticized aseptic morality often mobilized within European institutions, or as a way to allude to citizen plurality or essentialist identity struggles that omit inequalities, which can imply a weakening as subjects and political actresses to achieve any type of transformation. The dismantling of the idea of a homogenous subject of feminism, articulated around the notion of basic common identity and common ground oppression, has led to a wide range of discussion engaging the articulation between identity, diversity, and politics.

Considering the interlocking character of power regimes, diversity can be useful within socio-political

struggles for addressing axes of inequality which occur in collective action, and for highlighting heterogeneity within collectives, composed by people with a plurality of routes and baggage. In this context, 'diversity' is key to be able to visualize what axes of differentiation occur within and outside the collective, in order not to be the 'colonizers of the colonizer', which Silvia Cusicanqui (2018) addresses as the 'colonial wound'. Nevertheless, to center political action on multiplicity given the specificity of each position, may lead to processes of fragmentation, competition, and disconnection between particularized struggles.

This tension is taken by Heidi Mirza (2015) for whom activism should pay attention to diversity and, at the same time, engage a conscious construction of "sameness". In this context, "sameness" doesn't refer to assuming that oppression experiences are identical nor to a unified universal political project, but to seek a sense of commonality from which to act. This can be illustrated through Sindillar's experience; as Karina Fulladosa-Leal (2017) explains, the Union's political project has explicitly addressed the challenges of creating a common initiative, while taking into account the diversity of participants' situations and the conditions of their participation.

One of the most important contributions in this area is that of Black lesbian feminist Audre Lorde (1980). Her main argument is that difference is a powerful force for politics. Lorde sees difference as an opportunity for generating coalitions. Conjoint action needs the interdependence of different strengths and can also generate powerful feminists connections for struggle and life. This, in turn, forges also personal power. The political force of difference needs investment and commitment, so our task is to use our differences as bridges rather than barriers between us.

Departing from Lorde's work, and going further imagining concrete actions, Suryia Nayak (2020) points to our lack of patterns to relate to human differences as equals. Then, to generate interdependent coalitions and powerful connections from diversity represents a strong challenge. On one side, because it involves interrogating our own privilege and power position and, on the other, because new patterns of relationships across differences must be constructed. Patterns that are needed in order to move beyond superficial social change.

ENCLOSURE OF DIVERSITY WITHIN ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS: COOPTATION OF STRUGGLES

Several interventions within HEI aim at including, empowering, or tolerating 'those of different faiths and beliefs'. However, as academic institutions remain the main sites through which western colonial power imposes a dominant type of knowledge or way of knowing, it is necessary to analyse how the categories of difference are a result of colonial relations of power, a smokescreen by white supremacist institutions to perpetuate visible and invisible racial hierarchies (Quijano 2000, Stoler 2010).

Increasingly, educators within European HEI institutions are required to design programs that take 'diversity' into account and to produce teaching resources that 'include diversity' and foster equality. This process is embedded in a broader attempt to forge a 'European Identity' through economic, social and cultural integration, as well as cultural homogenization. Diversity is here constructed as a source of 'richness' and as a social benefit. Whilst this is seemingly opposed to approaches that address diversity as a threat to European identity, values, and to the 'European way of life', both practices construct a category of 'the different' as a monolithic homogeneous identity and experience.

Feminists of colour have critically engaged with the practices and discourses of diversity within academic institutions, showing how these become tools to tame conflict, rather than to envision radical alternatives. Too often, the language of diversity "bypasses power as well as history to suggest a harmonious empty pluralism" (Mohanty 2003a: 193). This can be observed in institutional attempts to 'add' curriculum materials addressing history and politics in the colonies, or to discuss issues of racial inequality as if they were separate from, rather than intrinsic to, European history, politics, and the construction of whiteness. Used this way, according to Sara Ahmed, "diversity can participate in the creation of an idea of the institution that allows racism and inequalities to be overlooked" (Ahmed 2012, p 13). This serves as liberal narrative to uncritically mask the racist foundation of Europe's educational, social and political infrastructures: namely, including or enclosing an alleged difference rather than undoing the dominant norm.

