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# Pluriversal possibilities and challenges for Global Education in Northern Europe

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**Keywords:** Global citizenship education, postcolonial theory in education, decolonial engagements in education, colonialism and education, global issues in the classroom, pluriversal pedagogy

- Research should engage with teachers about critical approaches to global education.
- Theoretical and empirical literature reinforces the importance of addressing colonialism.
- Pluriversal approaches respond to critiques that global education is embedded in colonial systems of power, and they build on critical pluralistic traditions by emphasizing coloniality and diversity.
- A study with teachers in northern Europe provides insights into ethical global issues pedagogy.
- Colonialism is a topic mediated strategically by teachers and a condition embodied in classrooms.

**Purpose:** This paper considers the relevance of critical and decolonial approaches to global education in northern Europe through theoretical and empirical research.

**Methodology:** We present a case for an approach that engages the modern/colonial dynamic (Mignolo, 2000; Andreotti, 2014) and pluriversity (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). We conducted a project involving workshops with secondary teachers in England, Finland, and Sweden centred on Andreotti's (2012) HEADSUP tool. We recorded discussions at the workshops and individual interviews after applying the tool in practice.

**Findings:** Teachers are both strategic and reticent in how they take up colonialism when teaching global issues. Wider political contexts and teachers' and students' own experiences with colonialism and racialisation are very much part of how ethical global issues are framed, unpacked, and responded to in classrooms. While there are some significant challenges evident, several teachers deepened their approach and co-produced a teacher resource supporting the application of HEADSUP to classroom practice.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

As the call for papers for this special issues indicates, “Global Education has not yet overcome a certain imbalance between theory and practice....Moreover, Global Education discourse often accommodates at once humanist, critical, neoliberal or even neo-colonial views with substantially different intents and effects”. In this paper, by drawing on theoretical and empirical research, we argue critical and decolonial perspectives are particularly relevant in the context of these overlapping and sometimes contradictory approaches. Specifically, we explore critical approaches that engage directly with Western colonialism which are often identified on the periphery of Global Education (GE) practice (Pashby et al., 2020).

Aligning with national and regional policies, the influence of NGOs, and increasing scholarship in this area, GE has become an umbrella term in Europe referring to development education, human rights education, education for sustainability, education for peace and conflict prevention, and global citizenship education (GCE) (Bourn, 2020). While these intersect, they also have specific academic and practice-based traditions and are situated differently within various European contexts. For example, in some contexts, development education and GCE have recently been used interchangeably (Coelho, Caramelo & Menezes, 2019; Calvo, 2020). In this paper, we offer a focused engagement with how GE—particularly the treatment of global issues in classrooms—has been embedded and implicated in coloniality by relaying and responding to broader GE research and a common set of critiques in two specific areas: GCE and environmental and sustainability education (ESE). We explore how the work of Mignolo (2000, 2011, 2018) and Mignolo and Walsh (2018) provides a theoretical framework of decolonial possibilities for pluriversality that can be applied, following Andreotti (2012, 2014), to support an ethical global issues pedagogy in classrooms in northern Europe, one that takes up questions around power and difference. We consider how existing theoretical and empirical research on GE more broadly and GCE and ESE more specifically reflects the need for centring this type of pedagogy, and we locate our work within some of the wider theoretical debates in the two fields while clarifying our approach to pluriversality. We then share insights from teachers in England, Finland, and Sweden who express that colonialism is both a topic and a relation of power in classrooms engaged with global issues. We end with a discussion of these key findings in relation to the need to push from plurality and multiple perspectives towards pluriversality.

## 2 GLOBAL EDUCATION AND MODERNITY’S TRICK: A FRAMEWORK FOR ETHICAL GLOBAL ISSUES PEDAGOGY

Our work with teachers sought to respond to key critiques of both ESE and GCE. In addition to a concern about education for sustainable development being overly focused on individualism and competition (Jickling & Wals, 2008; Van Poeck & Vandenabeele, 2012), research notes a tendency in environmental education to disconnect environmental issues from historical and political contexts and to perpetuate Westerncentrism (Matthews, 2011; Blenkinsop et al., 2017)<sup>1</sup>. Similarly, GCE has been critiqued for emphasizing superficial awareness raising, stepping over complex and ethical issues regarding power inequalities, and reproducing global systems of power by creating an ‘us’ who become the global citizens helping a ‘them’ who have the problems (e.g., Andreotti, 2006; Shultz & Pillay, 2018). A common thread between ESE and GCE is a focus on global issues, and we argue, along with Andreotti and Souza (2012), for the need to centre critical approaches:

“Despite claims of globality and inclusion, the lack of analyses of power relations and knowledge construction in [global education] often results in educational practices that unintentionally reproduce ethnocentric, ahistorical, depoliticized, paternalistic, salvationist and triumphalist approaches that tend to deficit theorize, pathologize or trivialize difference.” (p. 1)

With Coelho, Caramelo and Menezes (2019), we understand GE both as a product and producer of de/post/colonial conditions. In our work, we try to take very seriously Mohanty's (1990) contention that "who we are, how we act, what we think, and what stories we tell be-come more intelligible within an epistemological framework that begins by recognizing existing hegemonic histories" (p. 185). Indeed, Willinsky (1998) argues education can be a space where colonial processes are challenged and re-written through a "rethinking [of] what we have inherited" (p. 258). In this paper, we are specifically interested in exploring how teachers in northern Europe discuss colonialism explicitly and implicitly in relation to their practice and when prompted by a global issues analytical tool that raises for discussion historical patterns of oppression.

