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The Relevance of Unmasking Neoliberal Narratives for a Decolonized Human Rights and Peace Education

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The Relevance of Unmasking Neoliberal Narratives for a Decolonized Human Rights and Peace Education

Bettina Gruber[*] and Josefine Scherling[**]

Abstract

Education plays an important role in the dissemination of neoliberal narratives. The neoliberal approach to education focuses on human capital and subordinates people to the pure logic of the market. It shapes educational processes in a considerable way, including Human Rights Education (HRE) and Peace Education (PE). The conscious perception and unmasking of the

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prevailing neoliberal paradigm should therefore be a high priority in a critical approach to HRE and PE. On the basis of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development in which HRE and PE are considered vital to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, the authors show that it is essential to combine the question of a genuine decolonization of HRE and PE with a critical examination of the neoliberal paradigm.

Keywords: Neoliberal, decolonized, Human Rights Education, Peace

Wendy Brown (2015) examines the significance of a critical debate about neoliberal developments in a globalized world where socio-economic and profit-oriented paradigms dominate societies and have a crucial impact on education. Her hypothesis is that neoliberalism is much more than an accumulation of politico-economic principles/processes or a reconfiguration of the relation between state and society. All parts of life are being measured in economic terms and metrics. Within this 'neoliberal rationality' individuals are only exemplars of the homo oeconomicus (Brown, 2015) and productive human capital becomes the only legitimate goal of education and educational programs.

Aiming at a comprehensive decolonization of education, this paper emphasizes that neoliberalism is a form of colonialism and discusses how neoliberal developments influence Human Rights Education (HRE) and Peace Education (PE). The authors propose that in many current educational approaches, such as HRE and PE, the debate about the necessary decolonization in knowledge, teaching and everyday practices is neglected; dealing with this issue is often marginalized because the continuous neoliberalization of all parts of human life to a certain extent prevents decolonial thinking and critique. Using a hermeneutic interpretative approach, a theoretical reflection is employed to take a critical look at the goals and self-conception of the HRE and PE disciplines in an increasingly globalized and neoliberalized world.

After a short introduction to the concepts of colonialism and neoliberalism and their interrelations in the context of a perspective of decolonization, this article outlines the connection between neoliberalism,

education and colonialism. This connection becomes evident through an analysis of global education goals and ideals, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which ostensibly promote HRE and PE and at the same time reintroduce a colonial mindset. Taking the example of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development (Agenda 2030) as a global, transnational document, it will be shown that HRE and PE are often framed in a way that leaves them open to neoliberal interpretation.

There is, clearly, a need to unmask the neoliberal paradigm present in education. This article does so by starting a dialogue between HRE and PE on the critical understandings of education needed in a global society in order to show ways in which a contribution to comprehensive decolonization could be made. To this end, the authors refer to international scholars from interdisciplinary fields that have this in their focus, i.e. political scientists, social scientists, historians, etc. Interdisciplinary dialogue between different academic disciplines holds potential for stepping out of a neoliberal and neocolonial framework, allowing for a more holistic view to emerge. In their critical analysis of the neoliberal paradigm within HRE and PE, the authors strongly rely on Zembylas and Keet who have dealt intensively with neoliberalism and colonialism within HRE and PE and thus provide a good basis for discussion.

The "imperial way of life" and perspectives of decolonization

In order to deal with the socio-political framework in which a decolonization of HRE and PE must be located, one needs to consider a number of phenomena and outline their connections with education. We need to take into account colonialism and postcolonial developments, capitalism with its inherent market radicalism, neoliberalism, and the increasing neoliberalization of all areas of life. This article will employ Zembylas and Keet's (2019) conceptualization of colonization and decolonization. Referring to Mignolo (2003) and Brayboy (2006), Zembylas and Keet (2019) describe colonialism as "the exploitation of human beings and non-human worlds in order to build the wealth and the privilege of the colonizers" (p. 131). While colonization "goes hand in hand with geo-politics

of knowledge, and specifically the domination of Eurocentric thought that classifies regions and people around the world as underdeveloped economically and mentally, [d]ecolonization refers to the interrogation of how Eurocentric thought, knowledge and power structures dominate present societies [...]" (p. 131).

In very general terms, neoliberalism can be understood as a practical ideology of the actors of capital that organizes the transformation of social relations on a societal level under capitalist conditions. Neoliberalism is based on the assumption that capitalism, the market, competition and the performance principle are the solution to close "justice gaps" within societies (Schäfer, 2019, p. 49). The interplay of capitalist modes of production, technological development and innovation, and economic growth is inherent. Without a growth imperative, capitalism does not work (Schäfer, 2019, p. 32). Capitalist societies are always growth societies, since the compulsion to accumulate capital is inextricably linked to economic growth (Schäfer, 2019, p. 45). The "imperial way of life" connects the structures of historical colonialism, the present post-colonial-capitalist-neoliberal globalization and the everyday actions of the people in the Global North (Brand & Wissen, 2018, p. 120).

