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From Margins to Pluriversality: Refusal, Reconstruction, and Decolonial Futures
Des marges à la pluriversalité : refus, reconstruction et avenirs décoloniaux
De los márgenes a la pluriversalidad: rechazo, reconstrucción y futuros descoloniales

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Résumé de l'article

Nous examinons l'interaction entre la « politique du refus » d'Audra Simpson et le « pluriversalisme » du sous-commandant Marcos, tous deux issus du discours postcolonial sur l'Île aux Tortues, en tant que cadres visant à une gouvernance autodéterminée qui reconnaît authentiquement les savoirs et les modes d'être autochtones. Simpson prône un refus émancipateur d'accepter la reconnaissance de l'État colonisateur, qui marginalise souvent les perspectives autochtones pour les reléguer à un statut « périphérique » ou « déviant » au sein des institutions et des politiques éducatives. En revanche, le pluriversalisme de Marcos, tout en remettant en question la force homogénéisatrice de l'État, promeut un engagement dialogique qui intègre les savoirs mésoaméricains pour enrichir les discours dominants, favorisant la « pensée frontalière » ou « l'épistémologie frontalière ».

Nous proposons que l'approche de Simpson déconstruit les structures hiérarchiques de connaissances dominantes dans l'éducation, tandis que la méthode de Marcos cherche à reconstruire des paradigmes plus inclusifs où diverses épistémologies coexistent sans perpétuer la domination coloniale. Ainsi, notre thèse préconise un processus décolonial en deux étapes avec des implications importantes pour la pratique, la politique et la pédagogie éducatives : (1) mettre en œuvre la politique de refus de Simpson afin de démanteler de manière critique la domination des épistémologies coloniales dans les programmes, les méthodes d'enseignement et les politiques éducatives, en brisant les relations hiérarchiques entre les systèmes de connaissances coloniaux et autochtones, et (2) utiliser l'approche pluriverselle de Marcos afin de reconstruire les paradigmes éducatifs, en favorisant les politiques et les pratiques pédagogiques qui soutiennent la coexistence équitable de différentes épistémologies et ontologies souvent concurrentes. Cette double stratégie a pour but de transformer les systèmes éducatifs en empêchant la perpétuation des déséquilibres coloniaux tout en encourageant un paysage éducatif véritablement inclusif et pluriversel.

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From Margins to Pluriversality: Refusal, Reconstruction, and Decolonial Futures

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Abstract

This document examines the interplay between Audra Simpson's "politics of refusal" and Subcomandante Marcos' "pluriversalism"—both emerging from postcolonial discourse on Turtle Island—as frameworks aiming for self-determined governance that authentically acknowledges Indigenous knowledge(s) and ways of being. Simpson advocates for an emancipatory refusal to accept settler-state recognition, which often marginalises Indigenous perspectives and relegates them to a "peripheral" or "deviant" status within educational institutions and policies. In contrast, Marcos' pluriversalism, while also challenging the state's homogenising force, promotes a dialogical engagement that incorporates Mesoamerican knowledge(s) to enrich mainstream discourses, fostering "border thinking" or "border epistemology."

This analysis proposes that Simpson's approach effectively deconstructs prevailing hierarchical knowledge structures within education, while Marcos' method seeks to reconstruct more inclusive paradigms where diverse epistemologies coexist without perpetuating colonial dominance. Thus, the thesis advocates for a two-step decolonial process with significant implications for educational practice, policy, and pedagogy: (1) Implementing Simpson's politics of refusal to critically dismantle the dominance of colonial epistemologies in curricula, teaching methods, and educational policies, effectively breaking down hierarchical relationships between colonial and Indigenous knowledge systems; and (2) Employing Marcos' pluriversal approach to reconstruct educational paradigms, fostering policies and pedagogical practices that support the equitable coexistence of different, and often competing, epistemologies and ontologies. This dual strategy aims to transform educational systems, preventing the perpetuation of colonial imbalances and promoting a truly inclusive, pluriversal educational landscape.

Keywords: politics of refusal, pluriversalism, postcolonial discourse, indigenous knowledge, inclusive pedagogy

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De los márgenes a la pluriversalidad: rechazo, reconstrucción y futuros descoloniales

Resumen

Este documento examina la interacción entre la "política del rechazo" de Audra Simpson y el "pluriversalismo" del subcomandante Marcos (ambos surgidos del discurso poscolonial sobre “Turtle Island”) como marcos que apuntan a una forma de gobierno autodeterminada que reconozca de manera auténtica los conocimientos y formas de ser indígenas. Simpson aboga por un rechazo emancipador a aceptar el reconocimiento del estado colonizador, que a menudo margina las perspectivas Indígenas y las relega a un estatus "periférico" o "desviado" dentro de las instituciones y políticas educativas. Por el contrario, el pluriversalismo de Marcos, si bien también desafía la fuerza homogeneizadora del estado, promueve un compromiso dialógico que incorpora los conocimientos mesoamericanos para enriquecer los discursos dominantes, fomentando así el "pensamiento fronterizo" o la "epistemología fronteriza".