It is outside the scope of this paper to adequately and fully address the well-established and entangled history of theoretical resources that seek to address colonialism's perpetuating influence in education. Stein (2019) notes decolonial thought overlaps with work in post-colonial, anti-colonial, Indigenous, Black and abolitionist studies and social movements. Our approach focuses on "challenge[ing]...the insularity of historical narratives and historiographical traditions emanating from Europe", a common contribution of postcolonial and decolonial arguments (Bhambra, 2014, p. 161). Important discussions have raised the overuse of the concept of decolonising in education (e.g. Tuck & Yang, 2012). These discussions are particularly nuanced in the context of settler-colonial relations in, for example, Canada and New Zealand. We argue, critical reflection on decolonial engagements in education in European contexts requires further attention (see Pashby & Sund, 2020a).

We have sought to build a praxis of ethical global issues pedagogy through bridging these theoretical resources with practice in classrooms (Sund & Pashby, 2020). In framing, unpacking, and responding to global issues in secondary classrooms, there is a pedagogical imperative to dislodge Eurocentrism and support a situated and historical critique that decentres coloniality. Drawing on Mignolo and Walsh (2018), by decentre, we mean creating space for and illuminating the idea that there are not only multiple perspectives on a given issue; there are different, pluriversal, ways of understanding the world—different knowledges, understandings, and ways of experiencing a specific global issue. These differently positioned perspectives are not neutral but implicated in wider systems of oppression. Taking this seriously means resisting an assumed universalising approach within dominant, Western traditions in GE and facilitating a pluriversal approach that starts with engaging directly with difference. It is important to say at the outset that a pluriversal approach is "neither a rejection nor a negation of Western thought" which itself is built into the fabric of schooling and thus is part of the pluriversal (Walsh & Mignolo, 2018, p. 3). Walsh and Mignolo (2018) focus on *re-existence* by which they mean working to re-define and re-signify conditions of dignity on our shared planet (p. 3). We find this approach helps us to respond to the tendency of mainstream practices to reinforce an 'us' and a 'them' within a colonial imaginary. Thinking with pluriversality provides the possibilities for a praxis that works towards a re-existence of relationships across differences, and therefore can offer a *re-enunciation* of GE. In this paper, we are particularly interested in considering how an approach to pluriversality builds critically and/or differs from liberal humanist and critical pluralistic approaches to including multiple perspectives. We explicitly take up the critiques that GE may reinforce colonial relations of power by pointing out that pluralistic approaches may hide or step-over the role of coloniality in constructing, mediating, and ignoring different positions.

In our project with teachers, and as a move towards a praxis of pluriversality, we sought to bring forward Mignolo's (2011) conceptualisation of the shine and shadow of modernity as a potentially productive way to explicate the close relationship between education and colonialism in GE (see also Sund & Pashby, 2020; Pashby & Sund, 2020a). According to Mignolo (2011), much of what is valued in international and national development comprises the light side of modernity (e.g., a teleological foundation promising on-going progress, individual freedom based on the assumption that progress is seamless, and shared human experience organised through nation-states and liberal democratic practices). He argues, however, that these ideals are ultima-

tely held up by a dark side of modernity: coloniality. Key values of modernity (political, economic, epistemic, ethnic, gendered, etc.) are inextricably linked with the systems of oppression that define coloniality (slavery, genocide, over-exploitation, dispossession, etc.). Rather than existing as a binary, the dark and light sides are mutually constitutive.

Andreotti (2014) synthesizes these contributions from Mignolo in her interrogation of how mainstream approaches to learning about global issues are implicated in what she calls 'modernity's trick'. By not recognising how the shadow is constitutive of the shine, altruistic desires for common humanity and shared hope can trick educators and learners into feel-good measures that distract from deep engagement with complicity. An over-focus on a concern with balanced perspectives or plurality of perspectives without a strong rooting in colonial difference can mean global issues pedagogy misses the point. A pluriversal approach that engages directly with colonial difference can potentially produce new ways of relating otherwise (Andreotti, 2014) and re-enunciating GE (Mignolo, 2018). Rather than a new hegemony or reified binary, pluriversality requires a commitment to reflexivity to avoid a circularity in which we "reproduce modern/colonial patterns – even in our efforts to critique them" (Stein et al., 2020, p. 5). Andreotti (2011) calls for a nuanced approach that "moves discussions away from the uncritical and wholesale embrace or rejection of modernity" (p. 392).

In our project, we sought to treat difference and oppression directly, as a way of re/contextualising how teachers approach global issues. As we were considering what this could mean in the context of classrooms in northern Europe, we were particularly interested in de-centring Eurocentrism while also being aware of the potential to re-centre Eurocentrism through critique (Mignolo, 2018). Decolonial critiques of Eurocentrism, in Walsh and Mignolo's (2018) view, actively seek possibilities to re-exist beyond Western thought without rejecting nor negating it. A praxis of pluriversalism "takes us beyond, while at the same time undoing, the singularity and linearity of the West" (Walsh & Mignolo, 2018, p. 3). As we have discussed elsewhere (Sund & Pashby, 2020), as researchers and educators, we recognize the educational institutions in which we work with teachers and the research we conduct are complicit within the modern/colonial dynamic. Accordingly, we do not nor cannot aim to reject modernity, but we take up an imperative to be disobedient to the normalization of Eurocentrism and to reveal modernity's trick by seeking to make visible and then engaging with rather than stepping-over the repeated systems of oppression that can be reproduced through GE.