The exploitation of the "periphery by the center" – within the framework of an increasingly globalized world – is woven into this capitalist, neoliberal system and its developments as a matter of course, as they have always belonged together. Brand and Wissen (2018) put it this way: "Colonial logics have run through the entire development history of capitalism" (p. 122, our translation). The "imperial way of life" is an essential factor in the reproduction of capitalist societies, and Western modernity is closely linked to and co-responsible for developments in the Global South, which is instrumental to the progress and wealth of the Western world. In the so-called "externalization society" (Lessenich, 2016, our translation). Western modernity can live well by anchoring the structures and mechanisms of colonial rule; producing wealth in the global North and enjoying prosperity at the expense of others (Lessenich, 2016). And it is about outsourcing the costs and burdens of progress, and it is above all about keeping this knowledge small and not spreading it (Lessenich, 2016).

This system seems to work well, because, according to Bünger (2016, p. 107), these considerations are rarely at the center of current everyday discourses. They are also insufficiently dealt with in traditional educational science, where there is hardly any systematic discussion of capitalist theories. For example, the reference to social and socio-economic inequalities in the field of educational research in German-speaking countries often contents itself with social-structural constructions along statistical lines such as income, educational titles or the concept of relative poverty. This research then does not establish a connection between the increase in social inequality and the inherent logic of capitalism in the 21st century (Bünger, 2016, p. 107).

Neoliberalism: Colonialism in the context of education

'Neoliberal globalization' entails more than changes in economy and politics. It is deeply rooted in minds, everyday practices and educational institutions such as schools and universities (Brand, 2010, p. 4). The entire field of education is being economized and educational institutions are competing with one another (Schroer, 2012, p. 165). Only a few monographs or anthologies from the disciplinary field of educational science in German-speaking countries, for example, provide an explicit link between pedagogical concerns and neoliberalization in their title (Bünger, 2016, p. 111). Education deals even less with neoliberalism, thus unmasking the latter as a form of continuing colonialism.

Neoliberalism is hardly discussed or problematized in HRE and PE. In this respect, Zembylas and Keet, especially through their book *Critical Human Rights Education* (2019), make a valuable contribution to furthering the development of a critical HRE by reflecting on the concepts of neoliberalism and colonialism and their effects on HRE. What remains somewhat under-considered in their work, however, is the clear emphasis on neoliberalism as a form of colonialism and, as a consequence, the urgent demand to integrate a critical neoliberalism debate into the decolonization debate on HRE, for capitalism and neoliberalization are deeply connected to

the aforementioned postcolonial discourses and developments as well as their corresponding narratives.

The linking of postcolonial theory, decolonization perspectives and neoliberal critique form an essential basis for looking at hegemonic knowledge production and epistemic violence. According to Castro Varela (2016), it is vital that pedagogy establishes a connection between education and power with regard to the permanently failing decolonization processes. There is an urgent need for a de-colonialist view to examine neoliberal narratives and developments in order to show "how contemporary social, political, economic, and cultural practices continue to be located within the processes of cultural domination through the imposition of imperial structures of power" (Rizvi, 2007, p. 256). Gyamera and Burke (2017) state that in neoliberal discourses a white Anglo-European standpoint is represented which, through a one-sided economic interpretation of globalization, is not only encroaching into all areas of life, but is also becoming the dominant ideology worldwide. It penetrates individuals, groups and institutions in order to occupy all thought and action as the dominant narrative.

In order to spread neoliberalism in the best possible way, education is an important instrument. It plays a significant role in achieving global colonization through the neoliberal ideology. As Dawson (2019) points out, neoliberalism is understood not only "as an economic policy agenda" and "an extension of authoritarian capital", but also "as a form of neo-colonial domination" (p. 3). The focus on the neoliberal paradigm with regard to education is a rather neglected perspective in the scientific debate on decolonization, but, as will be shown here, a particularly necessary one. Enslin and Horsthemke (2015) aptly address the problem of a lack of criticism of neoliberalism within the scientific discourse on decolonization and education:

> Particularly in education, resistance to the lingering effects of colonialism that focuses too strongly on cultural marginalization distracts critical attention from the destruction primarily wrought by neo-liberalism, ineffectually fought by reversion to epistemic and moral traditionalism. Addressing human needs through education—

including by widening policy, curricula and pedagogy with ways of knowing beyond the worst of the historical West—requires critical attention to the power and influence of global capital, the ongoing destruction wrought by industrial technology, the harnessing of education to the production of labor power to serve the interests of capital and the attendant subversion of education through the imposition of business-inspired models of management of education on its organization. (Enslin & Horsthemke, 2015, p. 1172)

The predominant reduction of colonization to the area of cultural exclusion in the decolonization debate is certainly one reason why the connection between neoliberalism and colonialism is only marginally dealt with in scientific discourse. However, a closer critical look at education in the global context clearly reveals the colonizing effect of a neoliberal paradigm. For example, Gyamera and Burke (2017) show the consequences in the field of higher education, especially with regard to internationalization and higher education curricula in Ghana which are infused with hegemonic discourses aimed at the "acquisition of skills and employability". The study reveals "the ways neo-colonization, through discourses of internationalization, neoliberalism and globalization, legitimates particular forms of curriculum and marginalizes indigenous forms of knowledge in higher education" (p. 455).