Se argumenta en este estudio que el enfoque de Simpson deconstruye eficazmente las estructuras jerárquicas de conocimiento prevalecientes dentro de la educación, mientras que el método de Marcos busca reconstruir paradigmas más inclusivos donde coexistan diversas epistemologías sin perpetuar el dominio colonial. Por lo tanto, la tesis aboga por un proceso descolonial de dos pasos con implicaciones significativas para la práctica educativa, la política y la pedagogía: (1) Implementar la política de Simpson de negarse a desmantelar críticamente el dominio de las epistemologías coloniales en los currículos, los métodos de enseñanza y las políticas educativas, rompiendo efectivamente las relaciones jerárquicas entre los sistemas de conocimiento colonial e indígena; y (2) Emplear el enfoque pluriversal de Marcos para reconstruir paradigmas educativos, fomentando políticas y prácticas pedagógicas que apoyen la coexistencia equitativa de epistemologías y ontologías diferentes y a menudo en competencia. Esta doble estrategia apunta a transformar los sistemas educativos, previniendo la perpetuación de los desequilibrios coloniales y promoviendo un panorama educativo verdaderamente inclusivo y pluriversal.

Palabras clave: política de la negación, pluriversalismo, discurso poscolonial, conocimiento indígena, pedagogía inclusiva

Des marges à la pluriversalité : refus, reconstruction et avenirs décoloniaux

Résumé

Nous examinons l'interaction entre la « politique du refus » d'Audra Simpson et le « pluriversalisme » du sous-commandant Marcos, tous deux issus du discours postcolonial sur l'Île aux Tortues, en tant que cadres visant à une gouvernance autodéterminée qui reconnaît authentiquement les savoirs et les modes d'être autochtones. Simpson prône un refus émancipateur d'accepter la reconnaissance de l'État colonisateur, qui marginalise souvent les perspectives autochtones pour les reléguer à un statut « périphérique » ou « déviant » au sein des institutions et des politiques éducatives. En revanche, le pluriversalisme de Marcos, tout en remettant en question la force homogénéisatrice de l'État, promeut un engagement dialogique qui intègre les savoirs mésoaméricains pour enrichir les discours dominants, favorisant la « pensée frontalière » ou « l'épistémologie frontalière ».

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Mots-clés : politique du refus, pluriversalisme, discours postcolonial, savoir autochtone, pédagogie inclusive

Methodology and Argumentative Framework

This document's framework first seeks to contextualise the existing Eurocentric paradigm imposed on Indigenous people(s) across Turtle Island as normatively constructed and hegemonically dominant, relegating Indigenous knowledge(s) to a "peripheral"[1] or "deviant"[2] status conceptualised not on their own terms, rather conceptualised via their deviation, or lack thereof, of the Eurocentric paradigm's normative ontological and epistemological assumptions.[3] Indeed, despite the theoretical decolonial paradigms explored in this document informed via distinct types of colonialism—the settler-colonialism faced by the Kahnawà:ke Mohawk Nation in northern Turtle Island,[4] aiming to displace and replace Indigenous knowledge(s) with a settler alternative, and the exploitative colonialism encountered by the Zapatista partisans in southern Turtle Island and Abya Ayala,[5] focused on extracting resources and labour-power[6]—both forms seek to marginalise Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies, relegating them to the epistemic periphery.

Secondly, this document delves into Audra Simpson's "politics of refusal" as a means to emancipate Indigenous knowledge(s) from dominant epistemic structures. By examining the Kahnawà:ke Mohawk Nation, Simpson's concept advocates for Indigenous resistance against settler-state recognition, which she concurs marginalises Indigenous knowledge(s) by deeming them "deviant" or "peripheral." In response, Simpson suggests that preserving Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies requires a complete discursive rejection and epistemic severance of the colonial paradigm as a means of dismantling the core-periphery epistemic relationship between hegemonic and peripheral epistemologies.[7]

Thirdly (3), this document explores the *Zapatista Army Of National Liberation's* (EZLN's) commitment to pluriversalism as articulated by their spokesperson: Subcomandante Marcos, often conceptualised as a distinct subalternate paradigm to Simpson's, which instead acknowledges the existence and validity of multiple ways of

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[1] Cynthia Enloe, *Margins, Silences, and Bottom Rungs: How to Overcome the Underestimation of Power in the Study of International Relations*, in *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[2] Kai T. Erikson, "Notes on the Sociology of Deviance," *Social Problems* 9 (1961): 307.

[3] Zeynep Gulsah Capan, "Decolonising International Relations?" *Third World Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (2017): 1-15.

[4] Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 387-409.

[5] Miguelángel López-Hernández, *Encuentros en los Senderos de Abya Yala* (Quito: Editorial Abya Yala, 2004).

