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Giving and receiving, or denying knowledge?

***Aspects of knowledge production in development studies seen
through a perspective of decoloniality***

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Introduction

This essay is a critique of modern/colonial knowledge production, with particular reference to development studies, based on thinking about decoloniality, and illustrated by experiences from a bachelor's programme in development studies at Lund university and a field study done in South-Western Benin as a part of those studies. The purpose of this essay is *more* to discuss issues that I have come to see as problems with knowledge production in development studies, through the experience of doing the field study and reading on decoloniality. The purpose of this essay is *less* to convince anybody of solutions to the problems I have discussed, but rather to show what decoloniality as a project might be seen as working towards.

A few concepts that I use in this essay should be briefly defined before I move on. *The colonial matrix of power*, refers to a heterogeneous totality of hierarchies enacted as domination in colonial self-Other relations. A specific self-Other relation that I'm discussing is that between myself and the people in the village where I did the field study. An aspect of the hierarchies could be *a hierarchy of knowledges*, where a dominant knowledge, the tradition of western rational knowledge, disqualifies other knowledges. Other hierarchies might include gender, race and class for example. Colonial relations refer to *coloniality* with its history beginning from the colonization of the Americas, but not ending with colonialism, and reflecting the continued reproduction of those hierarchies that have been established since the conquest. *Modernity* is seen as both the here-and-now (materiality) of a place, and as a project of European origin. The rhetoric of the modernity project is seen to promise development but modernity, and thus development, is viewed as inseparable from its underside, that is coloniality. The knowledge of modernity has to do with western rationality and logocentrism. Logocentrism taken to mean "the fixing of meaning in hierarchized binary oppositions" (Gregory et al. 2009, p.528). One such binary could be the subject-object relation, found also in development research. *Development studies* in this essay refers to a discipline emerging in European and US (western) universities after the second World War, focusing on finding ways to achieve development in countries and regions of the world that have yet to reach the standard of Europe and the United States, which are seen as developed.

The first question that I am trying to answer, in this essay is, how is it that when we (students, researchers) are producing knowledge in development studies, our knowledge (modernity/rationality) and other knowledges do not meet as equals, and why is that a problem. The

first three chapters could be seen as dealing with this question. The first question has higher priority in this essay but there is also a second one: How could we imagine alternatives to hierarchic relations in knowledge production? I see the modernity/coloniality/decoloniality (MCD) research group as offering valuable insight to that question. According to Escobar (2010, p.33) “the group seeks to make a decisive intervention into the very discursivity of the modern sciences in order to craft another space for the production of knowledge”. Thus, the focus of the fourth chapter is a main concept from the MCD group, *decoloniality*, as “a planetary critical consciousness” that rejects abstract universals (Mignolo 2010, p.354). An especially important aspect of *decolonization*, understood as destruction of the colonial matrix of power, regarding the focus on knowledge production in this essay, is epistemic decolonization. Epistemic decolonization is seen as “necessary to make possible and move toward a truly intercultural communication; to an exchange of experiences and significations as the foundation of an other-rationality” (Mignolo 2010, pp.353-4). Such a communication would in my view require a self-Other relation that is not hierarchic, but one of *receptive generosity*, where gifts, of knowledge and other kinds, are given and received in a non-hierarchic relation.

In the first chapter I will be reflecting on how I might situate this essay, as a part of a wider 'thesis project', understood as the project of completing courses, doing the field study and writing this essay, and as situated in my life project then moving to describe how I arrived at the questions above. I see the first chapter as a foreground to more focused theoretical discussion regarding the two questions. In the second chapter I focus on theoretical discussions to look into the first question; how is it that when we (students, researchers) are producing knowledge in development studies, our knowledge (modernity/rationality) and other knowledges don't meet as equals, and why is that a problem? There I am relying on journal articles about decoloniality, mostly from writers associated with the MCD project, or research group. To open up the problem, I will start by discussing modernity and modernity/coloniality (modernity seen from the perspective of decoloniality), thus exposing and describing the colonial matrix of power. This discussion will lead me to describing how the hierarchies that constitute the colonial matrix of power might be seen to include a hierarchy of knowledges, which would relate to knowledge production in development studies. According to Quijano (2010, p.26) the “fundamental presupposition” of “the European paradigm of rational knowledge [is] ... knowledge as a product of a subject object relation”. I discuss the subject object relation in connection to what could be seen as a hierarchy of knowledges, but I also relate it to the focus of the concluding section of the second chapter. I will conclude the second chapter with a discussion on the self-Other relation and what could be seen as a

colonial self-Other relation. There I aim to show that a colonial self-Other relation denies receptive generosity, one aspect of which could be giving and receiving knowledge in a non hierarchic relation.

In the third chapter I am discussing experiences from a field study I did in a village in South-Western Benin. Regarding the field study I am basically doing two kinds of analysis. First, I am analysing and interpreting 'data' that I 'collected' during the study in the form of transcripts from discussions and notes on observations. The purpose of that analysis is mostly to illustrate how 'other knowledges' can be seen as present in the here-and-now of the village where I did the field study. The idea there is, to put it simply, to discuss how people in this village could be seen to draw from other knowledges than modernity and to argue that if development studies is not decolonized, we won't achieve a conversation on an equal setting between modernity and other knowledges, in the knowledge that we produce. Second, I am briefly analysing the field study itself from the perspective of decoloniality, in order to show how I, as producing knowledge in/for development studies, could be seen to have reproduced the colonial matrix of power in that specific case.

In the fourth chapter I will discuss what decoloniality seen as a project might imply. Decoloniality does not only work to expose the colonial matrix of power and thus criticise modernity/coloniality. Decoloniality as an option and a project also involves creating strategies for working towards pluri-versality, as an outcome and requirement of destroying the colonial matrix of power. I understand pluri-versality as a "universal project leading toward a world in which many worlds will co-exist" (Mignolo 2010, p.353). The idea of pluri-versality is also crucial to producing knowledge without reproducing the colonial matrix of power, since to me pluri-versality should include leading toward, not a knowledge, but many knowledges, in which many knowledges will co-exist. In this sense decoloniality can be seen as both a way to expose the colonial matrix of power and to work to destroy it. Or more specifically in this essay, thinking about decoloniality is my basis to exposing how knowledge production in development studies could be seen to reproduce the colonial matrix of power, and also to imagining how development studies might come to produce knowledge without reproducing the colonial matrix of power.

1. Foreground

In the first section of this chapter I will discuss how I might see the thesis project, and this essay as a part of it, situated in my life project. In the second section I will explain how I came to write about the problem of knowledge production in development studies. The third section is still about explaining how I came to write about this problem, but it already goes briefly into the theoretical discussion that constitutes the second chapter.

1.1 Situating the thesis project and the essay in my life project

I feel that trying to produce knowledge without suppressing other knowledges should belong to an overall effort of trying, as entities in the world, to go about our life projects as we would wish, without denying the same for others. This could be something I am trying to work towards in my life project, but the aim of this thesis project and the aim of this essay is much more limited. In this essay I am not trying to solve the problems of the people I met while doing the field study in Folly Condji. I am rather trying to conceptualize problems I see in what we are doing here in the university. This is not to say that the problems that people told me about when I was in Folly Condji would not be important to myself, it is in this thesis project that I am focusing more on problems I see in the studies I am doing. I am focusing on problems in development studies because I feel that it is a project where I am already somewhat deeply involved in, and I also feel that the problems of Folly Condji are probably better solved by people most deeply involved in that community's life project, namely, the people of Folly Condji. If I am able to produce knowledge in a way that doesn't disqualify knowledges involved in the life project of Folly Condji, then I might be able to contribute positively to that project through my own. For me this thesis is a part, in a sense one beginning, of that project of trying to produce knowledge that could draw from many knowledges and that might contribute to projects drawing from many or different knowledges. The purpose of this thesis is also to try to convey certain concerns expressed to me by people from Folly Condji, not only to see whether some theory can be useful, but because it is something I promised to do.

Very importantly this thesis is part of my lifelong continuous process of learning and thinking. Furthermore, my personal process of learning and thinking is part of and conditioned by larger processes of knowledge formation that also have their history in time and space. For example, the histories of learning of each author whose texts I have read are present in my text, but my specific

history and experiences are what should make this text different and unique by conditioning how I understand the texts of others. My history and experiences have most likely given me inspiration for new ideas when I have been reading the texts of others and I quote other texts frequently in my own. Therefore, this text is by no means some kind of a sum of my work alone, but I have also made efforts to learn and understand, and those efforts are what this text tries to describe.

1.2 How I came to discuss problems with knowledge production in development studies

What you are reading now is text. All this text that you might read is also referred to as my thesis, but my thesis is not only text. This essay is how I try to present in writing a process, or a project, of thinking and learning over a *time* and in *different places*. The time here could be the time I've spent doing courses in the Bachelor's Program in Development Studies and especially the courses focusing on thesis work. The different places could be the places I have been to during this time: my home in Finland, Reykjavik where I was on exchange, and especially Lund where I am doing my studies, and Grand Popo in Benin. At first I was basically assuming that I would use knowledge that I have gained through studying in the universities, especially in Lund, to plan a field study for collecting data in Benin and then I would return to Lund to analyse that data using more knowledge from the university.

I did plan a field study and I did travel to Benin. In South-Western Benin, in the village of Folly Condji I did a field study and collected data. Then I returned to Lund and through reading more on decoloniality I started to realise more that there was something fundamentally wrong in development studies, my studies and the field study I did included. It is not that I would have felt like there is nothing wrong at all with development studies before going to Benin, but having come back from there and then read more on decoloniality I felt that there was such a fundamental problem that I can not continue doing development studies if I do not address this problem first. Perhaps most importantly, I saw how much I could relate the theoretical discussions around the problem of knowledge production, to the research that I was doing for this essay. Through reading on decoloniality I did not only feel that I could see the relation between knowledge production and hierarchies in the world-system in a different way. I also felt that the writings on decoloniality that I have read, have to me contributed significantly to the possibility of imagining alternatives to hierarchic relations in knowledge production.

I would say that the writers associated with the MCD project, through discussing coloniality, “the darker side of modernity” (Mignolo 2010, p.317), help to reveal fundamental problems with knowledge production in western universities, and through thinking about decoloniality, strategies to work on those problems might be imagined. In this text I am trying to convey that feeling in a way that would be understandable to the intended audience (the examiner, opponent and my supervisor), and hopefully even others. I see broadening understandings of knowledges as important because, as I will argue, right now it seems to me that the dominant discourses within development studies rather promote one, the knowledge of modernity, and disqualify other knowledges. Thus, knowledge produced in development studies tends to mainly benefit projects that draw from the same logics as people who do development studies. Through decolonizing development studies we can then work with the aim of producing knowledge that would not serve to disqualify other knowledges, and that might even support projects drawing from other knowledges.