A critical examination of this topic should therefore be taken up in the context of a decolonization of HRE and PE; otherwise a large gap remains that limits decolonization efforts because they do not sufficiently represent the complexity of colonization or decolonization. Assuming that, "a decolonizing approach in HRE needs to examine human rights issues through a critical lens that interrogates the Eurocentric grounding of human rights universals and advances the project of re-contextualizing human rights in the historical horizon of modernity/coloniality" (Zembylas & Keet, 2019, p. 13), it is also imperative to include neoliberal discourses, since they represent an Anglo-European standpoint.

Education itself plays an important role in the dissemination of ideas and neoliberal narratives. This can be observed, for example, in the internationalization strategies of universities, which are mainly concerned

with competition and preparing the workforce, as some authors problematize (Gyamera & Burke, 2017; Dawson, 2019). As Rizvi (2017) emphasizes, in neoliberalism it is relevant to question

> how educational purposes might now be conceptualized to drive communities into socially productive directions, reconciling the competing demands of the economy and the society [...]. Equally important is the question of how educational reform might simultaneously respond to global, national and local pressures and priorities" (p. 3).

The (global) market needs well-educated workers. This discourse is very visible in Vocational Education and Training programs, for example, which are focused on market conformity and which, as the study by Chadderton and Edmonds (2015) reveals, also protect white people's privileges. A radical restructuring of society, as Lösch (2008) calls it, urgently needs educational institutions to anchor their knowledge in people's minds and to preach an alleged lack of alternatives. The human capital approach, through which people are subordinated to a pure logic of exploitation, serves as an important case in point when it comes to shaping educational processes. This approach is based on the World Bank's definition of human capital:

> Human capital consists of the knowledge, skills, and health that people accumulate throughout their lives, enabling them to realize their potential as productive members of society. We can end extreme poverty and create more inclusive societies by developing human capital. This requires investing in people through nutrition, health care, quality education, jobs and skills. (World Bank, n.d., para. 1)

This suggests that the value of people is seen to a large extent as resulting from their contributions to the market or economic growth. The homo oeconomicus thus represents the leading figure as well as the human image of neoliberalism, namely: the "entrepreneur of himself, being for himself his own capital, being for himself his own producer, being for himself the source of [his] earnings" (Foucault, 2008, p. 226). Block (2018) maintains that "[i]ndividuals are, in other words, free, calculating and rational agents

who are out to better themselves by making themselves more saleable in the job market" (p. 577).

By linking the World Bank to international organizations such as UNESCO or UNICEF, whose agendas include education, the spreading and establishing the neoliberal paradigm internationally is facilitated. One of the World Bank's most recent co-operations with UNICEF in the field of education projects, for example, will promote education whose objectives are geared exclusively to market conformity. This is shown in a press release by the World Bank on a newly concluded agreement with UNICEF on the promotion of education in developing countries dated 8 April 2019:

The World Bank's financial commitment is expected to focus amongst other things on:

- Accelerating curriculum changes in formal education so that skills and knowledge align with workplace demands; (…)
- Stepping up efforts to match job-seekers with employment and entrepreneurship opportunities; and
- Equipping young people with the flexibility and problem-solving skills they will need to succeed as engaged citizens in the new world of work. (World Bank, 2019, para. 8)

The World Bank (2019) is investing $1 billion in this project, which, as it states, is also part of its Human Capital Project. According to the World Bank, this project is also an important contribution to achieving the SDGs. The core of this approach is the Human Capital Index: "The Human Capital Index (HCI) measures the human capital that a child born today can expect to attain by age 18, given the risks to poor health and poor education that prevail in the country where she lives" (World Bank Group, 2018, p. 34). In another passage, it says:

> These individual returns to human capital add up to large benefits for economies—countries become richer as more human capital accumulates. Human capital complements physical capital in the production process and is an important input to technological innovation and long-run growth (World Bank Group, 2018, p. 15).

UNICEF's project with the World Bank must also be seen in the context of this neoliberal paradigm. The objectives clearly reveal: it is largely

market-oriented and leads to a one-sided (neoliberal/market-oriented) knowledge production with a colonizing effect, especially if the target countries of this project are countries of the global South. Zapp (2017) notes: "Today the [World Bank] is, by far, the largest funding institution in education in the world covering all educational sectors from early childhood care and education to tertiary education and lifelong learning" (p. 1). Zapp (2017) argues that the World Bank not only has an enormous normative influence in the field of agenda setting and policy design in education but also – as his research results clearly show – in its cognitive and epistemic role, applying "its knowledge in the field through a drastically growing number of projects with explicit focus on education around the globe" (pp. 1-2). In this regard Zapp speaks of "Governing (through) knowledge" (p. 2).