[6] Lorenzo Veracini, "'Settler Colonialism': Career of a Concept," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 41, no. 2 (2013): 313-333.

[7] Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014).

knowing and being.[8] Indeed, this perspective, not unlike Simpson's, challenges the universalizing tendencies of the Eurocentric-paradigm. Nonetheless, Marcos, unlike Simpson, does not endorse a complete disengagement from the Mexican nation-state's ontologies and epistemologies. Instead, he promotes a dialogue that leverages Mesoamerican epistemologies to challenge and enrich the dominant discourse, embracing "border thinking"[9] that transcends epistemological barriers and presupposes a paradigm thought of as "a world in which many worlds fit."[10]

Fourthly, the document aims to juxtapose Simpson's "politics of refusal" with Marcos' "politics of pluriversality," concluding that Simpson's call for the preservation of Indigenous epistemologies through refusal aligns with a *deconstructivist* stance, which seeks to dismantle established hierarchical knowledge frameworks. In contrast, Marcos' stance should be thought of as *reconstructivist*, advocating for a prelude to refusal politics that builds a new model where multiple epistemic and ontological systems can coexist equitably, preventing the formation of epistemic isolationism. This section critiques both Simpson's 'politics of refusal' and Marcos' 'politics of pluriversality'. It suggests that Simpson's approach risks replicating the very exclusion it contests by potentially creating a singular, prescriptive Indigenous counter-hegemony that marginalises other diverse resistances and knowledge(s) via epistemic isolationism. Similarly, this section points out that Marcos' methodology does not sufficiently dismantle the existing core-peripheral epistemic paradigm before initiating 'border thinking', potentially placing Indigenous epistemologies at a disadvantage in dialogue with the Eurocentric paradigm.

Lastly, this document reconciles Simpson's and Marcos' subaltern approaches toward Indigenous epistemic emancipation by advocating for a two-step process with profound implications for educational practice, policy, and pedagogy. Specifically, it suggests that these two approaches can be complementary in transforming educational systems. Firstly, if Simpson's 'politics of refusal' is considered a deconstructivist approach—an antithesis tasked with dismantling the dominance of colonial epistemologies—it serves to critically challenge and disrupt the hierarchical relationships embedded in educational curricula, teaching methodologies, and policy frameworks that privilege colonial knowledge systems over Indigenous ones. This deconstruction necessitates a re-evaluation of educational content and practices that have historically marginalised Indigenous perspectives, urging educators and policymakers to reject and remove colonial biases and epistemic dominance from educational institutions.

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[8] Subcomandante Marcos, *Zapatista Stories for Dreaming an Other World* (Oakland: PM Press, 2022).

[9] Walter Mignolo, "The Many Faces of Cosmopolis: Border Thinking and Critical Cosmopolitanism," *Public Culture* 12, no. 3 (2000): 721-48.

[10] Moritz Engel and Leistungsanrechnung erfolgt im Fach Ethnologie, "A World in Which Many Worlds Fit."

Secondly, Marcos' approach can be seen as a reconstructivist strategy—a synthesis focused on rebuilding educational paradigms to allow distinct epistemologies to coexist without perpetuating colonial imbalances. This reconstructive phase involves implementing pluriversal educational policies and pedagogical practices that actively incorporate and value Indigenous knowledge(s) alongside other epistemic traditions. By fostering an inclusive educational environment, this approach promotes 'border thinking' or 'border epistemology,' enabling students and educators to engage with multiple worldviews and ways of knowing in a manner that respects and acknowledges their inherent value.

By utilising both approaches in perpetuity, educational systems can circumvent each other's prior acknowledged problematizations. Simpson's politics of refusal effectively breaks down existing oppressive structures but, if used in isolation, may risk leading to epistemic isolationism. Conversely, Marcos' pluriversalism reconstructs inclusive frameworks but may not fully address the dismantling of entrenched colonial hierarchies if not preceded by a deconstructive phase. Therefore, combining these approaches allows for a comprehensive decolonial strategy in education: one that first dismantles colonial dominance and then rebuilds an educational paradigm where diverse epistemologies and ontologies are equitably integrated. This dual approach has the potential to transform educational practices, policies, and pedagogies, fostering an environment where Indigenous knowledge(s) are not only recognized but are integral to the educational landscape, thus promoting a more just and inclusive society.

Challenging Hegemony: Relegating Indigeneity to the Epistemic Margins

To avoid pan-Indigenization, which tends to homogenise diverse Indigenous epistemologies[11] and thus leads to Indigenous epistemicide—which is the opposite aim of this document—it is critical to recognize that the subalternate ideologies articulated by Simpson and Marcos, refusal and pluriversalism respectively, are informed by distinct Indigenous epistemologies and colonial frameworks. Simpson's framework is rooted in the Kahnawà:ke Mohawk epistemology and the context of Anglo/Franco settler-colonialism in Northern Turtle Island. In contrast, Marcos' perspective is grounded in Mesoamerican epistemological traditions, shaped by the colonial dynamics of Luso/Hispaño exploitation-colonialism in Southern Turtle Island and Abya Yala.[12] Indeed, Settler-colonialism, as pursued by Anglo/Franco powers in regions like "Canada", sought to erase Indigenous presence and replace it with European alternatives, leading to a demographic dominance of settlers in the genealogy of the

[11] Anita Herle, "Dancing Community: Powwow and Pan-Indianism in North America," *Cambridge Anthropology* (1994): 57-83.