To the reader, the most important content in this essay is maybe how I discuss the problem, but I find it also important to describe how I came to write about this problem of how knowledge production in development studies reproduces the colonial matrix of power. In a sense I have been working towards writing this essay throughout my studies, but in describing how I arrived to discuss this problem with knowledge production in development studies I will begin with the field study I did in Benin. As I said, I had a plan about how to do the field study and this plan was mostly inspired by a certain book by Arturo Escobar.

1.3 Reading Escobar's Territories of Difference

What first brought me to decolonial thinking and the MCD project was when my supervisor suggested I read Escobar's book *Territories of Difference* (2008). I had ideas and interests, and talking about them was what led my supervisor to recommend this book to me. However, I had not found as much resonance to many of these ideas and interests in the academic literature I had read so far during my studies. Escobar's (2008) book was my main inspiration when I was writing the research proposal for the field study, which was the first piece of extended writing that I did specifically for the thesis. In the proposal I introduce the most important concepts and ideas from Escobar (2008) that I took with me when I left Lund to do a field study in Benin. Very importantly, at that moment in my process of learning I was focusing more on how these concepts could help me interpret what is happening in rural South-Western Benin, and thus my focus was still more on problems over there. In this moment, when I am writing this essay, my focus is more here in the

university where I am studying and the processes of knowledge production that the university, my program and this essay are connected to.

Here I will write about the concepts *alternative development*, *alternative modernities* and *alternatives to modernity* as they are presented by Escobar (2008), since those concepts were my entrance of sorts to thinking about decoloniality, and while in Benin I was interpreting my experiences very much through these concepts.

In Escobar's (2008, p.179) description “[u]nlike mainstream development ... alternative development implies a level of contestation over the terms of development but without challenging its underlying cultural premises”. I understand these cultural premises to be connected to the ones Escobar (2008, p.170) discusses as he writes that “[d]evelopment and modernisation can be seen as the most powerful global designs that arose out of the local history of the modern West in the post-World War II period”.

Compared to alternative development “[t]he alternative modernity dimension of the relation between globalization, development, and modernity involves ... a more significant contestation of the very aims and terms of development on the basis of an existing cultural difference and place-based subjectivities” (Escobar 2008, p.185). Another feature is that “alternative modernities involve both the presence of development in the local imaginary and the fact that the “non-Western,” far from being a vanishing tradition, is a constitutive feature of modern life” (Escobar 2008, p.185). In this way alternative modernities can be seen as being beyond the resistance, that is alternative development, when they *do* challenge the underlying cultural premises and are able to question development itself. Challenging, questioning and countering development are important in understanding this idea of alternative modernities. Arce and Long (2000, p.19) state that “[c]ounterdevelopment means shaping and establishing the here-and-now of modernity” and according to Escobar (2008, p.176) “Arce and Long imply that every act of development is at least potentially an act of counterdevelopment and that every act of counterdevelopment is potentially an alternative modernity – a modernity from below (2000:21)”.

Escobar (2008, p.162-3) describes *alternatives to modernity*, compared to alternative modernities, “as a more radical and visionary project of redefining and reconstructing local and regional worlds from the perspective of practices of cultural, economic, and ecological difference, following a network logic and in contexts of power”. Important to me here, is the notion of possibility to

imagine alternatives to modernity, and the rootedness of these alternatives in difference and place.

Escobar also notes that “[a]lternative development, alternative modernities, and alternatives to modernity are partially conflicting but potentially complementary projects” and “[o]ne may lead to creating conditions to the other” (Escobar 2008, p.198). The different projects each have their own roles: Alternative development is for “livelihood and food autonomy”, alternative modernities “shelter the economic, ecological, and cultural difference” and alternatives to modernity serves to imagine “local and regional reconstructions based on such forms of difference” (Escobar 2008, pp.198-9).

Recognizing the possibility of alternatives and difference is to me something distinctive in this theoretical approach. This is because, as Escobar (2008, p.74) describes, “most variants of this discourse [of political economy] have endowed capitalism with such dominance and hegemony that it has become impossible to conceptualize social reality differently” and because of this “[a]ll other realities ... are thus seen as opposite, *subordinate*, or complementary to capitalism, never as economic practices in their own right or as sources of economic difference”.

In addition to economic difference, there are differences described in relation to space that this theoretical approach is concerned with. According to Escobar (2008, p.30) “social science debates since 1990” have been characterized by a concern with globalization, and “by a pervasive asymmetry by which the global is equated with space, capital, and the capacity to transform while the local is associated with place, labor, tradition, and hence with what will inevitably give way to more powerful forces”. In this way, culture, nature and economy are seen as being determined by global forces and the role of place is marginalized. This marginalization of place could be seen as preventing us from recognizing, imagining and realizing alternatives. Escobar (2008, p.30) states that “any alternative course of action must take into account place-based (although not place-bound) models of culture, identity, nature and economy”.

At the time when I was reading Escobar (2008) in Lund, I had already decided with a friend of mine that I would join him and his family when he would go to Benin, with the idea that I would do some kind of a field study as a part of this thesis work. What I took with me from this theoretical discussion as most important and interesting regarding the field study, is that it enables, or sees as possible, recognizing and imagining alternatives based on difference and place. As quoted above, Escobar (2008, p.30) writes about “place-based models of culture, identity, nature and economy”. This could be seen to mean that when place is different, or you go to a different place than where

you are, you would find different models of culture, identity, nature, economy. Turning things around it could also mean that if you start moving from your place and you start seeing different models of culture, identity, nature and economy, you would assume you've come to a different place. I understand these place-based models of culture, identity, nature and economy to draw from place-based knowledge. Place can be an area in space, but it can also be culture, identity, nature and economy. Inspired by Escobar I started to ask myself whether the concepts that helped Escobar interpret what was happening in the Colombian Pacific, could help me interpret what is happening in Benin. At that point I was still thinking at least in some ways that since I am doing development studies it means that I should go somewhere in the developing world to make observations and collect data and then interpret it to produce knowledge. That knowledge then should contribute to poverty alleviation, empowerment and such.

So I did the field study and I came back to Lund to write this essay and I started reading more texts especially from writers who were associated with the MCD project, like Escobar. Up to that point I was focusing mostly on the concept of alternative modernities and place-based systems of organizing life. I was hoping that in my field study Escobar's concepts could help me understand and then demonstrate some of the logics in a rather place-based system, and especially how those logics might not correspond to how knowledge is seen from the perspective of modernity. This was because I felt, and still do, that this kind of 'local' knowledges were still considered something less than the knowledge produced by researchers studying development for example, as in that they would be interpreted through theories drawing from the tradition of western rational knowledge. However, I came to notice that I should not be content with what I had done in Benin and that there were such fundamental problems, that I would need to consider those before going on with doing development studies. What I realised was that in my field study I could be seen to have reproduced the colonial matrix of power, and that if I would continue producing knowledge as it seems to be produced in most of development studies, I would continue reproducing the matrix. Thus this essay came to be about what I would see as problems with producing knowledge in development studies. The next chapter is a theoretical discussion where I aim to conceptualize these problems and situate them in the colonial matrix of power.

2. Theoretical Discussion

In this chapter I move towards exposing the problem of knowledge production in development studies. I will depart from modernity, as the concept already came up above in Escobar's concepts of alternative modernities and alternatives to modernity. A critique of modernity was also the first aspect of decoloniality that I became aware of. Here I will first introduce the concept of modernity from a more general perspective and then I will move on to discuss modernity from the perspective of decoloniality. Modernity described from the perspective of decoloniality will lead to a discussion on the colonial matrix of power and then to the relation between the colonial matrix of power and knowledge production in development studies. That relation is explored through thinking about a hierarchy of knowledges, especially the hierarchy in the subject object relation in modern science. The hierarchy in the subject-object relation is reflected in the self-Other relation, that is the focus of the final section on receptive generosity.

2.1 Modernity

Modernity as a concept can be rather problematic to approach. According to Gregory et al. (2009, p.471) it is a “notoriously ambivalent and highly contested concept”. Gregory et al. do find some common notions about modernity. Firstly they connect modernity to Eurocentrism, since “the term has been used to designate a number of discrete, yet interrelated, phenomena that, in most cases until recently, place Europe at the centre of the world stage” (2009, p.471-2). Gregory et al. find that modernity has been thought of as a period in time, a break from the past; modernity has also been associated with “a particular mental attitude” seeking explanations through rationality and order and dominating nature, achieving progress through science; modernity can also be used to refer to “a thoroughly secular project of liberation and emancipation” dealing with rights and justice; finally Gregory et al. find that the concept of modernity is also used to specify “a particular process of global incorporation” leading from colonialisms to globalization. From the relation between modernity and globalization I draw a bridge to the MCD project.

In his article *Worlds and Knowledges Otherwise* (2010, p.35), Arturo Escobar poses the question: “Is globalization the last stage of capitalist modernity, or the beginning of something new?”. According to Escobar (2010, p.35) the MCD project and what he calls “intra-modern” perspectives would “give a very different answer to this question”. Escobar (2010, p.35) claims that in these

intra-modern perspectives globalization is mostly viewed as entailing “the universalization and radicalization of modernity”. In this view, according to Escobar, modernity is seen as an essentially European phenomenon, and globalization as a relatively single process emanating out of Europe. The main point to me here is that in these intra-modern views modernity is mainly, even solely, explained through factors internal to Europe and the totality of modernity is not thoroughly questioned.

Escobar (2010, p.35-6) describes four aspects of modernity from intra-modern views. First, historically modernity has its origins in seventeenth century northern Europe, eventually becoming consolidated with the industrial revolution. Second, “sociologically modernity is characterized by certain institutions, particularly the nation state”, self-reflexivity through expert knowledge, and the “separation of space and place, since relations between 'absent others' become more important than face to face interaction”. Third, culturally modernity involves rationalization, universalization and individuation. Also, “[o]rder and reason are seen as the foundation for equality and freedom, and enabled by the language of rights. Fourth, philosophically modernity might be seen to hold “the notion of 'Man' “separate from the natural and the divine” and to place him “as the foundation for all knowledge and order of the world”. Progress and development are also important to these views on modernity. As I mentioned, according to Escobar (2010, p.37) the stance of the intra-modern views on modernity seems to be that “*from now on, it's modernity all the way down, everywhere, until the end of times*”(original emphasis). This is not necessarily to say that modernity is the same all over. Escobar (2010, p.37) states that in some recent “anthropological investigations” modernity has been seen as “deterritorialized, hybridized, contested, uneven, heterogeneous, even multiple”.