In order to spread the ideas of neoliberalism globally, it is precisely such global educational policies that require education systems worldwide to adapt to global market requirements. In this context, Rizvi (2017) criticizes a one-sided concept of globalization that interprets globalization only as an economic phenomenon where market-economic premises rethink social relations. For him, the Agenda 2030 represents an important corrective, since this initiative advocates a new form of globalization, one "that combines economic, social, and environmental objectives" (Sachs, 2016, para. 2). As we will see later, however, Rizvi's argumentation needs refining, because although this affirmative attitude towards a different form of globalization is taken up in the preamble of the Agenda 2030, the Agenda as a whole requires critical examination. Doing so makes clear that the private sector, among others, "is widely acknowledged as a key driver of the achievement of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) across countries and regions" (UNDP, 2020, para. 1). As Langan (2018) critically indicates, "[o]ne of the most striking elements of the SDGs is their renewed focus upon economic growth and business flourishing" (p. 179).

Already the Education for All (EFA) initiative (2000-2015) – the predecessor of the Global Education Agenda, which plays an important role in Agenda 2030 – has shown its entanglement in neoliberalism with its colonizing effects, as impressively demonstrated in the documentary Schooling the World by director Carol Black (2010). EFA has been subjected

to harsh criticism. It has been accused of excluding alternative approaches to education or of considering them inferior; of seeking to make people fit for the market with its purely capitalist-oriented education; and of continuing a kind of colonization with an assumption of superiority. In this documentary Manish Jain, for example, criticizes the hidden agenda of EFA as follows:

> It's a program which is sanctioned by every government in the world, it's a program which the World Bank and the UN agencies support; it's a program that corporations are also now [...] behind. And the agenda of the program is to get every child into school. The claim is that again by going to school, communities will be able to develop and they will be able to become part of the mainstream society. Now I think we need to question what does it mean to become part of the mainstream today. And that for me is very much tied to a very clear agenda of becoming part of the global economy. And shifting one's own local economy, one's own local culture, one's own local resources both personal as well as collective into the service of the global economy. (Jain in Black, 2010, 20:56)

In the same documentary, Helena Norberg-Hodge criticizes along similar lines and combines the neoliberal paradigm with a form of colonialism:

> Ninety-nine percent of all the activities that go under the label of education come from this very specific agenda that grew out of a colonial expansion across the world by Europeans. And now in different countries in the so called Third World the basic fundamental agenda is the same; is to pull people into dependence on a modern centralized economy; is to pull them away from their independence and from their own culture and self-respect. (Norberg-Hodge in Black, 2010, 19:04)

A critical approach to HRE and PE should confront the problem of neoliberally oriented global educational initiatives in order to critically examine their own positioning therein and to track down possible blind spots in their own theory and practice that could make them complicit in the reproduction of neoliberal, and at the same time colonialist, systems. To what extent do HRE and PE contribute to the spread of neoliberalism through unreflected pedagogy? In this context, what are the challenges for a

decolonization of HRE and PE? According to Zembylas and Keet (2019), referring to Slaughter (2007), "(de/re)disciplining of HRE will bring into view its incorporation into neoliberalism and multinational consumer capitalism" (p. 9). This can only be dealt with by a critical self-analysis of HRE as well as by critically analyzing human rights themselves, as otherwise they threaten to become an instrument of neoliberalism, which will be explained in more detail in the following section. Critical thinking is, as a starting dialogue on the decolonization of HRE and PE will show, an essential component of unmasking the neoliberal paradigm.

A dialogue for decolonization: Unmasking the neoliberal paradigm

HRE and PE operate in a globalized environment shaped by neoliberalism. Both pedagogies share a global dimension through the development and global dissemination of HRE and PE via international conferences/documents/NGOs/institutions. Through a global process of mainstreaming, HRE and PE are also inevitably integrated into the hegemonic neoliberal discourse. Thus Keet (2017) writes with reference to HRE:

> I later on came to realize, as I participated in the complex processes of the United Nations agencies and their programs on HRE, that the global 'wave' of democratization of the 1980s and 1990s and the affirmation of human rights as a world-wide moral language, were closely knitted into the fabric of neo-liberal and capitalist expansion within which HRE was and is located. (p. 3)

In many international documents, peace/HR or PE and HRE are translated into a global language, which is characterized by a certain level of abstraction or a minimum consensus that must take individual state interests into account. An in-depth examination of this global language and what it includes and omits should be dealt with accordingly in a critical HRE and PE in order to conceive decolonization perspectives.

Based on a neoliberal peace concept and the instrumentalization of HR for neoliberal agendas, this section will attempt to initiate a dialectic relationship between HRE and PE, particularly with regard to Agenda 2030.

As Whyte (2019) maintains, "For the neoliberals, the competitive market was not simply a more efficient technology for the distribution of goods and services; it was the guarantor of individual freedom and rights, and the necessary condition of social peace" (p. 17). But which concepts of peace or human rights are fostered through neoliberalism? Exploring this is an important prerequisite for the further development of a critical HRE and PE, which offer resistance to the hegemonic and colonial structures and goals of neoliberalism, in terms of decolonization.