[12] Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 387-409.

nation. Conversely, exploitation-colonialism, practised in areas such as “Mexico,” focused on extracting resources and leveraging Indigenous labour via *Latifundia* and *Hacienda* land tenure models,[13] which resulted in a smaller European settler population and a mestizo-dominated genealogy.[14]

Nonetheless, despite these distinct colonial contexts, what is shared is an imposition of the Eurocentric, "modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world−system"[15] paradigm onto Indigenous people(s) throughout Turtle Island which carries the imposition of normative ontological and epistemological assumptions, and with it, establishes hierarchies between different ways of knowing and being.[16] Even within a Mesoamerican context it is important to not conflate the epistemic locale from the social locale,[17] that is, acknowledging that despite the superficiality of mestizaje as evoked by Mestizo figures like Diego Rivera[18] and Tzapotēcah president Benito Juarez,[19] as well as the Mestizaje genealogy of the nation as a whole, the permeation of Mesoamerican theory is peripheralized and almost always situated as deviant to the colonial paradigm.[20]

As such, it is insightful to observe that within the hegemonic episteme, methods of understanding rooted in European traditions, like the scientific method, are semantically associated with 'empiricism' and ‘objectivity’. In contrast, within the same paradigm, Indigenous ways of knowing are semantically associated with “folklore” and “tradition.”[21] This persists despite the claim that the Euro-derivative scientific method, predicated on induction, normatively assumes that past experience informs future experience, the acknowledgement of which is often dubbed the *inductivist fallacy*.[22] Indeed, the centrality of such paradigm derivative of its normative bedrock can be thought of as the

[13] Camden Eckler, *Prevailing Facets of Spanish Colonialism: The Roots of Exploitation and Inequality in Latin America* (2020).

[14] Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 387-409.

[15] Ramón Grosfoguel, "The Implications of Subaltern Epistemologies for Global Capitalism: Transmodernity, Border Thinking, and Global Coloniality," *Critical Globalization Studies* (2005): 283-292.

[16] Frank Adloff, "Pluriversalism: Towards a European and Global Politics of Conviviality," in *Politics of the Gift*, 141-153 (Bristol: Bristol University Press, 2022).

[17] Ramón Grosfoguel, "Transmodernity, Border Thinking, and Global Coloniality," *Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais* 80 (2008): 3.

[18] Natasha Mathilde Picot, "The Representation of the Indigenous Peoples of Mexico in Diego Rivera's National Palace Mural (1929-1935)" (PhD diss., University of Nottingham, 2007).

[19] Guillermo Zermeño Padilla, "Del Mestizo al Mestizaje: Arqueología de un Concepto," *Memoria y Sociedad* 12, no. 24 (2008): 79-95.

[20] Cynthia Enloe, *Margins*.

[21] Franke Wilmer, "Narratives of Resistance: Postmodernism and Indigenous World Views," *Race, Gender & Class* (1996): 35-58.

[22] Hume, David. "An inquiry concerning human understanding." In *Seven Masterpieces of Philosophy*, pp. 183-276. Routledge, 2016.

"ego−politics of knowledge"[23] prioritising its own normative assumptions that inform its particular epistemology(s) over those that inform peripheral ones despite the social construction and subsequent institutionalisation of its own knowledge(s).[24]

Further, the relegation of Indigenous knowledge(s) to the epistemic periphery and Eurocentric knowledge(s) to the epistemic core, as per Eurocentrism's normative assumptions masquerading as objectivity, is produced/reproduced both by detractors and advocates of Eurocentrism. Consider, for example, the ways in which anti-colonial and abolitionist movements of the last two centuries have appealed to humanist, and rationalist Eurocentric sensibilities in arguing for colonial emancipation: the Haitian Revolution revised and recodified a universalist set of human rights adopted from their colonisers,[25] and the Latin American Subaltern Studies Group (LASSG) situated their anti-colonial critiques upon the Postmodern and Marxian foundations of Foucault, Derrida, and Gramsci.[26]

Indeed, although commandeering Eurocentric epistemologies to further anti-colonial emancipation has helped construct alliances with Euro-informed emancipatory groups,[27] it paradoxically further reifies Eurocentric universalism and thus contributes to the epistemicide of 'deviant'[28] or 'peripheral' knowledge(s). As such, decolonial scholars interrogate the privileged status of the Eurocentric paradigm, which is critically referred to as "punto zero"[29] (point-zero). This term denotes an epistemological standpoint that masquerades as universal and objective, while in reality, it is as particular and normatively situated as any other. This central point-zero presumes to be the default from which other knowledge systems are observed and often marginalised. The critique of point-zero revolves around the problematization of how peripheral epistemologies are subordinated to, and viewed through, the gaze of this dominant Eurocentric perspective via the dominant episteme.