Also Yehia (2006) writes about how the discipline of anthropology has engaged with the concept of modernity and describes this project as divided in two sides. According to Yehia (2006, p.92) “the first one is the examination of modernity itself as a set of practices, symbols, and discourses”. To me this view seems to view modernity rather as one than many. From the second side, emerges “a view of modernity as plural –what some authors call “alternative modernities”” (Yehia (2006, p.92)”. Yehia (2006, p.92) refers to a review of a set of such works where Kahn (2001) found that “taken as a whole they have pluralized and relativized the accepted understanding of modernity as a dominant and homogenous process”. Most discuss alternative modernities ... as emerging in the dynamic contacts between dominant (usually Western) and non-dominant (e.g., local, non-Western, regional) practices, knowledges or rationalities”. It is perhaps due to this plurality that “[t]here is no unified conception in these works, however, on what exactly constitutes modernity” (Yehia 2006,

p.92). Furthermore, “[i]n the last instance, the limits of pluralizing modernity lie in the fact that it ends up reducing all social practice to being a manifestation of a European experience, no matter how qualified” (Yehia 2006, p.92). Escobar (2010, p.37) writes along the same lines as he states that “in the last instance these modernities end up being a reflection of a eurocentered social order, under the assumption that modernity is now everywhere, an ubiquitous and ineluctable social fact”.

It could be seen that viewing modernity as plural might contribute to questioning the totality of modernity in some ways, but modernity itself still remains inescapable. Mignolo (2010, p.305) refers to Quijano, who is seen as a very important contributor to the MCD project, when he writes that “Quijano acknowledges that postmodern thinkers already criticized the modern concept of Totality; but this critique is limited and internal to European history and the history of European ideas”. This modern concept of Totality refers to a notion of “Totality that negates, exclude[s], occlude[s] the difference and the possibilities of other totalities” (Mignolo 2010, p.305). In the previous paragraph Totality could in my view be replaced with knowledge. I would argue that this negating, excluding, occluding, of other knowledges in this case, could also be seen to characterise development studies.

If modernity is attributed with such Totality as above, what can be imagined is a pluralized modernity, or alternative modernities, not alternatives to modernity. Escobar (2010, p.37) sees an important difference between intra-modern and decolonial views on modernity, as decoloniality claims that “radical alternatives to modernity are *not* a historically foreclosed possibility”(my emphasis). Decoloniality then seems to appear to Escobar (2010, p.37) as a project articulated around that possibility. What is crucial for decoloniality and its view on modernity, is the underside of modernity, namely coloniality. From the perspective of decoloniality, modernity cannot be separated from coloniality and this is why I am next discussing modernity/coloniality.

2.2 Modernity/coloniality

The purpose of the discussion that follows is to first present modernity from the perspective of decoloniality, as modernity/coloniality. As an important aspect of coloniality I will write on the colonial matrix of power.

Yehia (2006, p.97) states that “[m]odernity presents a rhetoric of salvation, while hiding coloniality, which is the logic of oppression and exploitation” and according to Mignolo (2011, p.279) “the

logic of coloniality ... is constitutive of the rhetoric of modernity”. Coloniality and colonialism are not the same. Colonialism “denotes a political and economic relation in which the sovereignty of a nation or a people rests on the power of a another nation” (Maldonado-Torres 2010, p.97). Coloniality emerged through colonialism, but the “long-standing patterns of power that emerged ... define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and *knowledge production* well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations” (Maldonado-Torres 2010, p.97, my emphasis). I will continue by discussing the historical origins of modernity/coloniality, which differ markedly from how Escobar (2010) saw the historical origins of modernity as being presented in intra-modern views on modernity. Escobar (2003, p.60) writes the following: “The conquest and colonization of America is the formative moment in the creation of Europe's Other; the point of origin of the capitalist world system, enabled by gold and silver from America; *the origin of Europe's own concept of modernity*” (my emphasis). According to Quijano (2010, p.22) “[w]ith the conquest of the societies and the cultures which inhabit what today is called Latin America, began the constitution of a new world order, culminating, five hundred years later, in a global power covering the whole planet”. What I am trying to present here is how Europe's modernity has not been shaped only by forces internal to Europe, that through colonization a colonial structure of power was established, and that fundamental parts of this power structure are still being reproduced.

Quijano (2010, p.22) writes that “[a] relation of direct, political, social, and cultural domination was established by the Europeans over the conquered of all continents”, and that “[t]his domination is known as a specific Eurocentered colonialism”. Today “the Eurocentered Colonialism, in the sense of a formal system of political domination by Western European societies over others seems a question of the past” (Quijano 2010,p.22). However, this specific Eurocentered colonialism is linked with a “specific colonial structure of power [that] produced the specific social discriminations which were later codified as 'racial', 'ethnic', 'anthropological' or 'national', according to the times agents and populations involved” and “[t]his power structure was, and still is, the framework within which operate the other social relations of classes or estates” (Quijano 2010, p.22).

2.3 The colonial matrix of power

In my view, this colonial structure of power could be seen as enacted in the colonial matrix of power. According to Mignolo (2010, p.332) Quijano “has been exploring the colonial matrix of power in four different and mutually articulated domains”. These are:

“1. The appropriation of land and the exploitation of labor. 2. The control of authority (viceroyalty, colonial states, military structures). 3. The control of gender and sexuality (the Christian family, gender and sexual values and conduct. 4. The control of subjectivity (the Christian faith, secular idea of subject and citizen) and knowledge (the principles of Theology structuring all forms of knowledge encompassed in the Trivium and the Quadrivium; secular philosophy and concept of Reason structuring the human and natural sciences and the practical knowledge of professional schools”. Mignolo (2010, p.334) refers to these four domains as “the four spheres of the colonial matrix of power”. Mignolo (2010, p.334) also writes about two fundamental elements of “the 'glue' holding together the four spheres”, which are *knowledge and racism* and *capital* (Mignolo 2010, p.332) .

According to Mignolo (2010, p.332) in the formation of the colonial matrix of power “*The control of knowledge in Western Christendom belonged to Western Christian men, which meant the world would be conceived only from the perspective of Western Christian men*”(original emphasis). Grosfoguel (2010, p.68) states that the foundation of knowledge in the European Middle Ages was God, but Rene Descartes replaced God “with (Western) Man as the foundation of knowledge in European Modern times”. This could be seen as a transition from theo-politics of knowledge to ego-politics of knowledge. In ego-politics of knowledge the all knowing God is replaced by man as the autonomous subject who can produce knowledge through analysing and interpreting information that he gains from observing an object. As a result of this, “[u]niversal Truth beyond time and space, privilege access to the laws of the Universe, and the capacity to produce scientific knowledge and theory is now placed in the mind of Western man” Grosfoguel (2010, p.68). The separation of mind from body and nature in modern Western sciences enables claims of “non-situated, universal, God-eyed view knowledge” (Grosfoguel, p.68). Also the “Imperial Being, that is, the subjectivity of those who are at the center of the world because they have already conquered it” enabled the emergence of claims to universal knowledge. This is what Castro-Gomez, according to Grosfoguel (2010, p.68), calls “the point-zero' perspective of Eurocentric philosophies” that “hides its local and particular perspective under abstract universalism” (Grosfoguel 2010, p.68). Thus, I take the ego-politics of knowledge to mean that the findings of the European scientist are seen as universal, representing truth in all times of everywhere, rather than at a specific time in a locality with a history.

At the same time as Western knowledge has claimed universality, it has also dismissed non-Western knowledges as particularistic, and lower in a hierarchy of knowledges, which correlates to a

hierarchy of people. Knowledge has been important for denoting people lower in the hierarchy, through expressions such as people without writing, without history, without development, without rights, or without democracy (Grosfoguel 2010, p.68). However, race, instead of knowledge emerges as the central concept in constructing a hierarchy of people when I read about coloniality. Non-Europeans came to be seen as non-, or not so much human not only because they were not of the correct faith and knowledge, but at the same time also because of their skin colour. According to Grosfoguel (2010, p.71) “[t]he idea of race organizes the world's population into a hierarchical order of superior and inferior people that becomes an organizing principle of the international division of labor and of the global patriarchal system”. Thus race is of central importance in thinking about the colonial matrix of power. Conceptualizing race in this way has very important implications also for how we understand capitalism, but second part of what holds together the above mentioned four spheres of the colonial matrix of power is capital. Next I will discuss some aspects of capitalism, and move on to discuss how the relation between race and capitalism might be conceptualized.

Mignolo (2010, p.334) discusses how “capitalism as we know it today surfaced and materialized with the 'discovery and conquest' of America. This is due to the appropriation of land that *“enormously increased the size and power of capital”* (Mignolo 2010, p.335). Capital and capitalism should not be taken to mean the same thing. According to Mignolo (2010, p.335) “[c]apital refers to the resources ... necessary for the production and distribution of commodities as well as for political interventions in the control of authority”, whereas capitalism “refers to a philosophy that is based on a particular type of economic structure”. Here I will bring up two concepts associated with capitalism, which I will refer to in the analysis section of the field study chapter, production conditions and accumulation.

First, production conditions are here defined as “those factors that are not produced as commodities, that is, according to the law of value, even if they are treated as such”, for example “land (nature), labor (human life), [and] space” (Escobar 2008, p.93). Remembering that difference between capital and capitalism articulated by Mignolo, it might be seen that in the economic structure that the philosophy of capitalism is based on, “capital tends to create its own barrier by destroying production conditions” (Escobar 2008, p.94). According to Escobar (2008, pp. 93-4) “[m]odern capitalism has brought about the progressive capitalization of production conditions” and “this process is mediated by the state”. In Escobar's (2008, p.94) description of that process the “state legitimizes its control over production conditions in terms of general interest, including, for

example, progress and development and economical growth”. Second, accumulation is defined as “[t]he process by which capital is reproduced on an expanding scale through the reinvestment of surplus value” (Gregory et al. 2009, p.3). Gregory et. al (2009, p.3) write that “for Marx accumulation was uniquely imperative within capitalist societies and therefore constituted a definitive condition of the capitalist mode of production”.

Mignolo (2010, p.335) argues that the colonial matrix of power “became the *foundation of capitalism* and capitalism, as the engine of the system that bears the name of 'neo-liberalism', a conservative and violent narrative advancing war and free trade to expand the Western world, continues to reproduce the colonial matrix of power”. Since the colonial matrix of power is seen as the foundation of capitalism and the idea of race as organizing the hierarchies in that matrix, it is also necessary to understand capitalism through race.