Perez and Salter (2019) analyze the concept of peace promoted by neoliberalism, which they describe as a "one-sided, oppressive viewpoint of peace" (p. 268). They examine its effects especially in the US on the perception and handling of people of color (POC). According to them, neoliberalism obscures the problem of "racial conflict, perpetuates an ineffective, colorblind peace, and reinforces a structurally violent, discriminatory justice" (Perez & Salter, 2019, p. 269). They further state that peace and justice from the neoliberal point of view are regarded as two opposing concepts, in the sense that the responsibility for peace lies with the respective individuals and not with state institutions, as the latter aim "to maintain an oppressive status quo" (Perez & Salter, 2019, p. 269). To regard peace only as an absence of violence/conflict, excluding the equal distribution of resources, leads to political action that discriminates against POC in particular. However, social justice is an important component of peace, but it is precisely this area that is predominantly excluded from the neoliberal paradigm as state intervention would be needed to achieve it (Perez & Salter, 2019). If socio-economic inequalities are seen as unconnected to social conflict, that is if they "purposely ignor[e] racial history," they are not attributed to a discriminatory system that favors whiteness; rather, they are the result of individual failure, "hold[ing] everyone accountable to the rules of a history-neutral, fair playing ground" (Perez & Salter, 2019, p. 277).

The concept of social justice, which is an important goal of decolonization, is excluded from a neoliberal concept of peace. And it is this concept of peace, which agrees with the morals of the market, or supports the market, that in turn promises society a global (universal) peace order, as Whyte (2019) quotes Hayek as saying: "Only the widespread morals of the

market, Hayek argued, offered 'the distant hope of a universal order of peace" (p. 14).

Just as peace is instrumentalized as a concept for the neoliberal paradigm and thus serves to maintain its power, HR are also used as an important factor for the legitimization and expansion of the neoliberal paradigm. Through reinterpretation, they offer neoliberalism "a moral framework for a market society" (Whyte, 2019), which is expressed in particular in the right to education. Rizvi (2017) also problematizes the re-articulation of HR concepts such as freedom and justice by neoliberals, claiming that "[t]he idea of freedom has become tied to a negative view of freedom as 'freedom from' as opposed to a positive view of freedom as 'freedom to', as articulated by Amartya Sen (1997); she interprets freedom in terms of the capabilities that people have to exercise choices and live decent lives, free from poverty and exploitation" (Rizvi, 2017, p. 9). Freedom is interpreted from a neoliberal point of view as freedom of the market and thus as freedom of individuals as economic actors. In this respect, neoliberals, as Freeman (2015) argues, see a free market in front of them, in which free individuals make decisions for themselves and are therefore also responsible for the consequences of their decisions. However, this point of view completely excludes the "inequalities of political and economic power that determine the nature of markets and the inequalities that are the outcomes of market transactions" (Freeman, 2015, p. 152). That is why neoliberals distinguish between freedom and ability (Freeman, 2015, p. 154): "For the neoliberal an individual locked in prison is not free, but a poor individual is free to become rich even if that individual is unable to become rich through lack of the necessary psychological or material resources." Freeman (2015) draws the conclusion: "The 'freedom' of the poor does not enable them to enjoy good lives, and this fact casts doubt on the value of the freedom that is the basis of neoliberalism" (p. 152).

Authors such as Moyn (2018) and Whyte (2019) have discussed the intertwining of HR with (the rise of) neoliberalism, a history that is deeply linked to colonial imperialism, a history that perpetuates inequalities. Moyn (2018) explains the link between HR and neoliberalism as follows:

Precisely because the human rights revolution has focused so intently on state abuses and has [...] dedicated itself to establishing a guarantee of sufficient provision, it has failed to respond to – or even recognize – neoliberalism's obliteration of any constraints on inequality. Human rights have been the signature morality of a neoliberal age because they merely call for it to be more humane. (pp. 216-217)

This makes even clearer the relevance of a critical HRE, which focuses on recognizing and analyzing correlations and critical self-reflection. Only with this critical and analytical ability will it be possible to expose the colonizing effect of neoliberalism and the complicity of HRE in this process and to rethink HRE in a new and decolonial way. Mainstream HRE and PE have no resources for unmasking and subsequent decolonization, as Zembylas and Keet (2019) emphasize for HRE in particular. For critical PE, Zembylas (2018) therefore formulates the task:

[...] to recognize and take an active stance against multiple ways in which knowledge production in the neoliberal order is implicated in the material conditions of coloniality and its persisting effects [...] on understandings of peace and enactments of peace education in different settings. (p. 16)

Hence, it is necessary for a critical HRE and PE to reflect the (global) programs in which HRE and PE are included with a decolonial view in order to make visible and counteract its own entanglement in colonialism, especially in terms of neoliberal narratives and corresponding colonial practices "to challenge Eurocentric narratives of progress spread by liberal understandings of democracy, peace and human rights" (Zembylas, 2018, p. 10).

