

ARTICLE

Between Social Justice and Decolonisation: Exploring South African MOOC Designers' Conceptualisations and Approaches to Addressing Injustices

Taskeen Adam

As social justice and decolonisation discussions fill the physical and virtual corridors of universities in South Africa, educators, and in this case, MOOC designers, are inevitably influenced by them. They are prompted to reflect on such topics, whether in agreement or with scepticism. Provoked by one interviewee's comment that 'you could decolonise and still have an enormous amount of injustice', this paper investigates how South African MOOC designers conceptualise (in)justice, and how they attempt to address these injustices in and through their MOOCs. As notions such as 'social justice' and 'decolonisation' have multiple meanings and connotations, a framework was created to unpack the 'Dimensions of Human Injustice' namely, material, cultural-epistemic, and political/geopolitical injustices. These dimensions of injustice were used to analyse semi-structured interviews with 27 South African MOOC designers. MOOC designers who stressed cultural-epistemic injustices, focused on relevance, inclusive processes and the geopolitics of knowledge production. Those who stressed material injustices, focused on socio-economic disparities, infrastructural inequalities and the need to tackle these systemic problems at a societal level. Through illustrating that MOOC designers attempt to address injustices based on their different conceptualisations of (in)justice, this study argues that a multi-pronged approach to tackling the various dimensions of injustice perpetuated in and through MOOCs can lead to more holistic justice-oriented MOOCs that better enable learners. Additionally, justice-oriented efforts by South African MOOC designers, highlighted in this paper, can be seen as a guide for the MOOC space in general to take greater strides in creating MOOCs in more justice-oriented ways.

Keywords: material injustice; cultural-epistemic injustice; geopolitical injustice; MOOC designers; social justice; decolonisation

Introduction

Since the 2015 and 2016 #RhodesMustFall and #Fees-MustFall student protests in South African universities, there has been renewed interest in themes of decolonisation and social justice in education. Whilst the student movements have raised awareness of the structural injustices embedded in our education systems, institutions and educators are still investigating how best to respond to these injustices.

As educators' views are impacted by these discourses, these views in turn impact their learning design. This notion is expressed by Keddie (2012: 264) who highlights that teachers' views on justice and social good 'shape the ways in which they understand and approach student difference and disadvantage'. She further highlights that whilst most educators agree on the importance of 'remov[ing] the barriers or obstacles that prevent some

students from participating on par with their more privileged peers, there is far less agreement about what these obstacles might be and how they might best be overcome.' (Keddie 2012: 264). In South Africa, various discourses, debates and discussions have been circulating, highlighting the tensions in how justice is conceived and how injustices should be dealt with. Terms such as social justice and decoloniality have multiple meanings, connotations and implications, leaving educators confused and conflicted on how to address injustices.

This research looks at South African Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) designers, a specific sub-set of the academic body, to understand how social justice and decolonial discourses have impacted their views. Drawing on Adam (2020) and Ross et al. (2014), MOOC designers' backgrounds, contexts, identities and worldviews, which are often unacknowledged, strongly influence the design of MOOCs and thus MOOC designers' views were focused upon in this study. Based on the premise that educators' views on justice impact their approach to learners and learning design (Giroux 2003; Keddie 2012), this study

investigates how MOOC designers conceptualise justice, and the ways in which they attempt, if at all, to address injustices in and through their MOOCs.

In order to unpack MOOC designers' conceptualisations of (in)justice, the Dimensions of Human Injustice Framework was created, which analyses injustice through three lenses: material injustices, cultural-epistemic injustices, and political/geopolitical injustices. Using this framework, I show how different MOOC designers conceptualise and aim to address injustices, some placing greater emphasis on cultural-epistemic injustices embedded in geopolitical inequalities, and others on material injustices that need addressing at societal and national levels. This approach assists in putting aside narrow interpretations of particular discourses, for example, social justice being equated to economic justice, or decolonial movements being interpreted as Africanisation, towards a more holistic mindset that can better tackle the multiple dimensions of injustice in our educational contexts and bring about learning designs that better support learners.

Merging Social Justice and Decolonial Discourses

This section develops a unifying analytical framework for critically analysing injustices. This is done through tying together the literature on social justice frameworks and decolonial approaches. In bringing together these discourses in one analytical framework, it is important to understand their differing intellectual histories and developments, particularly with respect to calls to challenge 'hegemonic Euro-North American-centric intellectual thought and social theories' (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015: 485).