First, according to Grosfoguel (2010, p.72) “[t]he old Marxist paradigm of infrastructure and superstructure is replaced by a historical-heterogeneous structure ... , or a 'heterarchy' ... in which subjectivity and the social imaginary is not derivative but constitutive of the structures of the world-system”. I interpret this to refer to the idea of base and superstructure, which according to Gregory et al. (2009, p.42) is “[t]he metaphor Marx uses to express the idea that the economic structure of the society (its 'base') conditions corresponding legal and political superstructures and forms of consciousness”. I would see that according to this logic a hierarchy of races would derive from the mode of production, but in Grosfoguel's conceptualization this relation seems to be turned around in a sense. I say this because Grosfoguel (2010, p.72) states that in “this conceptualization, race and racism are not superstructural or instrumental to an overarching logic of capitalist accumulation; they are constitutive of capitalist accumulation at a world-scale”.

I will try to make some further clarifications on the relations between the colonial matrix of power, race and capitalism before moving on to focusing more specifically on knowledge production. I present two ideas, one from Quijano and one from Grosfoguel. First, Quijano (2010, p. 25) writes:

“So, coloniality of power is based upon 'racial' social classification of the world population under Eurocentered world power. But coloniality of power is not exhausted in the problem of 'racist' social relations. It pervaded and modulated the basic instances of the eurocentered capitalist colonial/modern world power to become the cornerstone of this coloniality of power”.

Thus, even though race could be seen as the 'cornerstone' of the colonial matrix of power, race is not all there is to the colonial matrix of power. Second, Grosfoguel (2010, p.73) writes: “Given its

entanglement with other power relations, destroying the capitalist aspects of the world-system would not be enough to destroy the present world-system. To transform this world-system it is crucial to destroy the historical-structural heterogeneous totality called the 'colonial power matrix' of the 'world-system'".

Thus, the colonial matrix of power is also not the same thing as the capitalist world-system, or rather, the capitalist aspects of the world-system. This is because race and capitalism are seen as hierarchies that in part constitute the heterogeneous totality of hierarchies of the colonial matrix of power. Or capitalism might rather be seen as a philosophy that serves to reproduce economic hierarchies. These economic and racial hierarchies are not separate in the sense that they constitute the totality of the power matrix, but as Grosfoguel stated, the totality is heterogeneous. This is why "Anti-capitalist decolonization and liberation cannot be reduced to only one dimension of social life ... [as] [i]t requires a broader transformation of the sexual, gender, spiritual, epistemic, economic, political, linguistic and racial hierarchies of the modern/colonial world-system" (Grosfoguel 2010, p.73).

Here I attempted to show how, from a decolonial perspective, modernity and capitalism are not seen as intra-European phenomena, since "modernity is not an exclusively European phenomenon but constituted in a dialectical relation with a non-European alterity" (Mignolo 2010, p.311) and since the conquest of America is seen as a starting point, or even *the* beginning of, the formation of the capitalist world-system. I also discussed briefly the colonial matrix of power and the hierarchies that are associated with it. I especially pointed out how race is a central concept in understanding the colonial matrix of power, and also how it relates to understanding capitalism and the economic hierarchies that it has produced and keeps reproducing. As I quoted Grosfoguel stating, there are other hierarchies than economic and racial, for example, a hierarchy of knowledges could be conceptualized. Next I will look at how hierarchies of knowledge, or epistemic hierarchies, have been considered by writers associated with the MCD project. At the same time I will relate the discussion to development studies.

2.4 A hierarchy of knowledges

In this section I am focusing on a somewhat specified field of relations within the colonial matrix of power, that might be conceptualized as 'hierarchy of knowledges', where a dominant knowledge, the tradition of western rational knowledge, disqualifies other knowledges. I begin by discussing what

Grosfoguel (2010) conceptualizes as 'epistemic hierarchy' and 'linguistic hierarchy'. The second part of this section is based on a discussion on the production of knowledge by Quijano (2010), from his article titled "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality". I will consider the implications of that discussion to development studies with the purpose of making more visible the connection between the hierarchies intrinsic to the colonial matrix of power and knowledge production in development studies.

Grosfoguel (2010, p.70-1) discusses different aspects global of hierarchies in the world-system. touch upon what could be conceptualized as a hierarchy of knowledges:

1. "an epistemic hierarchy that privileges Western knowledge and cosmology over non-Western knowledge and cosmologies, and institutionalized in the global university system
2. "a linguistic hierarchy between European languages and non-European languages that privileges communication and knowledge/theoretical production in the former and subalternize the latter as sole producers of folklore or culture but not of knowledge/theory".

Since western rational knowledge, that is seen as the dominant knowledge, is produced in these languages, knowledge produced in other languages is seen as inferior knowledge, or not knowledge, at least in part because of this difference. An effect of these hierarchies in my view could be that when development researchers go to 'the field', to some rural community in Africa for example, and collect 'stories' and observe the 'culture', the collected stories and observed practices do not become knowledge until they are interpreted and analysed by the researcher based on theories produced in the university and written down in a European language, preferably English. The role of the people in the village is that of objects, they are observed and interviewed by the subject(s) (researcher(s)) in order to collect data, but they have no part in the production of knowledge and theory. Just as well, if a native American thinker writes a book in her native language about philosophy or cosmology, drawing from a local history of knowledge, the knowledge she has produced is hardly considered as equal to European thinkers who are seen as producing some kind of universal knowledge, where the subject is not based in any locality. I think Quijano's discussion on knowledge production offers a good starting point for thinking about the connection between the colonial matrix of power, and how we consider knowledges in development studies. The focus of the discussion is on the subject object relation, which I already pointed out above.

Quijano (2010, p.26) discusses knowledge production in the Western sciences, and he claims that "in the current crisis of the European paradigm of rational knowledge, the latter's fundamental

presupposition is questioned: vis. knowledge as a product of a subject object relation". What are the subject and the object? According to Quijano (2010, p.26) "the 'subject' is a category referring to the isolated individual because it constitutes itself in itself and for itself, in its discourse and its capacity of reflection" and "the 'object' is a category referring to an entity not only different from the 'subject'! individual, but external to the latter by its nature. The object also has properties that set it apart from other objects and constitute the object's relations to other objects. Quijano (2010, p.26) criticizes the subject object definition and argues that the individualist view of the subject denies "intersubjectivity and social totality as the production sites of all knowledge". To me this denial is similar to how in eurocentric explanations of the history of modernity and capitalism for example, factors internal to Europe are seen to explain mostly everything, and the effects that the outside of Europe has had on processes internal to Europe have been downplayed, or ignored.

Quijano (2010, p.26) states that recent findings of modern science seem to question the definition of object. The properties of the object do not necessarily seem to be attributes of that individual object alone, but rather they are "modes and times of a given field of relations" (Quijano 2010, p.26). This could be interpreted to mean that the object does not exist as a sole identity but rather it only exists in the field of relations that it has to others. Also, the division between subject and object is problematic, since also the subject "exists as a differentiated part, but not as separated, of an intersubjectivity or intersubjective dimension of social relationship" (Quijano 2010, p.27). An important notion by Quijano is that knowledge, instead of a subject object relation, could rather be viewed as "a relation between people for the purpose of something", and the same applies for property (Quijano 2010, p.27). The difference between the two is "that the property relation exists in a material as well as an intersubjective manner; knowledge, on the other hand, exists only as an intersubjective relationship" (Quijano 2010, p.27).

Just as the historical origins of modernity are not fully explainable through factors internal to Europe, so do the individuality of the subject and the duality of the subject-object relation, have an aspect that needs to be explained also by factors external to Europe. Quijano (2010, p.27) explains that "the 'other' is totally absent; or is present, can be present, only in an 'objectivised' mode. This view makes it possible to deny that there would be any subject outside of Europe. Thus a view emerges that "only European culture is rational, it can contain 'subjects' – the rest are not rational, they cannot be or harbor 'subjects'" (2010, p.28). In this way the relation between European and other cultures became, and still is, a subject-object relation. Since between the subject and the object "there can be but a relation of externality" it has meant that "every relation of

communication, of interchange of knowledge and of modes of producing knowledge between the cultures” has been blocked (Quijano 2010, p.28). This has lasted for five hundred years and it is a prime example of “a relation of coloniality” (Quijano 2010, p.28).

Quijano (2010, p.28) goes on to claim that “the European paradigm of rational knowledge, was not only elaborated in the context of, but as a part of, a power structure that involved the European colonial domination of the rest of the world”. Finally, Quijano mentions Anthropology and Ethnography as examples of disciplines that have been formed and developed after the Second World War and that show a subject-object relation between “the 'Western' culture and the rest” where “[b]y definition, the other cultures are the 'object' of study” (Quijano 2010, p.28). To me it seems quite clear that the above applies for development studies. Development studies as a discipline also emerged in Europe and the US after the Second World War, and its objects of study have been 'developing', 'poor', 'third world' countries, communities, even continents. This subject-object relation is apparent in Grosfoguel's account below.

Grosfoguel (2010, p.65) writes about his experience from a group working with Latin American Subaltern Studies and he claims that “[w]ith a few exceptions, they produced studies *about* the subaltern rather than studies *with* and *from* a subaltern perspective”(original emphasis). According to Grosfoguel (2010, p.65) the group “reproduced the epistemic schema of Area Studies in the United States” and thus “theory was still located in the North while the subjects to be studied are located in the South”. I would say that my experience of doing a field study as a part of a bachelor's programme in development studies seems somewhat similar. The understanding that I had about how a field study could be done, based on courses I had taken in the programme, was that in 'the South' I would collect data and then interpret it through a theoretical framework, and all the theoretical frameworks I had learned about, could be seen as located in 'the North', or as drawing from western rational knowledge.

This absence of other knowledges than those drawing from western rational knowledge might be seen as a result of knowledge produced by non-Europeans in non-European languages not being considered as knowledge, but as folklore or perhaps culture, by those reproducing the dominant knowledge. Then the dominant knowledge would be seen as able to examine and observe other knowledges that are below in the hierarchy, but the knowledges are not discussing as equals. In this way, from the perspective of the dominant knowledge and those who reproduce it, it might seem that there is no hierarchy, since other knowledges than the dominant one itself are not even

recognized as knowledges. As if there was one knowledge (the dominant one) that is observing local situations in different places, and producing universal knowledge out of nowhere. From the perspective of decoloniality, it seems to be that instead of being an universal knowledge, the dominant knowledge has merely cloaked its geo-political location. That is, the knowledge of modernity has hid its European origin in “the rhetoric of universality” (Mignolo 2010, p.317).

I want to point out again that this hierarchy of knowledges that I have been thinking about here, should be seen as one aspect of the heterogeneous totality of hierarchies acted out as domination in the colonial matrix of power. This means that the hierarchy of knowledges that seems to be reproduced when we do development studies, cannot be separated from the other hierarchies that constitute the colonial matrix of power. Next I will discuss how this hierarchy of knowledges could be related to a hierarchy of being.