As critical race scholars argue, "taken for granted claims of race neutrality, color blindness and the discourse of tolerance often hide from view the 'hidden, invisible, forms of racist expressions

and well-established patterns of racist exclusion" (Essed and Nimako 2006: 282). They serve as disciplining tools to tame what has historically been constructed and excluded as the 'other', rather than challenging the way whiteness is constituted through epistemic violence. White innocence, according to Gloria Wekker (2016) and Kelley (2016), is a disciplining technique aimed at managing trauma rather than dismantling structural racism. It silences an incapacity of white students and teachers to acknowledge their own racial position and invisibilises the racialised hierarchies and inequalities in the division of labour within the academy.

By constructing a universal, homogenous oppressed subject and a universal structure of oppression (Mohanty 2003b), practices seeking the inclusion of diversity risk to erase or dismiss the need for in-depth interventions and analysis of the situated and material political and socio-economic relations through which oppression is perpetuated.

Moreover, these approaches are grounded in the assumption of European culture as intrinsically homogenous, that would be enriched by the encounter with diverse cultures. An alleged 'European identity' is continually constructed and homogenised through practices that normalise whiteness and western cultural practices as opposed to 'different cultures', a liberal terminology for addressing the 'racialized other'. As Fatima El-Tayeb argues: "instead of reconceptualizing Europe in order to include them, the unification process creates a narrative that not only continues to exclude racialized minorities but also defines them as the very essence of non-Europeanness in terms that increasingly link migration to supposedly invincible differences of race, culture, and religion." (2011 pp 2-3 of "European Others"). Moreover, we need to take into consideration that Europe is not a unified space; there are layers of uneven cultural, political economic, and hegemonic geographies. The divisions between core/periphery; North/South; East/West; developed/underdeveloped; colonizer/colonized have been exacerbated in the era of multiple crises.

This process of homogenisation through differentiation, is not only between a homogeneous "Europe" and its alleged exterior, but it has occurred within Europe itself by referring to "European" as though it is a unified identity that tracks an undifferentiated socio-spatiality. Here, diversity is clearly constructed as a deviation from a Eurocentric norm. As Gloria Wekker writes: "contemporary constructions of 'us', those constructed as belonging to Europe, and 'them', those constructed as not belonging (…) entail the fundamental impossibility of being both European, constructed to mean being white and Christian, and being black-Muslim-migrant-refugee" (Wekker 2016: 21). Those people and cultural practices pointed out as "diverse" are categorized as others through

processes of differentiation and subalternization. Thus, rather than dismantling the racist and patriarchal foundations of Europe, discursive practices that seek to include diversity reinforce relations of power where whiteness is an 'unmarked category' while "being black, migrant or refugee are marked categories" (Wekker 2016: 69).

This fails to acknowledge existing asymmetries and erases the role of colonialism and imperialism in forging Europe, the multiple forms of appropriation and exploitation on which Europe is built and the legacies of these forms of violence in defining European identity. Therefore, by implementing policies seeking to 'include difference', the neoliberal university tokenizes 'difference', it embeds it into its ordinary operations, and fails to dismantle the ways in which 'theoretical models and Eurocentric histories continue to provide intellectual materials that reproduce and justify colonial hierarchies' (Bhambra et al, 2019: 6). Adding and including diversity as an ingredient to 'enrich' whiteness fails to acknowledge how European knowledge and identity are historically produced, as well as the racialised and gendered forms of violence and silencing, on which it is constituted. White supremacist epistemologies cannot be dismantled by including, by way of compartmentalisation, different identities, thereby reinforcing and essentializing colonial categories and racialised practices (Sharpe 2016, Gebrial 2019).

Instead, what is needed, is an analytical process of deconstruction and disruption that places Europe and its colonial history into one analytical field that centres their entanglements: "because we are all products of a shared colonial history, we are all subjects of the enquiry" (Mackinlay & Barney, 2014, p. 56). Namely, undoing whiteness from the vantage point of the histories and experiences that are being erased, in order to make its epistemic violence visible and tangible. For Europe, this includes making visible the void as a result of historical cleansing. The point is not to enrich existing structures of domination or to make their violence more tolerable. The point is to centre and to make visible the role of colonial violence and erasure embedded in the architecture of European academic institutions. Rather than creating 'safe spaces' for difference to be included, it is necessary to create 'dangerous spaces' for whiteness not to be reproduced.