Thus, decolonialism as a school of thought seeks to *de-link*[30] the seemingly fixed core-peripheral delineations of knowledge(s) via engaging with Indigenous epistemologies on their own terms, not on their deviation—or lack thereof—of the

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[23] Grosfoguel, "Transmodernity," 4.

[24] Michel Foucault, "Power/Knowledge," in *The New Social Theory Reader*, 73-79 (London: Routledge, 2020).

[25] Ali Moussa Iye, "Pluriversalism: Building Alternative Ways of Interpreting Our World," *Afrospectives*, May 24, 2022, https://www.afrospectives.org.

[26] Grosfoguel, "Transmodernity," 2.

[27] Iye, "Pluriversalism"

[28] Ari Sitas, Sumangala Damodaran, Wiebke Keim, and Nicos Trimikliniotis, "Deviance," in *The World is Out of Joint*, 147-161 (London: Routledge, 2015).

[29] S. Castro-Gómez, *La Hybris del Punto Cero: Biopolíticas Imperiales y Colonialidad del Poder en la Nueva Granada (1750-1810)* (Bogotá: Instituto Pensar, Universidad Javeriana, 2003), manuscript.

[30] Walter D. Mignolo, "Delinking: The Rhetoric of Modernity, the Logic of Coloniality and the Grammar of De-coloniality," *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2-3 (2007): 449-514.

Eurocentric epistemic point-zero. In this sense, decoloniality requires changing the terms of the conversation, not just the content[31] in an effort to "decolonize the mind"[32] by exposing the point-zero fixture of Eurocentrism not just as normatively latent, and thus lamentably epistemically exclusionary, but that such normative assumptions exist to "serve someone or some purpose,"[33] with that purpose being the snuffing and othering of peripheral knowledge(s) and ways of being.

The Emancipation Ethos: Simpson's Politics of Refusal

Inline with this decolonial tradition, Audra Simpson posits a 'politics of refusal' as a means of *delinking* the Kahnawà:ke Mohawk Nation's epistemologies from the Eurocentric core. This position asserts that to gain acknowledgment for Kahnawà:ke's social customs within the hegemonic framework of the Canadian nation-state inherently relegates these practices, and the ontologies and epistemologies that inform them, to a marginalised or aberrant position. As per this perspective, to seek cultural recognition, conceptualised as Canadian citizenship, not unlike the endeavours of the Haitian partisans or the LASSG scholars, while superficially advancing reconciliation, paradoxically contributes to the epistemicide of Indigenous knowledge(s) by (1) reinstitutionalizing and reifying the core-periphery epistemic dichotomy by legitimising the centrality of the colonial epistemic paradigm in dictating the terms of the conversation, and (2) pan-Indigenizing diverse 'peripheral' epistemologies to essentialized and othered forms of cultural difference.[34] Thus, Simpson's approach of rejecting the dominance of Eurocentric knowledge systems without pursuing validation, or inclusion within those prevailing frameworks,[35] aligns with what decolonial scholars describe as an *epistemic refusal.* [36]

Pluriversal Pathways: Marcos and Mignolo

In explicating Marcos' pluriversalism as a subalternate paradigm to Simpson's, this document will engage with both the narrative methodology rooted in Mesoamerican epistemic traditions,[37] as represented by Marcos, and the analytical perspective offered

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[31] Walter D. Mignolo, "The Many Faces of Cosmopolis: Border Thinking and Critical Cosmopolitanism," *Public Culture* 12, no. 3 (2000): 721-748.

[32] Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, "Decolonising the Mind," *Diogenes* 46, no. 184 (1998): 101-104.

[33] Robert W. Cox, "Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory," *Millennium* 10, no. 2 (1981): 126.

[34] Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus*.

[35] Jürgen Habermas*, The Inclusion of the Other* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998).

[36] Walter D. Mignolo, "Epistemic Disobedience, Independent Thought and Decolonial Freedom," *Theory, Culture & Society* 26, no. 7-8 (2009): 159-181.

[37] Roberto Cantú and Aaron Sonnenschein, eds., *Tradition and Innovation in Mesoamerican Cultural History*, LINCOM Studies in Anthropology 16 (Munich: Lincom, 2011).

by Walter Mignolo.[38] The intention is to facilitate comprehension for a predominantly Eurocentric readership, which is the anticipated audience of this document. It is acknowledged however that Mignolo, despite his Peruvian origins, was part of the LASSG,[39] which as prior mentioned, implies a certain epistemic positioning. Nonetheless, the essence of pluriversalism, unlike Simpson's advocation of complete epistemic severance, lies in the interplay and integration of diverse epistemological frameworks. Hence, employing a narrative style in line with Mesoamerican knowledge(s) alongside Mignolo's academically-inclined deductive mode of knowledge(s) dissemination is not only appropriate, but also serves to embody principles of pluriversalism by demonstrating the harmonisation of disparate modes of knowledge(s) production.