2.5 Receptive generosity

In this section I will discuss some considerations regarding ontology based on Nelson Maldonado-Torres' (2010) article “On the Coloniality of Being”. The purpose here is to discuss the “self-Other relation” which I feel should be one of “receptive generosity”. First of all I have to define the self and the Other. Here I am discussing and conceptualizing the self-Other relation in a very wide or open sense, but I am also thinking more specifically about the self-Other relations between myself and the people in Folly Condji. When I think about those relations I would see myself as the self, and a person from Folly Condji as the Other. The Other might be taken to mean any other person, but in this discussion the Other is the one who is *dominated* when the colonial matrix of power, the heterogeneous totality of hierarchies is acted out as domination in self-Other relations, that I would see as colonial self-Other relations because of that domination.

I am writing about knowledge production in development studies, but it could be argued that what the problems with knowledge production in development studies that I have been discussing really come down to is the self-Other relation. I have also been writing about hierarchies, especially a hierarchy of knowledges, and I feel that a hierarchy in the self-Other relation could be seen to make possible those different kinds of hierarchies that are enacted as domination in the colonial matrix of power.

To elaborate on hierarchy in the self-Other relation, requires discussing ontology, here understood as “[t]he study and description of 'being' or that which can be said to exist in the world” (Gregory et

al. 2009, p.511), and epistemology, understood as being “[c]oncerned with defining knowledge and explaining how it works” (Gregory et al. 2009, p.206). In his article Maldonado-Torres (2010, p.106) discusses to “the Cartesian formulation”, “‘Cogito, ergo sum’, ‘I think, therefore I am’”. According to Maldonado-Torres (2010, p.106), who refers to Heidegger, “[t]he Cartesian formulation privileges epistemology”. I think, therefore I am, would mean that to be one would need to think. Here I take 'to think' to mean 'dealing with knowledge', and therefore, If one is not 'thinking', not 'dealing with knowledge', one *is* actually *not*, does not exist.

When this thought is related to the hierarchies I have been discussing, especially the hierarchy of knowledges, I think, therefore I am, might be seen to imply: “I think (others do not think, or do not think properly), therefore I am (others are-not, lack being, should not exist or are dispensable)” (Maldonado-Torres 2010, p.106). To me, those who do not think, or do not think properly, would refer to those who do not think according to rational knowledge, as it might be understood from the perspective of modernity. According to Maldonado-Torres (2010, p.106-7), “[t]he absent of rationality is articulated in modernity with the idea of the absence of Being in others”. Thus, those who do not think according to the logics of modernity, those who draw from other knowledges, would be seen as not-being, as lacking being compared to those who 'think properly'.

A self-Other relation where the Other is not seen as being, or as lacking being compared to the self, prevents receptive generosity, which is based on the logic of the gift. When the Other is seen as lacking being, according to Maldonado-Torres (2010, p.112) it also means that “the capacity to have and to give have been taken away from her and him”. Regarding knowledge, I take this to mean that when the Other is seen as not thinking properly and thus lacking being, the Other is also seen as not able to have or give knowledge. Maldonado-Torres (2010, p.112) refers to Emmanuel Lévinas, who “argues that gift-giving and reception are fundamental traits of the self”. Thus when we, from the perspective of the dominant knowledge, deny the giving of the gift (of knowledge) from the Other, we are also denying receiving from ourselves. The Other is denied of the fundamental trait of giving and we deny receiving from ourselves. It is us who draw from the dominant knowledge, that have the power to deny, “the only epistemic privilege is in the side of the colonizer” (Mignolo 2010, p.313). This is because of the heterogeneous totality of hierarchies enacted as domination in colonial self-Other relations, that is the colonial matrix of power. As a part of realising receptive generosity, the hierarchies that constitute the colonial matrix of power should be destroyed, and this is what decoloniality, which I will discuss in the final chapter, deals with.

3. Field Study

I mentioned already that I spent some time in Benin and engaged in ethnographical research. That research is by no means the only thing I did in Benin. I went there accompanying the family of a friend whom I got to know in Finland, but who hails from Benin. By being and doing with my friend, and the people that I met in Benin, I had also other projects than just that research project. However, it is mostly within the research project that I recorded my experiences in a more conscious and organized way, and thus it is easier to present those experiences in a way that might meet the expectations of this essay's intended audience. In the first section I will describe that process of recording experiences, how it happened, what kind of intentions I had and why. In the second section I will analyse the transcripts from discussions and observation notes through the idea of place-based knowledge and in the third section I write down some problems I was asked by people in Folly Condji to present in my essay.

3.1 General description of the field study

When I was beginning this thesis project in Lund I made some plans for the field study. Those plans involved more complicated and extensive methods than what I actually did in Folly Condji. In the following I will try to explain how I ended up going about this research and why. After I got to Benin the work with the research started by my friend introducing me to his friend, who became my research partner and a very good friend. He is a man of about my age and grew up about an hour's drive from Folly Condji. Currently he is studying English at the university. I discussed the ideas I had at that point with the research, which included visiting several communities and doing different kinds of interviews. At this point my research partner started to think which could be the first village we would visit. I had some criteria for the village, and those criteria were quite much influenced by Escobar's (2008) book.

When Escobar discusses how communities can be seen as organized according to other knowledges than modernity, he gives examples from communities in the Pacific Region in Colombia. With those examples in mind I thought of some kind of characteristics for a community that I should go to. What I was primarily looking for was a village where I might find something similar to what Escobar (2008, p.133) calls "traditional production systems". Escobar (2008, p.133) discusses a biodiversity conservation project where "[t]he traditional production systems (TPSs) of the

indigenous and black communities came to be seen as deeply embedded in cultural and social systems, as having their own forms of knowledge and rationality, and as being the basis for food security and conservation". Escobar (2008, p.133) describes the TPSs as follows: "Generally speaking, TPSs are small in scale and geared primarily toward self-consumption; they do not obey a logic of accumulation but are driven by the principle of self-reproduction". My idea then, was to visit communities where most of the consumed food would be produced within the community. In this way I was trying to find communities where the authority of other knowledges than modernity would be harder to dismiss.

My assumption there was that since the TPSs of the communities in the Colombian Pacific were seen to have their own forms of knowledge and rationality, and to prioritize self-consumption, perhaps production systems in communities in Benin might also have their own forms of knowledge and rationality. In order to find communities where most of the consumed food might be produced within the community, I was thinking I should visit communities that are further from, rather than closer to, the main road that leads to the capital city and also connects Ghana and Nigeria. The idea there was that communities that are further from the main road would also be further from marketplaces, which might make it more likely for people in those communities to produce more of the food they eat by themselves, rather than buy it from the marketplace.

After I told him about these ideas, my research partner thought of a village that we should visit first. This was the village of Folly Condji. It is not only because of my ideas about what kind of a village we should visit that my research partner chose Folly Condji. He also had a personal interest to visit this village since his father had been the first principal of the nearby school. Since Folly Condji seemed to fit the ideas I had quite well I did not see a problem in that sense with going there. After the first visit I changed my plan about going to multiple communities, and each time me and my research partner would be free from our other projects we would go to Folly Condji. During the time I spent in Benin I did visit other villages than Folly Condji, but it was the only place I visited for the purposes of the research. I chose to visit only Folly Condji in connection to the research project, in order to hopefully gain some depth in my understanding of life in that specific village and also to perhaps allow me and my research partner and the people in the village to get more used to each other. Going back and seeing the same people many times also gave me the opportunity to talk about, and ask further questions on, issues we had discussed during earlier visits.

I visited the village of Folly Condji more than ten times with my research partner and almost every

time we would have a group interview/discussion. What I am referring to in this essay when I write about experiences from Benin, is what I find in my transcripts of interviews we made, and some from notes on observations. Most interviews we made were open group interviews, done in a central open space in the village with people free to enter or leave the discussion. In these interviews either the chief of the village, the vice chief, or both were usually present throughout the discussion, although not necessarily contributing the most. For these interviews I prepared a subject and some questions beforehand and came up with new questions and sometimes also new topics during the course of the interviews. There was not any formal moderation by me or the village authorities and it seems to me that more or less everyone has been free to contribute to the discussions. One observation that leads me to think this way is, for example, that women of different ages would interrupt the chief and vice chief, among other men, without any sign of protest from the men that I would have understood. In some interviews I had questions that were directed specifically to someone, such as the chief for example, but also in these situations others usually had something to add.

On the first visit, as we arrived in the village the men arranged us right away sitting as a group under a big tree at an entrance to the village, and also children and women came to see. After this first discussion most interviews were done outside the chief's house as me and my research partner were directed there by him and other men of the village. It is a central open space in the village, through which many people move and in which people sit down too. In a space like this people might have been more likely to hang around and contribute to the discussion if they are interested, than if the discussions were held in a space belonging specifically to somebody and less visible, for example inside a house. However, that we always gathered at this place could mean that people living in other parts of the village were less present in the discussions. In addition to this space I have been doing interviews in and outside the houses of vodouns (spirits/gods) and at the fields of certain farmers, and while walking through the village.

This way to arrange the interviews, what I refer to as open group discussions, was not entirely planned beforehand. When we arrived at the village with my research partner we met four men standing by the road that leads to the village. After we greeted each other, I explained with the help of my research assistant who we were and that I'd like to hear people tell me about the village and I'd like to ask questions. While some of the men went to look for the chief, others brought some long chairs and placed them under a big tree and there we sat. I did not say how I'd like to do interviews or who I'd like to talk to. My intention there was partly "to avoid exploitative research or

perpetuation of relations of domination and control” as Sultana (2007, p.375) puts it, and partly to see what would happen, in order to perhaps learn something about power structures in the community for example. However, it is hard to say if the men in the village who arranged us this way sitting as a group in an open space, thought that it was the way I'd like to have it, or if it was preferred by them. During this first visit I also told what kind of subjects I would like to hear about and the men replied they would tell about all those things and that we could also visit the houses of vodouns and the fields. I feel that I was not really asking to see these places, but the men thought it would be important if I wanted to learn about their village. I was trying each time to communicate to people in the village that it was up to them to choose if they wanted to talk and answer questions, or to have me visiting them in general. Before each visit my research partner would call the chief to see if it's fine that we come and at the end of each visit the chief or some other man would tell us when it would be good to come again.