In the context of neoliberal academia, it is necessary to create cracks in and transform the epistemologies, methodologies, and pedagogical practices through which knowledge is produced as an abstract theory, which is intrinsically based on colonial principles of rationality, universality, and violence. In order to create cracks within these walls, we seek to build bridges between communities of decolonial feminist struggles so as to build alternative epistemological and pedagogical practices.

DECOLONISING EDUCATION: LIBERATING DIVERSITY

"We must be wary of assimilation but not fear cultural Mestizaje. Instead we must become nepantleras and build bridges between all these worlds as we traffic back and forth between them, detribalizing and retribalizing in different and various communities." (Gloria Anzaldúa 2015, 264)

Transforming the curriculum from a decolonial feminist perspective goes far beyond enriching the syllabus by including different perspectives, or adding new resources to a reading list. Rather than including different imaginaries, the aim is to disrupt the colonial imagination, to learn by un-learning the internalised domination of whiteness. This means dismantling the way knowledge production and pedagogical practices perpetuate the white, male, and Eurocentric canon, from an intersectional feminist and decolonial perspective.

Decolonial feminist perspectives do not just problematise race or gender as objects of study. Instead, they address interlocking systems of domination in order to put them in crisis: they entail militant interventions that challenge and dismantle the forms of epistemic violence and ethnocentric normativity inherent in western Universities and academic modes of knowledge production. As Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui has written, "[t]here can be no discourse of decolonization, no theory of decolonization, without a decolonizing practice" (2012: 100).

Decolonising education, therefore, can be done only by taking colonialism, empire, racism, and heteropatriarchy and "resituating these phenomena as key shaping forces of the contemporary world, in a context where their role has been systematically effaced from view" (Bhambra et al, 2019). It can be done by interrogating how colonial relations of power produce forms of knowledge that frame their violence as inevitable and irredeemable (Wanelisa Xaba), as well as challenging pedagogical and research practices that normalise, value, promote and reward whiteness and colonial infrastructures in the classroom, and in the process of knowledge production and transmission. It also means acknowledging that academic language is a vehicle of colonial power, and the ways it perpetuates body-less, emotion-less, un-rooted, abstract pedagogies (de Jong et al 2016).

Decolonising education is an epistemological and pedagogical process that opens the space for uncomfortable, critical, and militant interventions on the practices and discourses that reinforce

and normalise Eurocentric values and and the colonial continuum in knowledge production, acknowledging their constitutive role not only historically but also in the present of European academia: for doing so, decolonisation requires a collective process to reject inclusive pedagogies in favour of pedagogies of discomfort as transformative educational praxis (Motta 2018; Boler & Zembylas 2003). One the one hand, these lead the current infrastructure into a crisis; on the other, they can establish epistemic communities based on collective practices, conversations, and discussions, organised around a politics and ethics of feminist and anti-racist solidarity.

The aim of the toolkit is to elaborate epistemological tools that build theory through praxis, avoiding universalising abstractions, revealing particular and situated historical practices and conditions through which complex relations of colonial and heteropatriarchal power circulate. Through these disobedient epistemological practices (Motta, 2016), this toolkit seeks to produce resources to dismantle the assumptions that theory must be derived from a process of abstraction that is detached from everyday struggles. Instead, it intends to foster processes of reflection and collective analysis originated from the situated experiences within and outside European universities, dismantling divides between object and subject of knowledge, between activism and scholarship.

Despite this effort, it is important to be aware of the strong limitations of BRIDGES and of our toolkit in 'decolonising education' in total. Important open questions that emerge, include whether it is possible to produce liberatory practices created "with the master's tools" (Lorde, 1983) and within the master's house? What becomes of the University once it is decolonised? Is a feminist decolonial praxis possible within these spaces? Aware of the difficulty in answering these questions, we seek to keep them as points of reflection and discussion. Rather than "decolonising education", therefore, the toolkit situates itself within existing attempts to produce resources, activities and materials that challenge the epistemological and pedagogical foundations of HEI.

BRIDGES

This document is part of the BRIDGES Toolkit, a set of tools and strategies for addressing and dismantling structures of exclusion in Higher Education curricula. The Toolkit has been developed in the context of the Erasmus+ project **BRIDGES: Building Inclusive Societies: Diversifying Knowledge and Tackling Discrimination through Civil Society Participation in Universities,** whose working team consists of the following entities:

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