Marcos' pluriversalism is perhaps best articulated in his 1995 narrational communique: *La Historia De Los Espejos* (The History Of The Mirrors).[40] This narrative unfolds as a series of reflective, narrational mirrors, akin to the Russian nested matryoshka dolls, where each reflective "mirror" nested within its predecessor contains its own narrator who provides distinct interpretations of political events through various ontological and epistemic lenses. As one mirror details Mesoamerican cosmology, others convey perspectives from Mexican civil society and partisan political parties, offering a multifaceted critique of the preceding narratives. Further, the structure of the narrative defies traditional chronological progression and geographic confines, thereby contesting the notion of a singular, universal ontology and knowledge(s) it informs, and is in turn informed by. It juxtaposes Western philosophical paradigms with Indigenous cosmologies where flora and fauna are anthropomorphized and assigned agency, ultimately culminating with the narrator of Durito, a guerrilla fighter hidden in the forests of Chiapas articulating the EZLN's declaration of war.[41]

The text positions pluriversalism as a counterpoint to Simpson's politics of refusal. It concedes that both perspectives recognize knowledge(s) as manifestations of distinct ontologies/epistemologies. However, pluriversalism diverges from the politics of refusal's connotations of negation. Instead, it endorses an inclusive dialogue that intersects various cultural narratives, thereby challenging the supremacy of any singular universalist perspective via inclusion rather than epistemic severance. Marcos' text asserts that epistemology and ontology should not be conceptualised in a vacuum; they are not disengaged from each other, nor should they exist in epistemic severance as Simpson suggests. Rather, as per Marcos' analysis, they coexist and contribute to each other's meaning, with the mirrors situated within one another even when their

[38] Mignolo, Walter D. "Epistemic Disobedience."

[39] Gustavo Verdesio, "Introduction: Latin American Subaltern Studies Revisited: Is There Life After the Demise of the Group?," *Dispositio* 25, no. 52 (2005): 5-42.

[40] Subcomandante Marcos, "La Historia de los Espejos," EZLN Communique (1995).

[41] Marcos, "La historia."

foundational premises appear to be in direct contradiction, leading to the inclusion of such competing knowledge(s) in the EZLN's declaration. In this sense, pluriversalism too has done away with Eurocentrism's point-zero not by misrecognizing it, rather, by de-centring it and situating it as one of many potential epistemologies informing, and informed by, both its "mirrored" predecessors and successors.

Rearticulated by Walter Mignolo, pluriversality is ideally understood through the concept of "border thinking or border epistemology."[42] Unlike the notion of epistemic severance as suggested by Simpson, border thinking engages with the interplay between diverse and frequently diametrically opposing knowledge systems. Within the context of Marcos' discourse, this form of thinking manifests at the juncture where the knowledge(s) and ontological understandings of one 'mirror' intersect with and permeate those of another. Indeed, whereas Simpson's approach re-identifies new "frontiers"[43] of epistemic exclusion—that is, the advocation that Eurocentrism be excluded from Kahnawà:ke epistemologies not unlike the reversed configuration present in the existing hegemonic episteme—pluriversalism instead posits "a world in which many worlds fit.[44] (Fig 1.).

Problematizing Refusal and Pluriversality

In identifying blindspots within both decolonial approaches of refusal and pluriversalism, it firstly becomes apparent that Simpson's strategy of deliberate non-engagement with colonial structures, while effective in *deconstructing* the marginalisation of Indigenous knowledge(s) by the Eurocentric paradigm, may not encompass the varied forms of resistance needed to counteract the singular and pervasive nature of the dominant episteme. By advocating for a particular form of resistance—specifically, the refusal to participate in colonial institutions and ideologies—as a primary means of asserting Indigenous sovereignty, there is a risk of creating a new, albeit different, form of universalism. Such an approach may inadvertently prescribe a rigid and exclusive framework for understanding, which could marginalise a range of Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge(s), repeating the error it seeks to correct by imposing a new set of normative epistemological fault lines. This current document's analysis does not normatively advocate for, nor against, universalism; rather it suggests that as per Simpson's decolonial framework, her politics of refusal exist as a counter to "Canada's" "universal categories"[45] and to "defy social and political presumptions about universal

[42] Mignolo, "The Many Faces," 736.

[43] Mignolo, "The Many Faces," 740.

[44] Engel, Moritz, and Leistungsanrechnung erfolgt im Fach Ethnologie. "A World in which many Worlds fit."

[45] Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus,* 161.