As I said, there was no control of who joined or left the group discussions, except for once when for a while I was talking only with women. We would usually start with a topic that I would have prepared in advance, and I would ask preprepared questions too, but the discussions would eventually lead to somewhere else. It could be argued that not controlling the interview setting and sample would make this research less valid, but I already mentioned that representativeness is not the main concern of this field study. I could say that what was going on was something along the lines of “abandoning the search for objectivity in favour of critical provisional analysis based on plurality of (temporally and spatially) situated voices and silences”, as Sultana (2007, p.376) quotes Peake and Trotz. Yehia (2006, p.102) puts specific importance on silences as she claims that our (the academia's) “challenge becomes to re-configure our own frameworks and modes of engagement; so that we can replace *giving voice ... by listening*”. The idea is that through “learning to listen to/through silences, rather than signaling and end or closure of dialogue, might contribute to tangibly changing the terms of the conversation; which would create better conditions of possibility of subaltern to be heard” (Yehia 2006, p.102).

I would say that I was not able to listen in this sense very much. We couldn't visit the village very often due to me and especially my research partner having also other projects, and we also had quite limited time on each visit. Because of this I often felt pressured to continue discussions on topics where I could already see something I would write about in this essay, when I felt the current discussion was not continuing. Thus, I usually didn't feel like I had the time to just listen through the silence and wait to see/hear what would emerge from that. Another reason is that the reason for

me being in that village was always clearly the research. Thus, if I would be silent for too long people would assume that I had no more questions or new topics and would assume I'd be leaving or would go to do something else themselves. If I'd had more time to spend in the village I could perhaps have been a better listener

The open group discussions I have been discussing above could be described as focus groups, since “[a] focus group is a qualitative data collection method in which one or two researchers and several participants meet as a group to discuss a given research topic” (Mack et al. 2005, p.51). On the other hand Mack et al. (2005, p.51) write that focus groups “are also effective for accessing a broad range of views on a specific topic, as opposed to achieving group consensus”, but my experience has been that people in the focus groups tended to agree on most issues, perhaps adding to someone else's account but not disputing it. This might mean that people in Folly Condji had similar views on the issues that were discussed, but it might also mean that expressed views were only the dominant ones that people don't easily question publicly. In either case, some of those views might be interpreted to draw from other knowledges than modernity as I will argue in the analysis section.

While visiting the village I tried to continuously make observations on the surroundings and what was happening. However I don't feel that I did participant observation as such if it means “observing and participating, to varying degrees, in the study community's daily activities” (Mack et al. 2005, p.13). I did in some sense approach “participants in their own environment” (Mack et al. 2005, p.13) by going to the village, but there was minimal participation in activities. As I mentioned I always felt short on time, and that's mostly why I saw the open group interviews, or focus groups, as a more effective way to use the time I had than participant observation. Probably through participant observation I could have listened much more, also to silences, but I think that learning through a method such as participant observation would have required much more time to spend in Folly Condji than I had. In the next section I will analyse what I did have time to observe and listen to, and write down in my notes and transcripts.

3.2 Analysis

In this sub-section I will present an analysis of the material I have from the field study. I will analyse the discussion transcripts and observation notes in relation to the idea of place-based knowledge. My purpose there is that if, based on my analysis, it seems that there could be place-based knowledge in Folly Condji, then that knowledge would be other than modernity, which

originates in Europe. If there is other knowledge than modernity present in what people have said to me and in what I have observed, then there would also have to exist a perspective different from mine. Radically different, in the sense of drawing in part or wholly from knowledge other than modernity, from place-based knowledge. I am looking for this place-based knowledge in two ways. First, I am analysing some aspects of production, consumption and reproduction in Folly Condji, and second, I am analysing some aspects of vodou, the most followed religion in Folly Condji. I will argue that there are aspects in the two, that could be seen as drawing from place-based knowledge, and thus there should also be a perspective different from mine.

Realising that there is such an other perspective brings up receptive generosity. As I stated, based on Maldonado-Torres (2010), we would do well to be thoughtful of the trans-ontological relation and work towards transmodernity through decoloniality. Thus, if I feel that I see other knowledges present in the findings, then I must reflect on what kind of a relation this knowledge that I am producing for this essay has been produced in. That is what I will do in the second sub-section. Before I go into the analysis I would also like to note that the kind of picture I am presenting of Folly Condji is my interpretation of what was said by the people in those 10 or so discussions we had in the village, and my observations. When I am writing that something is like this or that in Folly Condji, it is my conceptualization; not the here-and-now of that place, but my interpretation of it. As I have already stated, the field study is not meaningful to me through representativeness, for the lack of which it should be criticized. The field study is meaningful to the overall purpose of this thesis as a source of experiences from an effort at observing the possibility of other knowledges. The field study I did is also an example of not co-creating knowledge for a (partially) shared purpose, and of reproducing the colonial matrix of power.

3.2.1 Production, consumption, reproduction

I will begin discussing how I found other knowledges could be present in the here-and-now of Folly Condji by focusing on some aspects of what could be seen as production, consumption and reproduction in the village. As I mentioned, I was influenced by Escobar's (2008) discussion on the traditional production systems (TPSs) in the Pacific region of Colombia when I was searching for communities I would visit for the field study. I will begin by presenting a quick overview of what I would see as some important aspects of production in the context of Folly Condji. Important in the sense that in connection to these aspects of production I could most clearly argue that other knowledges than modernity are present.

Production

In Folly Condji I was told that all the population are farmers and participate in similar production activities. Production activities seemed to be mostly centred around family units. These family units could be defined in many ways. A less inclusive definition could be a man, his wife/wives and their children and a more inclusive definition could include also grandparents and siblings. I was told that in Folly Condji all or most of the men are from the same family, as in related to each other. Thus, the more inclusive definition of a family unit would include the man's extended family rather than the wife's, since the wife would most likely be coming from a different village than Folly Condji. In fact 'Folly Condji' could be translated to mean Village of the family Condji.

The man's family line is important in regards to production also in the sense that land is usually owned by men. I was told that it is possible for a woman to own land if she has bought it with money and that she could give ownership of that land as a gift to her children, also a daughter if she chose to. However, I was told it is very unusual or rare for women to own land. As is apparent from above, land in Folly Condji can be bought and sold against money, but inheriting was reported as the usual way to gain ownership of land. When a man dies, the land he owns is divided evenly to his sons. A man's sons might have access to land owned by the father through 'gift' (as it was referred to by the men I was talking to) however. The 'gift' is when a (young) man would ask his father for a piece of land to farm. The son would receive the land, not to own it, but to work it, and he would not pay any specific rent for that land. The gift is not only between a man and his sons. I was told that one could go to someone with a one litre bottle of sodabi (strong alcohol), ask for a piece of land to work and would probably receive it. As I mentioned, when a man dies the land he owns is divided between his sons, and that includes also the land given as gift for someone to work.

When I am writing about land here it involves farmland and also bush. With bush, I am referring to land that is not farmed and not fallow, in this analysis I am focusing mostly on forest. We did not discuss inheriting and ownership of buildings specifically, but at least it was clear that houses of families (as in buildings for living in) were not always directly connected to the land the families would work. In fact people could also have land in the areas of other villages than the ones they lived in. I would see this as one reason to why I was told that there are not really borders between different villages. This is why I keep referring to the family unit as I discuss production. Even if the people who talked to me did not feel that there was borders between villages, it was quite easy to physically define Folly Condji from other communities at least in one sense. This is because most

houses in Folly Condji seemed to be built quite close to each other, and this 'house area' was surrounded by the fields and the bush. Thus, between the 'house areas' of different communities there would be fields and bush.

However, it would not make so much sense for me to think about a production area of Folly Condji, since production could be seen as centred around the family unit, and the family unit can be working land around different villages. Production activities of the family are dispersed throughout the 'house area', fields and bush, in other words, throughout all the area of Folly Condji. I was told that both women and men do all production activities. Still, many or even most activities were usually spoken of as women's or men's activities.

First of all, there is the work on the field(s), this work might be defined as men's work, but also the wife and children regularly join the man to work on the fields. Some 'more physical' activities might be more commonly done by men. On the fields in Folly Condji they grow at least maize, cassava, tomato, pima (a chili), and a sort of spinach. These plants would be planted for each season, but there was also trees and bushes on the fields. We talked at least about, and I also saw, banana, papaya, orange and different kinds of palm trees, and bushes which would be harvested to feed domestic animals.

From what I heard and observed, the activities seem to be highly governed by the change between the dry and wet seasons. There is a dry season roughly from December to March, then a wet/rainy season from April to July, and another rainy season in September-October. The men told me that during the wet season they would go to their farms every day, but during the dry season there was not as much activity on the fields. I was in Benin during the dry season and perhaps that is part of why the men seemed to have time to talk to me. From what I was told, the usual practice seemed to be that before the rainy season the fields are burnt, ground prepared for maize, and when the rain comes maize is sown and tomatoes and the spinach planted. I saw pima and especially cassava and sugar cane growing also during the dry season. During the wet season the weeds are cut twice and as crops are ready they are harvested. Harvesting maize was given as an example of when work on the field demands more people than are found close in the family and more people are invited to work on the field. The people who come and work are given food and drink, and also money.

Also charcoal making and hunting can happen on the fields. In a way that ties the field to the bush. The charcoal is burned from wood from the bush and the bush animals come to eat in the fields and the farmers try to kill them with guns and dogs, both in the fields and forest. I was told that there was no old forest in Folly Condji, but the more forested parts of the bush, and the areas planted with fruit and palm trees involve many activities. In addition to firewood, some edibles, like coconuts, and different parts of plants for making medicine, are collected. Also timber, building materials, and ingredients and other things needed for vodou ceremonies are cut and collected from the forest. Fruit is collected from the fruit trees, and palm nuts from the oil palms.

From the oil palm nuts, cooking oil is made through a process involving at least picking, breaking, soaking and boiling. Oil making seemed to be mostly done by women. Another activity that seemed to be more commonly done by women than men, is basket making. From the leaves of certain palm trees they refine materials for making baskets of different sizes. The palm leaves are also used to make brooms, hats and many other crafts, and they seemed to be very commonly used as building material. An activity that seemed to be exclusive to men is working metals. I saw some tools, such as knives and hoes, being fabricated, and I was told that also metal traps for catching bush animals are sometimes made in the village. The work on the farms and forest seemed to be done without 'machines'. That is to say, machete, hoe and stick are the common tools. In the village, by one family's house, there is a gasoline-powered mill for grinding maize into powder. For transportation, some men had motorcycles but I didn't see anybody from the village with a car. On the roof of the chief's house there was one small solar panel that produces electricity for charging mobile phones and powering a light.