Agenda 2030 as a matrix for unmasking neoliberal and postcolonial narratives for a decolonized HRE and PE

As already mentioned at the beginning of the paper the Agenda 2030 may serve as an illustration of unmasking neoliberalism and its relevance for a decolonial HRE and PE. It is an important document for HRE and PE in so

far as it focuses both on peace (Goal 16) as well as on education (Goal 4), which serves as a cross-sectional concept and connection to the other goals. In addition, HRE and PE are considered as vital to achieving the Agenda, together with other pedagogical approaches, in target 4.7:

> By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development. (United Nations, 2015)

This initiative, which is important for the future of global society, arguably needs critical voices that uncover possible colonizing/neoliberal orientations and thus create a basis on which a critical HRE and PE can use this global initiative for a decolonization process of their concepts.

The very title of this document already requires a decolonial view, because the term 'sustainable development' is not a neutral term, as Carrasco-Miró (2017) explains, but builds on its dominant narratives, which include ecological, economic and social aspects, on a basis that is "deeply modernist, extractivist, and capitalogenic" (p. 90). Carrasco-Miró (2017) describes this approach as follows:

> The assumption in 'sustainable development' that everything we encounter is a resource for human consumption and production must be challenged, as this capitalogenic vision has led directly to countless environmental and social disasters. (p. 90)

Carrasco-Miró (2017) takes a critical look at a concept of sustainable development that on the one hand wants to 'reconcile' economy and ecology in order to be able to respond well to global environmental challenges and on the other aims at striving for economic growth "that was – and still is – considered a condition for general happiness and development" (p. 91). And the author deliberates: "Why must the sole measure of progress be growth and measured in price? Who benefits from this single story? There are plenty of non-growth options and stories to be told, all of which have been ignored in the SDGs and Agenda 2030" (Carrasco-Miró, 2017, p. 94).

In this respect, it is interesting to see that some stakeholders, in their feedback on the Agenda 2030 zero draft (2015), do indeed criticize a growth-oriented, neo-liberal orientation of the Agenda or the failure to mention the neo-liberal framework conditions as causing global inequalities. In its statement on this draft version, the Center for Research and Advocacy Manipur emphasizes very clearly:

> The Earth's sustainable development will not be possible if we set problematic objectives; where multinational corporations, private sectors are let loose without accountability and where indigenous peoples land and territories are targeted with militaristic development aggression.
>
> The zero draft insisted on neo-liberal and economic growth oreinted [sic] model of sustainable development, which will only lead to corporatization of sustainable development and which has worked against sustainable development. (UN-NGLS & UN DESA, 2015, p. 498)

AP-RCEM (Asia-Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism) criticizes the lack of analysis of the causes for global inequalities from a neoliberalism-critical perspective.

> It [the introduction] fails to provide analysis of globalisation and neoliberal framework as the root causes of inequality of wealth, power, resources and opportunities. No recognition of the persistent and entrenched problems of patriarchy, gender inequality, sexual and gender based violence and violations of women's human rights, ecological crisis is a historic crisis of the relationship between humanity and its environment and its primary cause is overproduction, which leads to overconsumption on the one hand, and growing poverty and under-consumption on the other. It should also articulate the historical inequalities between states has led to inequitable finance, trade and investment architecture that has diminished the capacity of States to meet their economic, social obligations. (UN-NGLS & UN DESA, 2015, p. 90)

These two critical comments can also be applied to the current Agenda 2030, because they were not taken into account in the revised

version. Martens (2016) criticizes this in his report on behalf of the Reflection Group on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in which he describes "obstacles to the implementation" (p. 12):

> For too long, economic policies have been shaped by acceptance of neoliberal policies 'without alternatives'. But taking the title of the 2030 Agenda, 'Transforming our World', seriously implies that its implementation should lead to structural transformations instead of being led by the interests and advice of those governments, elite class sectors, corporate interest groups and institutions which have taken us down paths that are unsustainable and continue to create global obstacles to the implementation of the agenda.

> Thus, it is irritating that the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) as coordinator of the Global Business Alliance for 2030 [...] can claim to play a key role in implementing the 2030 Agenda, offering 'comprehensive engagement with the full diversity of business expertise'.

> Corporate lobby groups such as the ICC have been advocating for exactly those trade, investment and financial rules that have destabilized the global economy and exacerbated inequalities in both the global North and the global South. (Martens, 2016, p. 12)

Zein (2019) also criticizes the Western discourse on sustainability, in which the West prominently presents itself as leading the world into a sustainable future, "after almost worldwide adoption of a Western economic model that thrives on overconsumption has resulted in the pillaging of the earth" (para. 28). Zein is very critical of the "world of sustainability" and sees it as the continuation of colonialism. In her argumentation she refers to Chandran Nair's book *The Sustainable State* (2018), which, as Zein (2019) notes, sees the problem of "today's sustainable development narrative" in "that it is understood from the perspective of advanced economies rather than developing ones" (para. 24). This is especially evident in the Agenda's introduction part, point three: "We resolve also to create conditions for sustainable, inclusive and sustained economic growth, shared prosperity and decent work for all, taking into account different levels of national development and capacities." (United Nations, 2015, point 3) This emphasis

on economic growth is mentioned together in one paragraph with peace and human rights.