The convergence of social justice and decolonial discourses

Social justice frameworks and theories have been formed by institutions primarily from the Global North, particularly the USA, and designed from and for their contexts and worldviews (although with some claiming universality) (Fraser 2005; Mill 1863; Miller 1999; Nielsen 1979; Nussbaum 2002; Rawls 1971; Sandel 1998; Young 1990). However, there have been increasingly nuanced contextual understandings of social justice in relation to education in South Africa in the past 15 years (Dachi & Tikly 2008; Hlalele 2012; Pendlebury & Enslin 2004; Walker & Unterhalter 2007). Post 2015, social justice discourses in South Africa took a decolonial turn, influenced by students' protests for free, decolonised education (Lockett & Shay 2017; Unterhalter et al. 2019), which called to the forefront epistemic injustices and more ground-up conceptualisations and theorisations of issues of justice in South Africa.

Social justice discourses initially focused on redistributive interpretations of justice (Rawls 1971) but have developed to include recognitive and representational justices (Fraser 2005; Young 1990). Lambert (2018: 227) succinctly summarises this multi-dimensional framework for social justice:

'Redistributive justice is the most long-standing principle of social justice and involves allocation

of material or human resources towards those who by circumstance have less (Rawls 1971). Recognitive justice involves recognition and respect for cultural and gender difference, and representational justice involves equitable representation and political voice (Fraser 1995; Keddie 2012; Young 1997).'

While social justice discourses originally focused on *the consequences* of systems of oppression, decolonial discourses, evolving from Global South scholars, were born in contestation with the universalisation of Euro-centric frameworks of human values and thus emphasise *the sources* of systematic oppression and dominance. (Grosfoguel 2011; Maldonado-Torres 2016; Mbembe 2016; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015; Santos 2014; Thiong'o 1986). In understanding decolonial discourses, it is useful to differentiate between colonialism and coloniality, as Latin American scholar Maldonado-Torres (2007: 243) explains:

'Coloniality is different from colonialism. Colonialism denotes a political and economic relation in which the sovereignty of a nation or a people rests on the power of another nation, which makes such a nation an empire. Coloniality, instead, refers to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labour, intersubjectivity relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations. Thus, coloniality survives colonialism. It is maintained alive in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in aspirations of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience.'

Maldonado-Torres (2016: 440) thus articulates decoloniality as:

'the dismantling of relations of power and conceptions of knowledge that foment the reproduction of racial, gender, and geo-political hierarchies that came into being or found new and more powerful forms of expression in the modern/colonial world.'

Whilst decolonial discourses intend to *extend* awareness of injustices beyond redistributive injustices, they are often critiqued as instead *overlooking* redistributive injustices. It is thus important to highlight the South African student movements in 2015 and 2016, protesting for free, decolonised and quality education. Student demands included broader societal concerns such as ending the outsourcing of workers, requesting support from the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), clearing of student debts, provision of transportation to universities from townships, free sanitary products for female students, 10 GB of data, safe and decent accommodation, and increase of library textbooks (Langa et al. 2017; Moosa 2016). From these student demands, we see calls for decolonisation which include material, social and political injustices.

Thus, while social justice and decolonial discourses have had different intellectual histories, they have begun to converge and highlight similar dimensions of injustice, with a particular emphasis on epistemic injustices and the politics of frame-setting. It is from this convergence that I have created a framework that merges these discourses.

Dimensions of Injustice Framework

In merging social justice and decolonial discourses, I expand on Hodgkinson-Williams and Trotter's (2018) development of Fraser's (2005) multi-dimensional framework for social justice. This framework is chosen due to its 'transformative' dimension that bears resemblance to decolonial approaches. Additionally, it is rooted in South African and Global South contexts.

The transformative dimension takes redistributive, recognitive and representational justice beyond their ameliorative interpretations. At the level of *redistribution*, Hodgkinson-Williams and Trotter (2018: 207) place strong emphasis on combatting the root causes of maldistribution with a call to 'restructure' economic models. At the level of *recognition*, they explicitly mention epistemic injustices through what they term 're-acculturation' which 'would respect alternative epistemic positions and acknowledge alternative authorities on what is considered to be worthwhile knowledge and dispositions.' (Hodgkinson-Williams & Trotter 2018: 207). Additionally, Hodgkinson-Williams and Trotter draw on Luckett and Shay's (2017: 12) concept of 'reframing', beyond *representation*, to highlight the need to 'democratis[e] the process of frame-setting itself'. Interestingly, Luckett and Shay's (2017) work has in turn been influenced by the student protests for decolonised education.