Self-consumption and self-reproduction

Now that I've briefly described some aspects of what might be seen as production in Folly Condji, I will discuss consumption and reproduction. My purpose here is first to discuss in which ways production in Folly Condji could be seen as aimed more towards self-consumption and reproduction than accumulation. The idea here is that production aimed towards self-consumption and reproduction might be governed by knowledges other than modernity. This assumption I am basing on Escobar's (2008) discussion on the TPSs in the Colombian Pacific region. According to Escobar (2008, p.133): "Generally speaking, TPSs are small in scale and geared primarily toward self-consumption; they do not obey a logic of accumulation but are driven by the principle of self-reproduction". Secondly, the TPSs "came to be seen as deeply embedded in cultural and social

systems, as *having their own forms of knowledge and rationality*, and as being the basis for food security” (Escobar 2008, p.133 my emphasis).

Another aspect of the TPSs described by Escobar is that the “forms of knowledge and practices of gathering, production, transformation, and distribution of goods ... are closely related to the availability of natural resources and to the dynamic and natural cycles of the ecosystems in which people live, and which constitute the productive basis of the said systems” (Escobar 2008, p.133). I will discuss how production in Folly Condji could be seen as closely related to natural cycles, and how that might mean that other knowledges than modernity are present. This is because I assume that production that is very closely related to local natural cycles would have to draw from place-based knowledge. I will come back to both issues, the production for self-consumption/reproduction rather than accumulation, and the relation of production to natural cycles, after I present a brief overview of consumption in Folly Condji.

In Folly Condji I was told that when there would be harvest from the fields the man would decide how much of that would be sold by the wife at a marketplace, and how much would be saved for consumption by the family. The men I talked to about this told me that they would aim to maximize the amount to store for own consumption. I was explained that they want to save as much for own consumption as they can in order to have food during the dry season when they can't harvest as much, so they would need to buy less from the market. Stores of food might also be important during the rainy season, since the heavy rains and flooding can destroy fields and even houses.

However, in Folly Condji people told me that they also consume foods that they don't produce themselves, such as rice, beans, fish, groundnut oil and seasoning cubes. It is the women who sell and buy at market on the family's behalf and in order to buy from others at the market the women sell the produce from the fields that men have set aside. Also palm oil, bush meat (meat from hunted wild animals), (meat from) domestic animals, charcoal, dung cakes for burning, and plants and ingredients collected from the bush could be sold for money at the market or in the village, in addition to being consumed or used by the family. Other than food, for example matches, gasoline, gunpowder, nails, cookware and cloth might be bought at the market. I was told that if the women have money left after selling and buying at the market, the money might be saved to pay for example for schooling of children, paying for people you invite to work on your field, or for buying land.

Self-reproduction and/or accumulation

Since the bigger part of what a family in Folly Condji produces, especially regarding food, is saved for their own consumption, rather than sold, it could be said that production is mostly aimed towards stability and reproduction, rather than accumulation. The first priority seems to be storing food and products for own consumption and use, the second would be to sell produce to gain money for buying from the market what can not be produced by the family. Finally, if some money is left, it can be saved and used to buy land, which could be an example of accumulation. Such a logic does not seem to correspond too well to the two aspects of capitalism that I discussed in the section on the colonial matrix of power, in that it prioritizes ensuring self-reproduction, sustaining and reproducing the production conditions, over accumulation.

If prioritizing accumulation even at the cost of production conditions would be seen as representing the philosophy of capitalism, then prioritizing self-reproduction might be seen to represent a different philosophy, drawing from an other knowledge. I quoted Escobar about how production conditions are taken over by the state, but this does not seem to be the case in Folly Condji. At least since the men could be seen as having control over production conditions, as in that they own land or have access to it by gift. It is more difficult to say whether or not I would interpret production conditions as being destroyed in Folly Condji. I could say at least that economical logics that prioritize self-reproduction would in my view prioritize sustaining and reproducing production conditions. An important question then could be whether accumulation is prioritized even at the cost of production conditions, or reproducing production conditions is prioritized even at the cost of accumulation. Marx saw accumulation as a priority in capitalist societies, so if accumulation is not a priority, at least not over self-reproduction, in Folly Condji, is the community then not (part of) a capitalist modern society? The link between accumulation and modernity is that accumulation is seen by Marx as an imperative in capitalism, capitalism understood as a philosophy that is based on the knowledge of modernity (tradition of Western rational knowledge).

My point here is that if the 'economic logics' of people in Folly Condji are seen to draw from place-based knowledge, interpretations drawing only from the knowledge of modernity will most likely be misleading or partial, not making sense, from the perspective of the place-based knowledge and those who draw from it. Even though some aspects of the economy in Folly Condji might be compatible with some understandings of capitalism, those categories as such do not have any contribution from the place-based knowledge.

Some aspects of how I have conceptualized production consumption and reproduction in Folly Condji might point to some kind of accumulation. For example, in Folly Condji I was told that as a plan for the future, people were planting oil palms in order to produce more oil to sell for money, which might then be used to buy more land. To discuss whether or not there is capitalist accumulation in Folly Condji might be important if we want to understand how modernity is present in the 'village economy', but it is not the point of my essay. My point is not to show how modernity is present in the economy or religion in Folly Condji, but rather to show how place-based knowledge might be present. Place-based knowledge is by seen by me here as knowledge different from modernity. To recognize knowledge that is different from modernity, I am trying to see where what people say and are seen to do, appears to make no, or little sense, at least when viewed from the perspective of western rational knowledge. Since how I interpret production and consumption in Folly Condji does not seem to correspond well with the economic rational of the philosophy of capitalism, I assume there might be place-placed knowledge, the contribution of which might offer the possibility to conceptualize about the economy in Folly Condji from a perspective involving more than one knowledge. However, if knowledge is produced through what could be conceptualized as colonial self-Other relations, the possibility of that contribution would be denied.

3.2.2 Natural cycles

I would also see that much of the production and consumption in Folly Condji is adjusted according to the natural cycles of that place. It is not only inside the community that these natural cycles are important. Regarding many products at the local marketplaces, supply and demand is governed by the same natural cycles, since products like maize or palm oil, are produced and consumed locally. However, imported rice and cloth for example are not as tied to those local natural cycles. The most important natural cycle could be the change between rainy and dry seasons. For example, maize can only be grown during the rainy season so cassava is grown and eaten as another staple food since it grows also in the dry season. Having stores of food can also help during the rainy season, since the floods might destroy the crop, or it might be very difficult to access the marketplaces when roads are flooded.

Of course, farmers everywhere have to deal with local natural cycles, but in Folly Condji their influence seemed especially big. For example, around the town of Grand-Popo where I was staying, many farmers would have irrigation systems pumping water for the fields and thus they could grow many plants during the dry season. In Folly Condji it is the rainfall and the flooding of the river that

controls what can be grown and where. The fields are placed with concern to where the water will be during the rainy season, in order to minimize flood damages. Also the timing of farming activities like sowing of maize in relation to the rain is important to ensure a good harvest. Thus it might be argued that farming as it seems to be done in Folly Condji demands considerable knowledge of the local natural cycles. I would say that some of the knowledge about local natural cycles is most likely drawn from other knowledges than modernity, from place-based knowledge. For example, when I asked why the plants were planted on the field the way they were, mixed amongst each other, the first answer I got was that it is how the ancestors had done it. Conceptualized from the perspective of modernity this answer might be taken to represent tradition, which would not be seen as knowledge, relating to the discussion on a hierarchy of knowledges. Again, the possible contribution to knowledge production of a different perspective would be denied if the knowledge on local natural cycles would be dismissed as tradition.

Another example of what might be place-based knowledge, in Folly Condji could be the knowledge about what people referred to as 'traditional medicines', that are fabricated from leaves, roots and other parts of plants and other ingredients. From the forest and bush people could collect many ingredients, but some, such as cologne, gunpowder or parrot feathers are bought from marketplaces. I was told that with these medicines they could treat for example malaria, vomiting and diarrhoea. Sometimes the medicines would not work and then the people would have to travel twelve kilometres from Folly Condji for treatment. However, not all sicknesses can be treated at the hospital by a doctor. I was told that there are sicknesses which cannot be found in Europe, and which can only be treated by specific people in the village with 'traditional medicines'.

3.2.3 Vodou

The sicknesses and medicines I mentioned above have to do with 'the traditional religion' in Folly Condji called vodou. To call the religion traditional might be misleading, due the 'not knowledge' connotation of the word traditional. I was told that some of the people that live in the village are christians, but that most people worship vodun (spirits or gods). Vodou is a popular religion in Benin and especially in the area where I was staying. For example, on the tenth of January there were big celebrations for the global vodou day in the town where I was staying. My focus here is on vodou in the context of Folly Condji. In Folly Condji many spirits are worshipped and I would divide them in two categories. There are the ancestral spirits and the rest. The ancestral spirits have been worshipped in the village at their altars since the ancients, those who founded the village. The

rest have been purchased. In order to contact a spirit a person must have been taught the secret of that spirit, and the secrets for the ancient spirits have been passed on to selected people in the community who contact the spirits for others. Secrets of the other spirits have been bought from outside of the village with money and other things that have been required by the person teaching the secret and the spirit itself.

The practice of vodou is very much connected to the forest and the medicines. I was told that vodou could be translated to mean leaves. For each spirit there is a corresponding set of leaves that are needed for ceremonies. I already mentioned that some sicknesses can only be cured with 'traditional medicines'. In such a case the sickness is caused by the spirits and somebody who can contact them has to be consulted. I was told that those who learn vodou have to learn to know the different plants that grow in the bush and the forest, and to make different kinds of medicines and potions from those, and other ingredients. In this way vodou is strongly connected to the local environment, which might be seen as an aspect of place-basedness of the knowledge of vodou. Many times I was told that vodou and the spirits are something specific to Africa or Benin, but there are also elements that are specific to Folly Condji. I already mentioned the ancestral spirits and to me they represent knowledge that can be seen as specific to that family, the family Condji. The ancestrals had the knowledge of the secrets for these spirits when they founded the village and the knowledge has been passed on since then.

The local religion, especially the secrets of the ancestral spirits, show that there is knowledge that is very specific to that place and that community, that family even. This knowledge of the secrets of the ancient vodoun is a very important part of the lives of all the people in the village even though it is only held by few, since the spirits are everywhere. I was told that it is dangerous to ignore the spirits if you have a connection to them, so people try to be mindful of the spirits and have the ones who know the secrets perform rituals and sacrifices often enough. Some people who had left the spirits for christianity or otherwise, were said to have gone crazy afterwards. If this knowledge that seems to be so powerful in this village is not allowed to enter as an equal amongst others into the discussion between knowledges when knowledge is produced, then the possible contributions of an other perspective are again denied.

3.3 The field study in relation to the colonial matrix of power

I will now point an issue with the field study that I see as problematic in regard to the colonial matrix of power that I have been discussing in this essay.