The preamble to Agenda 2030 states: The Agenda "seeks to strengthen universal peace in larger freedom" (United Nations, 2015, para. 1). And the preamble continues: "We are determined to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence. There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development." (United Nations, 2015, para. 8) Under the decolonial perspective just discussed, the question inevitably arises: What universal concept of peace and what human rights concept frames this claim? What kind of justice will be promoted if no explicit criticism of colonialism/neoliberalism and its consequences is addressed, and if indigenous forms of knowledge with their alternatives, e.g. to the growth paradigm, do not have a place in the Agenda or are excluded?

Given that target 4.7. explicitly says, "By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, […]" (United Nations, 2015, target 4.7), then, from the point of view of what has just been said, a critical HRE and PE that unmasks the neoliberal paradigm is needed, otherwise HRE and PE run the risk of perpetuating colonial structures created and spread by a hegemonic neoliberal discourse.

Another area on which HRE and PE should take a decolonial view is the indicators which ultimately determine what is important in achieving the global goals, what should be measured and finally also what HRE and PE should focus on. The indicators prove to be an important neoliberal element, not only within the agenda. Giannone (2015) questions the functions of measurements and indicators, especially for HR purposes as "measurement is a formidable source of power, acting as the scientific lens through which political and economic powers have the capacity to define frameworks and adjudicate facts, to include and exclude, to impose a system of thought and a set of values" (p. 180). And in this, Giannone (2015) also sees the danger that HR are not sufficiently understood in their indivisibility, a problem that he clearly emphasizes and analyzes with regard to social HR. In particular, however, this can also be applied to the visibility of indigenous populations

in the Agenda 2030, which in turn seems to confirm the thesis of the interaction of neoliberalism and colonialism formulated in this article. As Madden and Coleman (2018) emphasize "[t]he development of SDG indicators, and the work to date on their implementation, include little mention of Indigenous peoples" (p. 6). This has far-reaching consequences, however, if one follows the remarks of Madden and Coleman (2018): "Without reliable information on the economic and social condition of Indigenous peoples, they can easily be ignored in national policy making, their substantial resourcing needs overlooked and discrimination disregarded" (p. 6). The attention of a critical approach to HRE and PE should be focused on these blanks in order to make them visible through their work and to counteract this current invisibility. In addition, the indicators point to a predominantly technocratic, quantitative empirical approach – a strategy used by neoliberalism to manage uncertainties and "to bring all human action into the domain of the market" (Giannone, 2015, p. 182), which backgrounds or omits qualitative elements and inequalities, the visualization of which is essential for a human rights-based approach to the vision set out in detail in the preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Therefore, a critical view is required with regard to the (sole) indicator for target 4.7 (the target that refers to HRE and PE):

> Extent to which (i) global citizenship education and (ii) education for sustainable development, including gender equality and human rights, are mainstreamed at all levels in (*a*) national education policies; (*b*) curricula; (*c*) teacher education; and (*d*) student assessment. (United Nations, 2017)

Apart from the fact that peace or PE is not included in this indicator, a critical approach to HRE and PE is urgently needed to foster a mainstreaming process which not only focuses on measurability, but also opens up a decolonial debate.

The problem that Esquivel (2016) sees in this quantification effort is that "the interconnected character of gender, class, political, and other dimensions of inequalities will again be missed in the implementation phase" (p. 18). In this context, the exclusion of the power aspect, which leads to blatant inequalities, must also be mentioned: This is why Dearden (2015)

states: "[...] power doesn't exist in the SDGs. The chapter on inequality nowhere mentions that the problem of poverty is inseparable from the problem of super-wealth; that exploitation and the monopolization of resources by the few is the cause of poverty" (para. 9).

By ignoring research critical of power and domination in order to approach the vision of the Agenda 2030, the demand for a transformation of the world as formulated in its title cannot take place, since root causes are not taken into account. For this reason, Esquivel (2016) makes the claim, referring to Kvangraven: "Yet, 'when global goals are perceived to be achievable through technical fixes, the fact that development requires fundamental changes in society is lost' [...]" (p. 18).

All of this needs to be considered if you want to achieve a decolonization of HRE and PE. Decolonization, according to Zembylas (2018),

> evokes a historical narrative that resists Eurocentrism and acknowledges the contributions of colonized populations across the globe; it emphasizes a moral imperative for righting the wrongs of colonial domination, and an ethical stance in relation to social justice for those peoples enslaved and disempowered by persistent forms of coloniality. (p. 10)

In this respect, an uncritical approach to the Agenda 2030, which is important for the future of a peaceful and more just society, could lead to the continuation of colonial practices that are driven by neoliberalism and its hegemonic discourses and narratives. An essential component of critical HRE and PE is advancing social and cognitive justice. This requires, as Zembylas and Keet (2019) emphasize, delinking HRE and – as we have argued – also PE "from Eurocentrism, capitalism and coloniality" (p. 152) in order not to be "complicit in the construction of everyday injustices" (p. 149).