Figure 1. Depicts how Indigenous knowledge(s) and ways of being are currently structured under the colonial 'state-centric' paradigm which Simpson regards as a 'politics of recognition', contrasted against Simspon's and Marcos' prescriptive propositions (a 'politics of refusal' and a 'politics of pluriversality' respectively). Each 'circle' represents a distinct epistemic and ontological modality.

human rights."[46] Thus, to establish new epistemic fault lines risks establishing novel universal categories, which presupposes the exclusion of other Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge(s) themselves. Indeed, while Simpson's method effectively critiques the core-peripheral relationship that undermines Indigenous knowledge(s) within colonial contexts, its global implementation risks creating an epistemic isolationism. This isolationism echoes historical transitions in dominant knowledge systems, like the shift from religious to scientific epistemes,[47] maintaining similar structures of exclusion albeit from Simpson's non-Eurocentric, Kahnawà:ke phenomenology.

Moreover, the concept of pluriversalism offers a promising *reconstruction* of a paradigm free from epistemic isolation, fostering a decolonial cosmopolitics where Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge(s) can interact through 'border thinking.' However, this assumes that the foundational biases of the Eurocentric paradigm have already been deconstructed. Even Mignolo acknowledges the limitations, noting that from the Mexican government's perspective, "border thinking is not a possibility at this point"[48] so long as the state maintains epistemic control over what is deemed "legitimate" knowledge, thereby undervaluing marginalised knowledge(s). Thus, pluriversalism, while facilitating a cosmopolitan framework where diverse epistemologies and ontologies could coexist, and thus, fulfilling both Simpson's decolonial prospect of defying "universal categories"[49] as well as its own of project to "detach ourselves from abstract universals,"[50] it does not fully dismantle the existing marginalisation of Indigenous knowledge(s), potentially perpetuating their subordinate position in relation to the Eurocentric paradigm.

Indeed, the optimistic vision of pluriversalism hinges on the deconstruction of foundational biases inherent in the Eurocentric paradigm. Without dismantling these biases, pluriversalism risks becoming another iteration of epistemic assimilation reminiscent of Simpson's politics of recognition rather than a genuine space of epistemic diversity. The power dynamics that privilege certain knowledge(s) and marginalise others need to be critically examined and dismantled to prevent the continuation of Indigenous epistemic domination prior to engaging in a pluriversalist project.

Thus, the argument's concluding premises are organised as followed:

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[46] Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus,* 161.

[47] Evans, John H., and Michael S. Evans. "Religion and science: Beyond the epistemological conflict narrative." *Annu. Rev. Sociol* 34 (2008): 87-105

[48] Mignolo, "The many faces," 742.

[49] Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus,* 161.

[50] Mónica González García, "Walter Mignolo: Towards a Decolonial Horizon of Pluriversality: A Dialogue with Walter Mignolo on and Around the Idea of Latin America," *Lucero* 17, no. 1 (2006): 41.

If the goal of decolonialism, which encompasses both Simspon's politics of refusal and Marcos' pluriversalism is to defy "universal categories"[51] and "detach ourselves from abstract universals"[52] respectively. *Then,*

(1) Simpson's politics of refusal succeeds in *deconstructing* the existing core/peripheral epistemic paradigm between Eurocentric and Indigenous knowledge(s).

(2) Simpson's politics of refusal is unsuccessful in *reconstructing* a new paradigm as it risks replicating the very exclusion it contests by potentially creating a singular, prescriptive Indigenous counter-hegemony that marginalises other diverse resistances and knowledge(s) via epistemic isolationism.

(3) Marcos' pluriversality is unsuccessful in *deconstructing* the existing core/peripheral epistemic paradigm between Eurocentric and Indigenous knowledge(s) by advocating for 'border-thinking' irrespective of the existing power relationships between knowledge(s) involved.

(4) Marcos' pluriversality is successful in *reconstructing* a new paradigm free of epistemic isolationism whereby a lack of epistemic fault lines allows for the inclusion of diverse Indigenous and non-Indigenous epistemologies.

(5) Concluding, this document advocates that decolonialism should engage with a two-step process: firstly, utilising Simpson's politics of refusal in *deconstructing* the existing core/peripheral epistemic paradigm between Eurocentric and Indigenous knowledge(s) at a local level, and secondly, utilising Marcos' pluriversality in *reconstructing* a new cosmopolitan paradigm free of epistemic isolationism whereby a lack of epistemic fault lines allows for the inclusion of diverse Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge(s) and ways of being (Fig. 2).

[51] Simpson, Mohawk Interruptus, 161.

[52] García, "Walter Mignolo," 41.