### 3 REVIEW OF RESEARCH: ETHICAL GLOBAL ISSUES PEDAGOGY IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

Recent education research suggests a strong need for explicit attention to coloniality in how global issues are taken up in Europe, and, in this section, we use a broad umbrella definition of GE (Bourn, 2020). For example, Winter (2018) examined the political and ethical discourses produced in a UK secondary geography textbook. She found the textbook's treatment of international development created and perpetuated divisions between Global North and South through a systematic disavowal of colonialism and a reliance on a totalising Eurocentric approach (based on universal narratives and supposedly objective indicators). This approach legitimises the categorisation and ranking of nations, producing the Global North as being ahead and the benevolent saviour of the poor and dependent Global South. Mikander (2016) found that Finnish and Swedish History, Geography, and Social Studies textbooks approach the relation between globalisation and colonialism through a spectrum of criticality: History textbooks blame the current conditions of poverty on the colonised for requiring independence too quickly, Geography textbooks ground poverty in issues of the present (e.g. natural disasters or war) while disregarding recent and long-term colonial history, and Social Studies textbooks provide a depoliticised account of colonialism as necessary for the creation of wealth in 'the West' with contemporary globalisation enabling countries to develop.

Rather than creating spaces to challenge Eurocentrism, research thus suggests a tendency for GE in formal education to reproduce it in the resources available. Although at a conceptual level, GE has critical potential (e.g. Coelho, Caramelo & Menezes, 2019; Calvo, 2020), its practice has often been challenged for being uncritical (e.g. Bourn & Hunt, 2011; Coelho, Caramelo & Menezes, 2019) and restricted to awareness and fundraising activities (Bryan, 2013). Research on GE curriculum, materials and practice has found a tendency to reinforce an Eurocentric perspective (e.g. Eriksen, 2018; Ideland & Malmberg, 2014) that reproduces harmful representations of subjects in the Global North and Global South (e.g. Tittley, 2019; Olusa & Gavigan, 2019), and reifies unequal relations between an 'us' and 'them' (Tittley, 2019). For example, Olusa and Gavigan (2019) examined GCE school materials in Ireland and found a persistent deficit image of the Global South where a 'We' of the 'Global North' is represented as a powerful yet benevolent force of development. Similarly, Walsh (2020), analysing evidence from a partnership between schools in Scotland and Malawi, found a hero narrative conceals the historical and political contexts of European actions.

Calling for the take up of Eurocentrism through teaching about colonialism in education, Araújo & Maeso (2012) advise against approaches that simply add more perspectives and versions of history. They argue "this liberal tale of a kaleidoscope of perspectives", often used in European contexts, is not enough to challenge naturalised dominant narratives (p. 1267). They argue in order for these narratives to be challenged, educators need to engage with the modern/colonial frames of interpretation in which the Eurocentric narratives gain meaning, by focusing on the tensions between knowledge and power. The tradition of presenting multiple perspectives from within a neutral and assumed liberal frame is mirrored in the conceptual debates within the field of global citizenship education. A metareview by Pashby et al. (2020) mapped and analysed nine typologies of GCE in journal articles from 2006-2015. While there was strong coherence around a critique of neoliberal approaches, typologies paid the most significant attention to differentiating within liberal humanist conceptions of GCE, those premised on a particular understanding of the individual based on a liberal concept of rights (see also Schattle, 2008). Andreotti's (2006) seminal distinction between 'soft' and 'critical' determined that the more common soft, liberal humanist, approaches are based in a common humanity and single view of progress wherein global justice issues are explored from within a Western, Global North status quo (Andreotti, 2014; Stein, 2015).

In distinction from liberal conceptions, authors of typologies identified few critical approaches to GCE that directly acknowledge and address social and economic injustices. Within these discussions of critical GCE in the typologies, Pashby et al. (2020) noted a tendency to conflate on the one hand, critical approaches that are very much rooted in and tied to liberal approaches with those, on the other hand, pushing for a more direct engagement with questions of complicity and pluriversality. The later build from soft versus critical towards GCE 'otherwise' (see also GTDF, n.d.). Some typologies categorised as critical approaches that provide a critique of current power structures and capitalist modernisation (Gaudelli, 2009) and Western exploitation and violence (Shultz, 2007; Oxley & Morris, 2013; Stein, 2015), and some critical approaches acknowledge complicity in that violence and promote alternative concepts of progress (Andreotti, 2014). Importantly, echoing the empirical research, several authors of typologies noted critical GCE approaches are important but not evident in practice (e.g. Oxley & Morris, 2013, Marshall, 2011, Schattle, 2008). In our project, we sought to take up the assumption that critical GCE approaches are not evident in practice by working directly with teachers. Further, while theoretically we locate our work quite firmly in the approaches to critical GCE that centre post- and de-colonial perspectives, empirically we recognize the dominance of the liberal humanist approach in practice. Thus, our engagements with teachers is strategically pitched at the interface between liberal and critical approaches while exploring opportunities for GCE 'otherwise'. In other words, we seek to engage with practice and to explore possibilities for re-enunciations of GE through explicitly taking-up decolonial concepts.