In the description of the research I write that I wanted to do the field study in a village rather than in a town or a city. It is not because I would think that other knowledges have no authority in the city that I wanted to go to the villages. It is more because I felt that if I tried to discuss how other knowledges than modernity work in cities, I might more easily dismiss these knowledges as 'superstition' or otherwise 'irrational' practices that have no logic. I believed that in the context of the village it could be easier for someone who's history is as immersed in modernity and its knowledge as mine, to start to see the rationality/logic/thinking that forms and interprets relations between actions, beliefs and place. This is because I would associate the town/city more with modernity, at least due to "it's [(modernity's)] thoroughly urban, or better yet metropolitan character" (Gregory et al. 2009, p.472). The village I would associate more with the non-modern and other knowledges.

This reflects how I was looking for a certain kind of place which would fit better into what I was interested to learn and find out. This is because the field study was mostly something I did for myself and the university. The people in Folly Condji did not contact me and ask me to do a study with them. It was me who went to the village and asked if I could make questions. In this way I'd see myself as having done a study about the community in Folly Condji, but not so much with the people in Folly Condji. Perhaps the most direct or pressing purpose for me to do the field study was to collect material for writing this essay, which I need to write in order to graduate from the bachelor's programme in development studies.

A small field study was presented as one option for collecting material for the thesis and certain courses in the programme focused on research design and methods. In one mandatory course there were discussions regarding theory of knowledge, and global power structures have been discussed at least in connection to dependency- and world-systems theories, but it was not until I had returned from Benin and started reading on decoloniality that I realised how Western sciences, including development studies, reproduce global power structures, the subject-object relation being one main aspect of that. To me this means that also the field study, where I went to Benin to collect material for my own research purposes in order to produce knowledge from my perspective, is a part of the

reproduction of the hierarchies that are enacted as domination in the colonial matrix of power. Still, I do not feel that I need to stop doing development studies, but I need to work on different ways to do it, which could allow for knowledges to meet as equals when I am taking part in knowledge production. I would see decoloniality, understood as a project, to offer promising and convincing perspectives to thinking about knowledge production.

3.4 Problems in Folly Condji

As I wrote in the first chapter, one purpose of this essay is also to convey, as in put in writing in this essay, some concerns or problems that people who talking to me in Folly Condji wanted to talk to me about. These concerns, not in any specific order are:

1. A building for a nurse's reception has been built by a foreign organization, but no nurse has been hired to work there by the municipality.
2. There is no electricity, except from the small solar panel at the chief's house, so it is very dark when the sun goes down. In some neighbouring villages some solar panels and lights were installed and people in Folly Condji told me they would also like to have lights.
3. When the rains are heavy their fields and even houses are sometimes destroyed and it is difficult to move between Folly Condji and other villages.

I am not analysing these concerns, since I feel that the space I have within this essay for the analysis is best used to analyse the production/consumption/reproduction and vodou in Folly Condji. Still, I write these concerns down because I was asked to do it, so that if people read this essay they would know about these problems.

4. Decoloniality

In the introduction, I defined decoloniality as “a planetary critical consciousness” that rejects abstract universals, and it could be added that the aim of the decolonial project would be a pluri-versal world (Mignolo 2010, p.354). I stated that to me pluri-versality should include leading toward, not a knowledge, but many knowledges, in which again many knowledges will co-exist. I would see that such knowledges might be produced in self-Other relations of receptive generosity. Actually, to me, the centre of gravity of this essay is in the section on receptive generosity, since there the theoretical discussion on what I perceive as problems in the production of knowledge in development studies is concluded. As I mentioned in the beginning of this essay, its purpose is more to discuss issues that I've come to see as problems with knowledge production in development studies, and less to convince anybody of solutions to the problems I have discussed. Rather, the purpose of this chapter is to show where the idea of decoloniality might be seen to come from, and what it might be seen to mean to work towards decoloniality. As I am discussing decoloniality, I also discuss the MCD group, not only because they write about decoloniality, but also because what the group aims to do might be seen as an example of a project working towards decoloniality, in that according to Escobar (2010, p.33) “the group seeks to make a decisive intervention into the very discursivity of the modern sciences in order to craft another space for the production of knowledge”, and in this space knowledges could discuss and converge in non hierarchic relations.

Escobar discusses what might be seen as a genealogy of thought of the MCD research group, and (2010, p.34) mentions for example liberation theology and dependency theory, that might be seen as originating from Latin America, but also states that the “group certainly finds inspiration in a number of sources, from European and North American critical theories of modernity and postmodernity to South Asian subaltern studies, Chicana feminist theory, postcolonial theory, and African philosophy”. In my limited experience of reading writings from people associated with the group, especially papers compiled in the book 'Globalization and the Decolonial Option', edited by Walter D. Mignolo and Arturo Escobar (2010), Latin America has a pronounced presence in those writings. Latin America understood here at least as writers from Latin America, history of Latin America and experiences of people that have lived Latin America. An important reason might be that the works that seem to be referred to by almost all the writers, are mostly by Latin American writers, such as Aníbal Quijano and Enrique Dussel. However, I would see Frantz Fanon and Aimé Césaire from the French Caribbean as important exceptions.

To me Fanon's thoughts on the experience of the colonized person seem important to understanding where decoloniality is coming from. Fanon (1965, p.128) writes the following:

“There is, first of all, the fact that the colonized person, who in this respect is like men in underdeveloped countries or the disinherited in all parts of the world, perceives life not as flowering or a development of an essential productiveness, but as a permanent struggle against an omnipresent death. This ever-menacing death is experienced as endemic famine, unemployment, a high death rate, an inferiority complex and the absence of any hope for the future. All this gnawing at the existence if the colonized tends to make of life something resembling an incomplete death”. This experience is crucial to the project of decoloniality since “if the colonizer needs to be decolonized, the colonizer may not be the proper agent of decolonization without the intellectual guidance of the *damnés*” (Mignolo 2010, p.312). In my view it is not only that decoloniality needs to involve the contribution of the colonized person, decoloniality starts from the colonized person, and through a relation of receptive generosity the colonizer can contribute to decolonization. I would define colonizer here as a person who, within the colonial matrix of power, is perceived to be in a dominant position compared to the position of the colonized person.

It will suffice here to define the *damné*, as the colonized person in Fanon's description. By leaving Fanon's work to such a brief mention I further deepen the pronounced role of Latin America. In this essay I don't find room and absolute necessity to discuss what could be seen as decolonial writing from different parts of the world. In later works I aim to have some more perspective on how decoloniality might be perceived and utilized around the world. Especially relevant for the purposes of this essay would have been decolonial perspectives, or perspectives on decoloniality, from the African continent. Within the MCD project, the African diaspora seems to be quite widely discussed, but perspectives, especially perspectives expressed in more recent works of writing, and reflecting more recent experiences, from the continent, seemed absent in what I have read. This does not necessarily mean that decoloniality should be seen as dominated by Latin America. Rather, diverse projects around the world might be seen as compatible with what writers associated with the MCD project have conceptualized as decoloniality. I would not see it as the purpose of the MCD group to somehow govern or steer what could be seen as the project of decoloniality, rather their project, as Escobar (2010, p.33) states, would be about opening a space for knowledge production in non hierarchic relations, thus contributing to the project of decoloniality, the destruction of the colonial matrix of power. Still, the difference between guiding and facilitating the conversation of different knowledges might prove to be difficult to maintain in practice.

Finally, I should discuss why I feel that the MCD project, through thinking about decoloniality, might offer 'different' insight into what could be seen as problems with hierarchic relations in knowledge production. There certainly are, and have been, many strands within development studies, where people attempt to produce more or less radical and alternative knowledge. For example, according to Escobar (2010, p.34) “dependency theory, liberation theology, and participatory action research” might “be said to have been the most original contributions of Latin American critical thought in the twentieth century”, and at least dependency theory and participatory action research have been discussed in the bachelor's programme I am attending, but according to Escobar the MCD program should be seen as something different than dependency theory for example.

Although I presented what might be seen as a genealogy of thought of the MCD group,

“[r]ather than a new paradigm 'from Latin America' (as it could have been the case with dependency), the MC[D] project does not fit into a linear history of paradigms or epistemes; to do so would mean to integrate it into the history of modern thought. On the contrary, the MC[D] program should be seen as another way of thinking that runs counter to the great modernist narratives (Christianity, liberalism, and Marxism)” (Escobar 2010, p.34).

There are two specific aspects that I have also discussed in this essay, which, to me, set the MCD group's work apart from other development related reading I have done, especially the majority of the literature I have been assigned during the courses I have taken in the bachelor's programme. One could be the centrality of the concept of race, and another how the 'intellectual guidance of the colonized person' is seen as indispensable, as imperative for what is conceptualized as decoloniality. In this essay I have only discussed decoloniality from the perspective of the MCD group, and my own, and thus a proper critique is lacking. For a view that builds on, but criticizes and aims to go beyond some perceived limitations of decoloniality, see the article titled: “Why (post)colonialism and (de)coloniality are not enough: a post-imperialist perspective”, by Gustavo Lins Ribeiro (2011).

Conclusion

In this essay I have discussed a wide array of rather, or very, abstract concepts most of which I have not elaborated on very much. Thus, many concepts are not thoroughly defined and the overall point:

'that there seem to be problems with hierarchic relations in knowledge production, and that thinking about decoloniality might offer unique insight into how those problems might be conceptualized, and what might be an alternative to such a problematic and unethical continuing situation'

might not be conveyed in a satisfactory, convincing way. It could be claimed that the argument I tried to make is too wide or complicated for this essay, but I feel that I didn't really have a choice. When I started to get more into writings about decoloniality, and started to think about my own position in what is conceptualized as the colonial matrix of power, I felt that I could not ignore the problems that I was starting to see with what I was doing in my studies and the field study especially. I saw it necessary to start working on those problems already in this essay, trying to meet the requirements of the programme at the same time.

I have tried to make the main point first through a theoretical discussion, where I draw mostly from writings about decoloniality from writers associated with the MCD group. Second, I related that theoretical discussion to my interpretations of the transcripts and notes from the field study. As I discussed the problems with knowledge production I was mostly focusing on modernity/coloniality, that is decoloniality as a critique of modernity. In the final chapter I focused on decoloniality as a project aiming at pluri-versality.

My conclusion for this essay could be that as I view knowledge production in development studies according to my own experiences, through what I would see as a perspective of decoloniality, it seems to involve hierarchic relations that prevent the production of knowledge as a result of conversation between different knowledges as equals. Because of this, the knowledge that is produced would be of less use to the political purposes of people who draw from other knowledges than the western rational knowledge of modernity. However, even if this essay is concluded, the problems are not, but I feel that thinking about decoloniality can be useful to deal with those problems.

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