Concluding Remarks and Perspectives

If one considers the appropriation of the concepts of HR and peace for neoliberal ideologies, dealing with HRE and PE in a critical way becomes an urgent and primary task for a decolonization of their pedagogies. This holds

true in particular after an analysis of the Agenda 2030. The dominant narrative of neoliberalism, which is deeply rooted in Western thinking, asserts its hegemonic knowledge production on a global scale through a purely economically interpreted globalization – oriented solely towards market conformity and economic growth. In order to promote a decolonization of HRE and PE, the narrative of neoliberalism must be exposed, since its discourses, as Gyamera and Burke (2017) show, referring to Bhabba (1994) and Rizvi (2007), "perpetuate unequal relations of colonialism" (p. 454).

Unmasking the neoliberal paradigm means critically reflecting on (universalized) global norms and values incorporated in global initiatives especially in the field of education, as education is a powerful instrument for spreading the neoliberal narrative. In particular, HRE and PE ought to be unmasking this hegemonic discourse; otherwise they run the risk of reinforcing and continuing colonial structures and practices without being aware of it.

> The real trouble about human rights, when historically correlated with market fundamentalism, is not that they promote it but that they are unambitious in theory and ineffectual in practice in the face of market fundamentalism's success. Neoliberalism has changed the world, while the human rights movement has posed no threat to it. [...] And the critical reason that human rights have been a powerless companion of market fundamentalism is that they simply have nothing to say about material inequality. (Moyn, 2018, p. 216)

As this article has shown, the concepts of peace and HR are instrumentalized for the neoliberal paradigm and misused for the continuation of colonialism. Therefore it is necessary that HRE and PE, each as their own pedagogy, but especially by considering them together, reevaluate their core concepts with regard to a postcolonial critique, reflect critically on themselves, so that they do not, in good faith, reinforce conditions of inequality and support (neoliberally shaped) power structures that maintain and strengthen colonial practices.

International documents on which HRE and PE rely must not be interpreted as "neutral or purely positive," as exemplified by the analysis of

Agenda 2030 in this paper. Not only the elaboration process, but also the implementation phase of these documents is a struggle for interpretive dominance. The Agenda 2030 makes this very clear. Here, the private sector, business, industry, corporations and thus also the World Bank are given an outstanding role in achieving the global goals. If, however, one considers the underlying agenda of a neoliberal paradigm, it becomes clear that it should be the task of HRE and PE, as part of a decolonization process, to unmask this agenda. Among other things this means pointing out its concepts and their implications for HR and peace; this needs to be done in a way that both take a position critical of power in the sense of critical pedagogies and, through their synergies, uncover colonizing practices and transform them accordingly.

For this purpose, however, it is necessary to recognize the connections of global capitalism including neoliberalism with the imperial way of life of the Global North and to make them the content of a critical HRE and PE. The colonial patterns of thought and action have inscribed themselves into everyday cultural practices and have solidified themselves in institutions. They are based on inequality, power and domination and often on violence, which they also generate (Brand & Wissen, 2018, p. 121). HRE and PE should have the central task of placing these patterns of power and domination in a center of discourse and reflective analysis.

In this context, existing counter-narratives from the fields of economy for the common good or anti-racism should be deliberated along with questions regarding environmental and energy issues and equal participation (of all people involved) in decision-making in the global framework, among others, and options should be jointly considered to arrive at concrete actions through a framework of learning processes. HRE and PE should stress support for counter-hegemonic developments within a critical debate through intensive integration of past historical processes, so that "subaltern" voices are included. This means putting oneself in relation to current and historical processes and developing a consciousness for social conditions so as to recognize these conditions as man-made (Schäfer, 2019, p. 219). It also means exposing the grand narrative of neoliberalism and developing

counter-narratives that counteract its central tenets of "growth," "acceleration," "consumption," "universalism," and "we and the others."

If we consider the debates on neoliberal and postcolonial developments in the context of different pedagogies, we can identify extensive critical approaches in the discourses of HRE and PE, but also in approaches to postcolonial pedagogy, critical civic education, anti-racist education, in the contexts of migration pedagogy research as well as in education for sustainable development. Looking for interdisciplinary synergies in the theoretical foundations as well as a systematic overview of their respective practices and perspectives within the framework of research workshops and laboratories would be of central importance.

Such critical thinking and reflection on one's own discipline requires new approaches to learning. In this context, transformative learning aims at reflecting and expanding one's own ways of thinking and assumptions (Schneidewind, 2018, p. 474) and goes together with decolonial thinking that "feeds from a multitude of sources and is far from forming a system or a uniform reservoir of methods or practice" (Kastner & Waibel, 2016, p. 30, our translation). Transformative education focuses on an understanding of options for action and approaches to solutions and thus strengthens the competences of "pioneers of change" (Schneidewind, 2018, our translation). The focus is on the exploration and internalization of new perspectives of meaning (Singer-Bodrowski, 2016, p. 16). It aims at collective discourses on becoming aware of "mental infrastructures" (Welzer, 2011, our translation) and the possibility of breaking free from them through participative and dialogue-oriented educational work. HRE and PE would be well advised to deal strongly with the theoretical prerequisites and possible links.

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