There are parallel discussions in the field of environmental and sustainability education. Lindgren and Öhman (2019), for example, argue for a critical pluralistic approach, one that criticizes consensus thinking and normativity. This approach encourages “an education of participation that is open to conflicting views” (p. 1), aligning with a growing body of literature that recognises deliberative democratic education approaches can overly determine consensus and that promote agonistic and conflict-positive approaches to global orientations to citizenship education (see, for example, Sant et al., 2020). While it is outside the scope of this paper to fully explore these noteworthy critical contributions to liberal approaches, we add that discussion of critical pluralistic approaches must consider plurality in relation to the modern/colonial dynamic, else, the conflicts encouraged may be limited to a debate within liberal humanism, retaining an epistemological, ontological, and methodological Eurocentrism, and thereby potentially falling into modernity’s trick (Pashby et al., 2020).

Importantly, and in light of a significant rise in literature in ESE promoting post-humanist perspectives that consider the more-than-human relations among species (e.g., Lloro-Bidart, 2017; Pederson, 2010), Lindgren & Öhman (2019) argue that within critical pluralistic approaches, humanism retains “values that we may not want to abandon”, and “putting human interests aside would therefore leave us with a useless ethics that would be both insufficient and irrelevant for political decision-making and potential environmental concern” (p. 2). Elsewhere, we have explored the cooperation and divergence between post/de-colonial approaches and post-human approaches to global issues education, emphasising a common critique of the assumed human subject and of modern development (Sund & Pashby, 2020). In our approach, we take as a centring assumption that the processes through which coloniality became the contingent shadow of modernity mapped physical land and exploited various species while also exploiting, classifying, and ranking people and cultures. We raise the appeal to humanism in the critical pluralistic approach here to reinforce the importance of political engagement and to note that in the pluriversal approach we are conceptualising here, humanism is not rejected, but is decentred.

We are not arguing that liberal humanism, and its iterations in GE, has a coherent and static perspective nor that important debates therein ought not be examined. Rather, aligning with Dussel (1993), we recognise the Eurocentricity at the core of such debates, and argue there has been an over-emphasis within GE research and practice on distinguishing positions within liberal humanism. This contributes to normalising certain differences rather than explicitly engaging with them which is particularly important when considering non-dominant positions and those that challenge Western epistemological and ontological teleology. We centre reflexivity to work towards re-enunciating GE and dislodging a universalism of modernity/coloniality embedded in Western liberal humanism while also rejecting relativism. It is a distinctive ethical lens that seeks to build from, raise, and address the possibility that a pluralistic criticism of consensus thinking and normativity could in practice be an example of what Mignolo (2018, p. 151) calls a “Eurocentric critique of Eurocentrism (e.g., demodernity), which is necessary but highly insufficient”. Andreotti (2014) has identified this in ‘soft’ approaches to GCE wherein “different perspectives and critical engagement are welcome within pre-defined frameworks” (Andreotti 2014, p. 44). Decentring western humanism opens up a decolonial horizon that presents itself as an *option*. In Mignolo’s (2011) view, the differences between options or trajectories will be negotiated with no room for an exclusive Western thought.

Critiquing Eurocentrism as a way of opening space for pluriversalism is not about rejecting modernity nor Western traditions but about underscoring their provincialism and raising a distinct ethical concern with reinforcing coloniality. Western thought, including liberal humanism, is, as argued by Chakrabarty (2000), at once both “indispensable and inadequate” in helping us to critically reflect on deep issues of inequality within modernity, and therefore we cannot reject it, but we need to explore how this thought “may be renewed from and for the margins” (p. 16). Thus, to reiterate, our contribution to the discussions of pluralism in ESE and GCE is a concern that if a pluralistic approach presents different versions of humanism or even critiques of humanism, it

makes a strong contribution towards complexifying global issues and presenting diverse perspectives; however, if it does not engage with the origins and limitations of modernity, it may reinforce modernity's trick.

Diversity (Mignolo, 2018) is another helpful conceptualisation of diverse perspectives that demonstrates the imperative of pluriversity. It focuses on a non-Eurocentric critique of Eurocentrism in that it does not rely purely on Western traditions to critique modernity. Rather than focusing on including more perspectives into the debates within liberalism, it starts from the premise that there are diverse local histories comprising a "planetary diversity of local histories that have been disrupted by North Atlantic global expansion" (Mignolo, 2018, p. 151). It is important to specify that centring critical approaches and engaging with pluriversity is not simply opening-up any perspective to debate in a relativistic way (Sund & Pashby, 2020). Rather, such work seeks to directly identify and unsettle the hegemonic categories that normalise an inherently unequal status quo held up by a modern/colonial imaginary. Drawing on anti-imperialist feminism, Khader (2019) points out that because political philosophy is dominated by debates within liberalism, "the view that liberalism is the only defensible normative viewpoint makes it difficult to imagine the possibility that one may criticize liberalism, or elements of it, without being a relativist" (Khader, 2019, p. 16). Diversity is the starting point and an ethical stance, not an arrival point after adding, categorising, and selecting perspectives and positions; it emerges from recognition of coloniality. Thus "it cannot be reduced to a new form of cultural relativism but should be thought out as new forms of projecting and imagining, ethically and politically, from subaltern perspectives" (Mignolo, 2000, p. 743). Given research about curriculum and resources in GE in Europe indicates embedded Eurocentrism, it is necessary to directly take up this challenge.