Decolonial discourses tend to discuss these concepts in a more entangled nature. Grosfoguel (2007: 213) argues that '[n]obody escapes the class, sexual, gender, spiritual, linguistic, geographical, and racial hierarchies of the "modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world-system"'. He further highlights the entanglements between these hierarchies, in particular 'the racial/ethnic' and 'Euro-American/non-Euro-American' divides which 'transversally reconfigure' all power relations (Grosfoguel 2007: 217). For this reason, it is difficult to categorise injustices independently. I attempt to do so while noting the irreducible complexity and interdependence of the various dimensions of injustice.

The framework in **Table 1** maps connections between social justice and decolonial approaches to addressing injustices, where I highlight three dimensions of injustice: material, cultural-epistemic, and political/geopolitical injustices. Initial inspiration for this merging came from a blog post titled 'Can we decolonize OER/Open?' (Adam et al. 2019).

Using the Dimensions of Injustice from **Table 1**, I expand on how they can be used to critically analyse injustices in South African education systems and in the Open Education Movement (OEM) and MOOC space in such contexts.

Material injustices refer to structural and economic inequalities regarding resources, infrastructure and wealth. In

Post-Apartheid South Africa, deep infrastructural inequalities still remain and can be seen starkly between historically-black universities and historically-white universities in terms of facilities, laboratories, internet connection, decent hostel accommodation, and student support and services among other factors (Langa et al. 2017: 53).

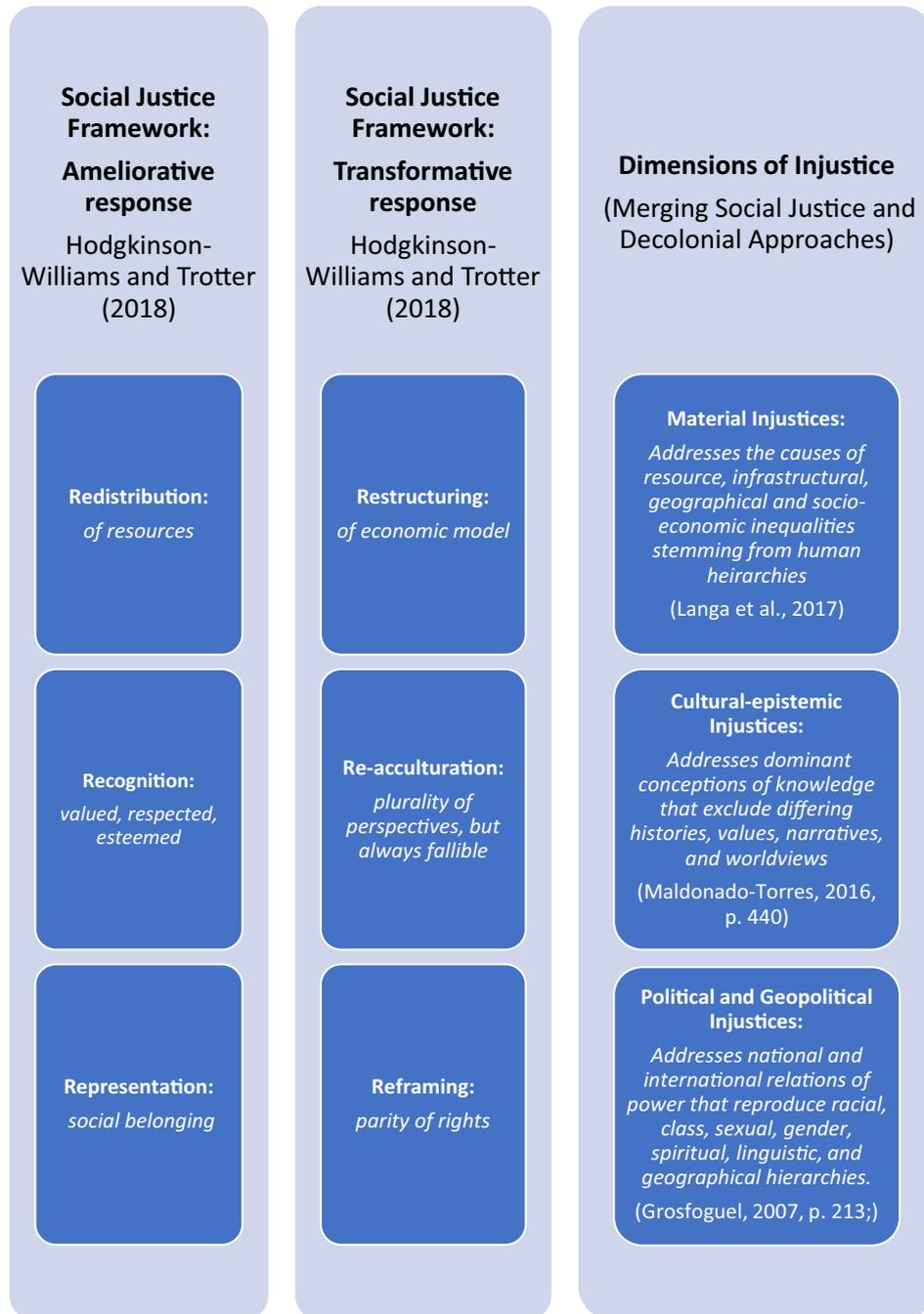
In the OEM and MOOC space, material inequalities relate to lack of digital devices, power supply, internet infrastructure, and data to access resources (Hodgkinson-Williams & Trotter 2018: 207). Rohs and Ganz (2015) highlight through the 'usage gap' and 'reception gap' that even when equal access to resources such as MOOCs is achieved, interpreting and converting these to opportunities largely depends on one's socio-economic status. At an institutional level, material injustices for Global South universities are represented as a lack of funds to create open content, hire instructional designers, or to pay partnering fees to online course platforms, especially when universities need to allocate finances for far more basic needs (Adam 2019: 367).