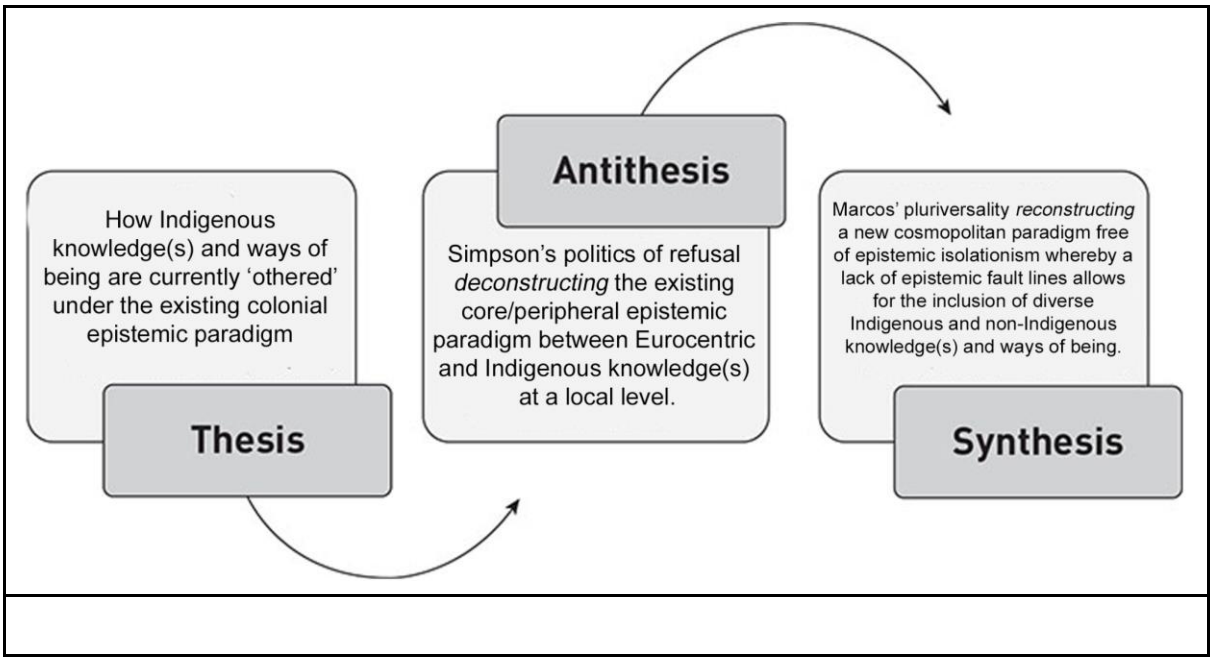

Figure 2. Dialectically depicts the theorised 'two-step' decolonial process outlined in the argument's conclusion.

Conclusion

While the theoretical framework outlined in this document proposes a two-step process for Indigenous epistemic emancipation, its application to educational practice, policy, and pedagogy remains to be concretely illustrated through specific case studies or examples. This absence represents a limitation of the current analysis, highlighting a gap in existing scholarship that directly applies the combined insights of Audra Simpson's 'politics of refusal' and Subcomandante Marcos' 'pluriversalism' within educational settings as per the 'two-step' approach proposed. Recognizing this limitation is crucial, as it underscores the pressing need for empirical research and the practical application of these theories to real-world educational contexts. Consequently, this document should be seen not as a definitive guide, but as an initial theoretical exploration that invites further scholarly engagement to test, validate, and expand upon the proposed decolonial process within diverse Indigenous educational environments. Such scholarly engagement is vital for transitioning from theoretical conjecture to practical, actionable strategies that can inform educational policies, reshape pedagogical approaches, and ultimately foster self-determined governance and the recognition of Indigenous knowledge(s) within educational systems.

Indeed, this document posits that while Simpson's approach effectively deconstructs the dominant Eurocentric epistemic hierarchy within educational frameworks by outright rejecting the colonial paradigm, it falls short in offering methods for the subsequent

integration of Indigenous epistemologies into curricula and pedagogical practices without inadvertently establishing new epistemic fault lines of exclusion and severance. Conversely, Marcos' pluriversalism provides a constructive blueprint for an inclusive epistemic framework that honours Indigenous knowledge(s) and fosters 'border thinking' within educational contexts. However, this approach could prematurely engage with existing colonial educational structures without first dismantling them, potentially compromising the integrity of Indigenous epistemologies and risking a devolvement into epistemic assimilationism rather than achieving genuine pluriversalism in education.

The synthesis of these two approaches suggests a symbiotic relationship with significant implications for educational practice, policy, and pedagogy. Simpson's 'politics of refusal' can serve to dismantle oppressive educational structures and curricula that perpetuate Eurocentric dominance, effectively clearing the ground for transformative change. Following this deconstructive phase, Marcos' pluriversalism can then establish new paradigms of coexistence within educational systems, where diverse knowledge(s) are integrated into curricula and pedagogical practices without perpetuating colonial imbalances. This dual strategy serves as a dynamic model for ongoing decolonial practice in education, ensuring that Indigenous knowledge(s) are not only preserved but are also active participants in shaping a more equitable and diverse educational landscape. By advocating for a complementary application of refusal and pluriversalism, this approach addresses the challenges posed by both colonial and postcolonial educational contexts, aiming to continuously counteract the marginalisation of Indigenous knowledge(s) while promoting their active contribution to a multiplicity of worldviews within educational settings.