Research suggests secondary and upper secondary school teachers' work in northern Europe is embedded in Eurocentric social and political conditions. Thus, we aimed to locate our work with them in *their* contexts where a pluralist tradition seems to have hold in supporting the idea that students should engage with multiple perspectives as all participants in the study indicated a desire to build complexity into their teaching of global issues. Building from this premise, we sought to emphasize a particular question of plurality seemingly not explicit in pluralist approaches, namely the importance of a deep onto-epistemic reflexivity that at once recognises Western-centrism and decentres it in order to more fully pluralise. To engage with rather than reproduce modernity's trick, we sought to support teachers to identify dominant, mainstream perspectives and to explicitly consider seven historical patterns of oppression that can be reinforced, albeit unintentionally, through teaching about global issues. We engaged teachers in a conversation about taking up colonialism as part of their framing and analysing global issues in classrooms, using Andreotti's (2012) HEADSUP list as a tool. HEADSUP works to make visible seven historical patterns often reproduced in educational initiatives, particularly those encouraging North-South engagements with local populations in Southern-contexts who experience structural marginalisation: hegemony, ethnocentrism, ahistoricism, depoliticization, uncomplicated solutions, and paternalism (p. 1; see also Pashby, Sund & Corcoran, 2019). We were interested in exploring to what extent HEADSUP would support a critical approach and open up possibilities for a pluriversity by providing an opportunity for teachers to talk about how they take up coloniality in their classrooms or to support their current or future work in so doing. We chose HEADSUP to present to the teachers because it intervenes into a neutral approach to interconnections and multiple perspectives and requires explicit engagement with on-going, unequal, and exploitative patterns of oppression that continue to be evident in GE initiatives in Global North contexts including Europe.

Importantly, as mentioned, we recognize schools themselves, teachers working in them, and we as researchers are embedded in ongoing colonial relations of power (Walsh & Mignolo, 2018). We recognize schooling functions as an agent of production and reproduction (Singh, 2015). We do not view the tool as a panacea for ethical global issues pedagogy nor as a



candidate for a new dominating 'best practice' but as *one* possible resource worth engaging (Pashby & Sund, 2020a). Specifically, HEADSUP aims to "support people with the on-going wrestling with concepts and contexts, choices and implications, that we face every day as teachers and learners working towards deeper and more ethical ways of relating to others and to the world" (Andreotti, 2012, p. 3).

### 3 CONSIDERING CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS: TEACHERS DISCUSSING COLONIALITY

In this paper we look at a small set of findings from the exploratory project outlined above where teachers responded to HEADSUP as tool for global issues pedagogy. In the winter and spring of 2018, supported by a grant through the British Academy's Tackling the UK's International Challenges programme, we held workshops in England, Finland, and Sweden with teachers interested in deepening and complexifying the teaching of global issues (for fuller details on methodology, see Pashby, Sund & Corcoran, 2019). As we were taking up a central concern that GE in Global North contexts reinforces colonial systems of power in how global issues are framed and explored, we wanted to engage with teachers in northern Europe. All three contexts have GE objectives in curricula, and we had access to networks to recruit teachers and complete the project within the tight one-year timeline. In total, twenty-six teachers volunteered to participate. They taught across ages fourteen to eighteen with participant numbers roughly spread evenly across the national contexts. While there were a few very experienced teachers, most identified as relatively new to teaching about global issues. The large majority were born and raised in their national context, but two (one in Finland, one in England) indicated they had immigrated themselves and one's (in England) parents immigrated. Most taught Geography and Social Studies while others taught Civics, Ethics, Natural Sciences, Economics, Religious Education, and Languages.

We aimed to explore to what extent HEADSUP supports a pluriversal approach. The workshops engaged the participants with context around sustainable development goal 4.7 and some of the main critiques from ESE and GCE. Next, a series of activities including distinguishing between soft versus critical GCE (Andreotti, 2006) built to directly considering and applying the HEADSUP checklist (Andreotti, 2012; Pashby & Sund, 2020b). Then, participants were given time to discuss their own practice in relation to HEADSUP. Seven volunteered to try out aspects of the workshop in their classes with a researcher observing and interviewing them afterwards. At the end of the project, we published a teacher resource co-created, piloted, and reviewed by participants, comprising different ways of taking up HEADSUP in classrooms (Pashby & Sund, 2019).

The project included a relatively small sample of self-selected teachers already interested in adding complexity to the teaching of global issues. While our findings are not generalizable, they nevertheless provide some important insights into the importance and challenges of engaging decolonial approaches in day-to-day practices in classrooms. In this paper, we share findings from transcripts of discussions at the workshops and interviews. We analysed these for theme and for insights in relation to theoretical and empirical research on global issues pedagogy as described above. As a contribution to this special issue's topic, we share two of the key inter-related themes from the project findings to explore how discussing and applying HEADSUP evoked teachers to describe their experiences in regards to: a) how colonialism is discussed as a topic and b) how colonialism plays out in the classroom demographics and dynamics.

### 5 COLONIALISM AS A TOPIC: TACKLING DEFICIT VIEWS AND FACING COLONIALITY

In a few instances during the workshops and in response to HEADSUP, teachers discussed the importance of addressing colonialism when teaching about global issues. In Finland there was agreement that colonial history is important. One teacher expressed: "I mean in order to really

get to the root of many problems, you have to have a very strong sense of history". One teacher mentioned that while there may be some focus on colonialism in history class, it may not be addressed across the curriculum.