Cultural-epistemic injustices refer to issues of knowledge, questioning what counts as knowledge and whose knowledge counts. They foreground different ways of being that result in different ways of knowing. Lambert (2018: 231) highlights that 'access' and 'democratisation of knowledge' do not automatically translate to justice; who gets access and to whose knowledges must also be questioned. The lens of cultural-epistemic injustices moves away from surface-level cultural recognition of diversity that can often lead to homogenisation, assimilation or commodification of culture, if not viewed epistemically. In South Africa, the embeddedness of Euro-centric education has been rattled by decolonial movements.

As MOOC platforms expand into developing countries, Czerniewicz et al. (2014: 124) highlight 'the threat that the current shape of the system poses to a heterogeneous diversified global knowledge system'. This is due to the predominantly 'unidirectional transfer of standardised Western education to a diverse international pool of participants' (Adam 2019: 376–377). Bali and Sharma (2017: 26) similarly argue that 'learners beyond the global centres are unlikely to reach the potential promise of MOOCs due to a number of barriers, particularly economic, linguistic and epistemological'. Lockley (2018: 150) points out that only 1.7% and 1.1% of MOOC producers are black on Coursera and FutureLearn respectively. Regarding language, Altbach (2014) comments that the dominance of English in MOOCs may 'inhibit the emergence of a local academic culture, local academic content, and courses tailored specially for national audiences'.

Political and geopolitical injustices refer to systematic imbalances in power relations from regional to international. Pendlebury and Enslin (2004: 46) argue that whilst Post-Apartheid South Africa has 'an impressive suite of policies and the high moral ground of political declaration', injustices still remain due to historical legacies of inequality. Geopolitical powers, whether corporates, governments or international organisations continue to shape the development of low and middle-income countries.

Table 1: Dimensions of Injustice: Bridging social justice and decolonial approaches to addressing injustices.



Source: Adapted from Hodgkinson-Williams and Trotter (2018) and Adam et al. (2019).