In England, some teachers spoke openly about how they address colonialism and are strategic in doing so. Geography teacher Riya (pseudonyms used for all participants), whose school is based in a predominantly white middle-class community outside of London, discussed a lack of treatment of colonialism and a largely uncritical presentation of international development in mainstream approaches. Echoing a teacher in Stockholm who suggested her students tend to associate racism with America, she finds that her students generally think that colonialism is about Africa and America and do not recognise colonialism as deeply connected to local issues in England:

"Because we've got this one [view] which has got, Africa, the continent, and it's got a massive hole in it and a big pile of stuff which is on top of North America. And it takes them ages to get that but it's the colonialism idea of all their resources have been taken by somebody else so they haven't got anything to use to develop with. But it takes them ages to get it because they just haven't got that concept in their head because this is before we do anything about colonialism."

Riya self-identifies as "quite anti-colonial", so much so that she feels she needs to "rein in [her] bias slightly", and finds this to be unique among her colleagues:

"I think it varies ... I wouldn't have said that everybody else has the same passion about it as I do, in terms of colonialism.... And part of that is obviously because my parents are quite clearly not white British parents, both of my parents were born in Kenya, Tanzania, their parents come from India, so I can see the colonial impact more than other people. So ... yes, everyone teaches about the impact it has in a negative way but not necessarily in a way that the students are going to think [critically], and I think that varies, obviously across classrooms."

Riya finds the curriculum requirement to look at the so-called 'development gap' opens an opportunity to discuss how materials have been taken away from developing countries:

"[The students] go, 'Well, we weren't very nice to them, were we?' And it's like, that's the point. And we talk about...Nigeria and the fact that it stabilised quite quickly after becoming independent compared to a lot of other countries, but it still had a lot of issues, and why did it have those issues?"

Fellow Geography teacher Jill, who works in a London school serving students mainly from Black and South-Asian communities responded to Riya's comment that she also discusses colonialism within the "hindrances to development" module. However, Jill takes a different tactic. She grew up in Canada and learned as a university student to recognise the legacy of colonialism there. When looking at a case study of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, she speaks freely about the violence of colonialism: "so I can sit there going on about all these Belgians colonising DRC, and I will say, obviously the UK colonised a lot of places just like Belgium". She senses that "it kind of disarms them a little bit, and they're less on the defensive". Riya, on the other hand, has a different take: "I don't think [my students] get defensive at all. Once you explain it, they're actually very like, yeah, we shouldn't have done that, like, yeah, exactly.[...] once you go into it, they're quite open to it". The discussion between Riya and Jill suggests individual teachers are committed to taking up colonialism in their classrooms when there are opportunities, but they

must do so in strategic ways. Further, the sharing of experiences among supportive peers produced a sense of being among a critical mass, a significant outcome of the workshops.

Having adapted HEADSUP into an activity looking at complex reasons for climate change, a teacher from a middle-sized city in Finland, Kaisa, also reflected on the importance of providing an alternative to a deficit view of so-called 'developing countries' in her post-lesson interview. She described a "best moment of the lesson" when a group started to discuss how poorer countries are largely to blame for climate change. She probed them to think of the histories of different countries and tied this to how Finland "was also a very poor country not long ago". A preceding activity she had adapted from the HEADSUP workshop identifies and unpacks the dominant perspectives students bring to the classroom by analysing newspaper headlines (Pashby & Sund, 2019, p. 6). Reminding the students that the newspaper activity had shown how little Finns know about 'developing countries', Kaisa led the students to some blogs organised by an NGO she knew about in which people from different countries explain their responses to climate change. After reading a blog from a Nigerian person's point of view, one of the students got really frustrated. Kaisa asked why he was agitated, and he said because now he sees that the Nigerians are also focusing on renewable resources. This challenged his previously held conclusion that the solution to climate change was to teach poorer countries to do better. Kaisa paraphrased: "because I thought that it is only the knowledge that we have in the Western countries, but now I don't know anymore how to reply to this question of whose perspectives, because they have actually the same perspective". Kaisa describes this as a great teachable moment because the frustration was productive. She found he overcame a simplistic and paternalistic idea that reinforced a deficit thinking hegemonic perspective and was leading to a simple solution, and he also had recognised when he did not know enough.

## 6 COLONIAL DIFFERENCE AND CLASSROOM RELATIONS

Taylor (2012) reminds us "a global citizenship education of 'bringing the world into our classrooms' forgets that our classrooms are always already in this world" (p. 177). Connected to the way Riya spoke about how her own colonial history directly influences her global issues pedagogy, prompted by discussing HEADSUP, teachers in the study also expressed the way colonialism is embedded in the classroom dynamics with their students.

In the East-Midlands in England, Sam considers boarding students from different countries (e.g., Nigeria, Spain, Hong-Kong) a resource: "you'll have at least that non-UK perspective, even if it's not that many ranges but that's quite a good thing about having [international students], so we'll have different opinions, different perspectives". Similarly, a teacher from Birmingham, Rachel, shared that she adjusts her global issues pedagogy according to the demographics of the classroom to directly target a deficit view. Reflecting on the difference between her approach in a rural school of mainly white, British-born students and her current school which is in an urban context with a far more diverse demographic, she notes:

"The amount of times the students refer to Africa as a like...a place and just sweeping generalisations. I think I'm in a much more fortunate position now because you have a student that can actually fight back. So if you've got a student that makes a sweeping statement you've then got a student who's perhaps from that location who can actually turn around, and they're much more careful in what the language they're using because they know they've got students from different countries whether they're first generation or things like that, whereas how you tackle it in my previous school when it was only me fighting that kind of corner, I didn't have the same clout, same sort of power to kind of confront that."

While Rachel saw students with more direct experience with racism and colonial legacy as a resource, two teachers at the Stockholm workshop described a more ambivalent sense of the power relations in the classroom in regards to minoritized students, expressing a challenge related to a desire to balance perspectives. For example, Geography teacher Helen found a danger in replacing one hegemonic view with another.

“...I struggle with this, with the hegemony and dismantling it, because I know that to some of my students, or probably quite a few of them I would present this sort of [politically correct] left[ist] institution, that is just always preaching about feminism and racism [...] So for example, with this mining role play that we did, and I talked about Sweden’s colonial heritage, then in one sense that just [...]puts me right into that position where they already see me, so I’m trying to think about how can I dismantle that, their hegemonic views without just putting in another set, and saying that, okay, so you shouldn’t think of it in this way, you should instead, you would do it in this way.”

Her comment echo’s Riya’s sense that she should ‘reign in her bias’ towards speaking about post-colonial critiques. Helen expressed an important concern about the role of the teacher in a pluralistic approach who should maintain neutrality. She continued,

“And especially maybe because my classes are quite divided, that I have, like usually one group who will be like, yes yes, I want to talk about colonialism, I want to talk about feminism, yes yes yes, and then there’s one group who are on the completely other side of the spectrum and just like, oh, why are we talking about this again, and so and also that connects to like the uncomplicated solutions, right, because the simple solution we’re talking about colonialism or the patriarchy, it’s that there is a bad guy, and usually that bad guy is in the classroom because of the simple solution is sort of well the white man, and then I have like in the corner the white boys who think that I am representing this pc bullshit...”

Helen’s contribution highlights the deeply challenging ways classrooms mirror wide political contexts. She clearly desired to take up pluralistic points of view in the classroom but experiences it as a negotiation between equal and binary perspectives: bad guys and good guys. Patrik, responded to her concern about replacing one ‘simple solution’ with another:

“My students don’t define themselves as Swedes or as Swedish ethnicity, so I had an experience a few weeks ago when we’re talking about colonialism, and they were all ready for the simple solutions, my girls from Somalia, and just said, why don’t you just give us the money, you should, because you have historical guilt, that Europe is guilty, so you should pay.”

It seems he took the notion of uncomplicated solutions from the HEADSUP tool out of context from the other patterns of oppression to make sense of the conflicting views in the classroom. In further iterations of the checklist, Andreotti et al. (2018) have added to uncomplicated solutions the importance of recognising complicity in systemic harm, something we had not emphasized in the workshop. Patrik’s description of the minoritized students in the class appears not to have engaged with a pluriversal approach that starts from the recognition of the shine and shadow of modernity and takes-up a diversity of local histories of coloniality. Rather, he takes a non-critical pluralistic approach seeking to support students to balance their perspectives. Evidently, this theoretical and conceptual engagement required more substantive teasing out on our part

during the workshop and presents an important limitation of and challenge to our approach. When asked how he responded to the Somali students, he answered:

“Well, what I discovered was [...] they were not really ready to discuss other consequences of colonialism, maybe there were positive consequences, so they were all set on the narrative, the dominant narrative that is [...] we are victims.. and you should pay. [...] Well, I tried to of course discuss with them how do you view the future, if you define yourself as victims?”

Helen’s characterisation of a duality of perspectives as ‘good guys’ versus ‘bad guys’ echoes Patrik’s concern about ‘good’ versus ‘bad’ colonialism, neither seeing these as mutually constitutive. Helen seeks to centre issues of colonialism and feminism but worries about balance; Patrik aims for balance by reinforcing a ‘good side’ of colonialism while labelling a critique of colonialism victim mentality. Both are committed to multiple perspectives and complexity, but experience what Andreotti’s (2011) warns about in calling educators to move “discussions away from the uncritical and wholesale embrace or rejection of modernity” (p. 392). Their discussions also highlight the need for complementary resourcing for teachers to navigate classroom dynamics in what are increasingly diverse racial demographics in Swedish schools, an issue across contexts in Europe. Like other teachers in the project, they mediate assumed positionalities of students. Key tensions originate among the demographics of the classroom community, with coloniality presented in the embodied contributions of ‘Somali girls’ in Patrik’s class and the perceived consternation of the ‘white boys’ in Helen’s class. These perspectives from two individual teachers reflect the tangible challenges of this work in context and point to the need for further resourcing and research into the intersections of GE and anti-racism.

Jill, who teaches in a school with large Afro-Caribbean community in London, found a lack of discussion of colonialism and a hesitancy for students to discuss race because, interestingly, they worry that discussing race would be perceived as being racist. She found adapting HEADSUP for use in her classroom helped:

“[They feel] we can’t really talk about some stereotypes and pick them apart because that means we have that stereotype, so it’s about being uninhibited in a way while still taking full responsibility for our own opinions. [...] [The students are] definitely willing, they want to pick this apart, and they want to share it.”

She also realised the connection between HEADSUP and explicitly addressing race and coloniality is part of a larger approach and is something she needs to revisit multiple times with students.

Similarly, a teacher from Stockholm, Sandra, also expressed the important power relations teacher manage within their classroom when they attempt to foster a critical discussion with multiple perspectives. When asked if the HEADSUP tool can be useful, Sandra highlighted the language it enables towards supporting her reflexivity:

“I’m thinking about my students that I have now that’s, you know [...] it’s tough for them to follow up and, you know, they speak Swedish but not academic Swedish, [...] but [HEADS UP got me] thinking about this, the power relations too, to kind of see that we are actually having a power relation in the actual classroom.”

She sees a direct connection between discussing HEADSUP and opening-up a discussion of power in the classroom that could support minoritized students while being mindful of accessible language.

## 7 GLOBAL EDUCATION IN EUROPE AT THE CROSSROADS: CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THE ETHICAL GLOBAL ISSUES PEDAGOGY PROJECT

Our research with a relatively small sample of teachers in northern Europe indicates that addressing colonialism in schools is very dependent on teachers' interests, background, sense of positionality, and ability to engage with anti-racist pedagogy in the classroom culture. In their discussions about and applications of the HEADSUP tool, teachers expressed concern around the fact that global issues often appear too far away, perhaps because, as the research we reviewed indicates, often in the textbooks global issues appear as originating in countries in the Global South. However, multicultural and multiracial student demographics or lack thereof directly brings the global dimension to the classroom while highlighting racism as a condition of coloniality. To varying extents, diverse classrooms allow for new, more critical, perspectives that challenge Eurocentric approaches to global issues. Yet, diversity is also a source of tension because of power relations expressed within the classroom. While some students are reluctant to discuss issues such as racism, some outwardly resist it, and still others are willing to express strong critical views but are seen as reinforcing a victim mentality. Several teachers found the HEADSUP tool proved useful in creating a critical dialogue and guiding discussion, particularly around issues of colonialism and race. Other teachers find it challenging to complexify multiply positioned perspectives and to negotiate trying to identify the 'bad guy' while avoiding replacing one uncomplicated solution with another. They seemed not to look at how the HEADSUP tool shows intersecting oppressive patterns, focusing instead on certain patterns in the tool such as hegemony and uncomplicated solutions as relevant to their practice without taking up salvationism and paternalism.

In order to resource an ethical global issues pedagogy that attends to existing critiques of GCE and ESE, teachers will need multiple approaches and to include a plurality of perspectives in the classroom. However, they ought not include multiple perspectives of what is widely known nor reinforce existing binaries. Our research calls on those of us interested in critical pluralist approaches to deeply consider difference and explicitly raise the extent to which difference of perspective tends to be defined in relation to "a supposedly neutral white, global North, middle class, male normativity" (Stein, 2018, p. 5). In practice, our work with teachers suggests they benefit from a variety of resources that both centre an explicit treatment of the role of historical and ongoing colonialism in contributing to today's 'global issues' *and* offer a reflexivity that can support a re-enunciation (Mignolo, 2018) of GE. This is challenging in practice, particularly when trying to engage all students across positionalities. Our findings demonstrate a need for a stronger anti-racist and culturally responsive pedagogy to support a classroom culture that is engaged with difference (see Eriksen, 2020). We fear without this, students raising critical perspectives—particularly those related to anti-racism and challenging Europe's complicity with colonial systems of oppression, and particularly when expressed by students of colour—may be further patronised rather than supported as providing an entry point for diversity. Eurocentrism is reinforced in textbooks as identified in the UK (Winter, 2018) as well as Finland and Sweden (Mikander, 2016). Eriksen (2018) has pointed out how education for sustainable development is implicated in a Nordic exceptionalism, for example, and Nicolson et al., (2016) have pointed how a similar exceptionalism directly impacts on racism in Finland. There is no shortage of literature on racism and education in the UK (e.g., Joseph-Salisbury, 2020). Further work must examine these intersections more directly.

A helpful approach has been marking out what is a dominant perspective and what points of view presents a challenge to a larger hegemonic, mainstream perspective. This was a particular insight from the HEADSUP workshop that Jill and Kaisa were able to apply to their teaching. It is possible that many of the extant approaches to multiple perspectives have served to reify and reinstate dominant views that students already know, and a fear of needing to be 'balanced' on the part of teachers causes some to feel they need to 'rein in' their strong colonial critique because it is

'biased' or to silence a critical approach for fear of being seen as too 'P.C.'. Some teachers had not taken up the conflict-supportive premise of critical pluralistic approaches (Lindgren & Öhman, 2019) or interpreted it in a way that highlighted positions as extreme and/or relativist. Although many of the teachers were apparently successful in identifying mainstream perspectives when discussing HEADSUP, it was challenging for some to not restrict their activities to a balancing act that treats all perspectives, including a dominant hegemonic one, equally. Several worried that critiquing the dominant perspective creates a new hegemony. Restricting what perspectives to include or determining 'right/wrong' can be understood as what Mignolo (2018) calls a discussion around the enunciated content of the colonial matrix of power, which does not target its enunciation, the framework within which this content gains meaning. Thus, our study demonstrates a case for centring more research and practice on how coloniality's past and present shape today's global issues classrooms in Europe. Projects that enable collaboration between teachers and researchers and that foreground theoretical praxis can initially be very helpful, but we have also found the need for long-term support and on-going conversation. Finally, our findings feedback important questions to the theoretical work explored in the first part of this paper and suggest the need to more strongly intersect anti-racism pedagogy with GE in Europe. Importantly, despite its limitations in terms of sample size and length of time to support teachers, the project was able to produce a resource (Pashby & Sund, 2019) to support this work in practice which shows promise for such participatory projects.

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#### ENDNOTE

<sup>1</sup> Elsewhere, we have expanded on the need for stronger intersections ESE and critical GCE (see [redacted]). And we recognise important work in bringing in other non-Western approaches (e.g. Sharma, 2020). However, we are focused in this article on the context of Western colonial history and present in Europe and the Western origins of GE as implicated in colonialism (see Stein et al, 2020).