In the OEM and MOOC space, geopolitical imbalances manifest in various ways. Bali and Sharma (2017: 26) highlight that ‘the conditions of disfavour are created by market forces, stakeholder interests, and pedagogical practices of those who offer MOOCs’ alluding to both epistemic and geopolitical imbalances in MOOC production. Santos-Hermosa, Ferran-Ferrer and Abadal (2017: 106) calculate that 89% of Repositories of Open Educational Resources (OER) come from Europe and North America, with only 1% from Africa. Adding to imbalances in MOOC production, Lambert (2018: 231) questions whether practices in the OEM achieve social justice if, for example, collaboration and co-creation are only with ‘relatively highly

privileged Global North IT workers.’ Due to lack of funds, universities in the Global South tend to either partner with Global North universities, or become research sites for Global North universities, where theorisation happens at the latter (Adam 2019: 367). Other geopolitical threats include digital neo-colonialism through ‘neoliberal techno-capitalist’ agendas and ‘platform capitalism’ in online education (Adam 2019: 370).

Methodology

This study is a sub-set of broader doctoral research on the extent to which MOOCs can support marginalised groups in South Africa and adopts a grounded theory approach

Table 2: Interviewee codes.

M	I	0	1	F	1	W
Interviewee Type		Unique Identifier		Gender	University	Race
Interviewee Type				Race		
MOOC Instructor	MI			White		W
MOOC Support Team	MS			Black or Minority Ethnic		B
Practitioner	P			University Code		
Gender				Unique University Code		1 to 4
Female	F					
Male	M					

from the broader research. Ethics approval was granted by the Department of Politics and International Relations at the University of Cambridge and consent was given by participants. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 27 MOOC designers (an umbrella term used here to refer to MOOC instructors, MOOC support team members, and practitioners) from four different universities in South Africa. Interviews were conducted in 2017 and 2018 and were transcribed and thematically coded. This paper focuses on interview questions that investigated meanings of social justice and decolonisation, in addition to interviewees' thoughts on the extent to which their MOOCs were decolonised and/or achieved social justice aims (or whether they needed to). Each interviewee was given a pseudonym and unique code that embedded their background information. The code is presented in **Table 2**.

Analysing MOOC Designer Responses

During the interviews, MOOC designers used a variety of terminology that often complicated the arguments they were making. The Dimensions for Injustice Framework aided in analysing the injustices they were aiming to address. While MOOC designers spoke across a range of injustices, what is highlighted is the emphasis certain MOOC designers placed on a particular dimension of injustice.

Cultural-epistemic and geopolitical injustices

Due to irreducible complexity, this section deals with the epistemic and geopolitical injustices together, as it emerged that MOOC designers address these dimensions together. MOOC designers who raised concerns about cultural-epistemic injustices used words such as 'knowledge', 'culture', 'context', 'relevant', 'situated', 'black', 'white', 'diversity', and 'epistemic' to describe their position. In describing geopolitical relations, words such as 'producers', 'colonial', 'decolonial', 'Global North', 'Western', and 'indigenous' were used. There was an emphasis on privileging marginalised groups and knowledges to give them the same standing as those that have been privileged. Due to the copious amounts of data, this section is presented mainly as a narrative of Nnenne who was the most passionate about addressing cultural-epistemic injustices. Where relevant, complimenting or differing statements from other MOOC designers are added.

Making education relevant

Nnenne describes a transformative education as one that is created by and for its context, emphasising the situatedness of knowledge, and the necessity for education to respond to the needs of that context:

*'A **decolonised education** would be, an education that gives back to the people ... That gives back to its **context**. An education that grows, that takes **FROM** where it is **situated**. Makes it into something more and **develops where it was taken from**. So, it goes back in, and makes something new, something better.'* (Nnenne, MI09F3B)

Similarly, Victor also emphasises relevance through a constructivist understanding:

*'The notion of decolonisation probably, it's about making ... it's about **constructing** knowledge that is **relevant**, first of all, to particular people in that **context**.'* (Victor, MI13M3B)

For Nnenne and Victor, knowledge must be rooted in that context, must be relevant to it, and must give back to it. Nnenne further notes that knowledge is not static:

*'It's **transforming**, that's the word I am looking for; transforming. I think that a non-decolonised knowledge is a knowledge that is not sustainable ... if education you are receiving cannot make you, cannot **identify yourself** in that education... You need to see yourself in it ... You can't look and look and only see strangers in what is being discussed.'* (Nnenne, MI09F3B)

With this understanding of transformation, knowledge should not only be relevant to the place and the people but should also evolve over time with them. Relevance involves acknowledging one's historical roots as well as one's present-day needs and contexts. Thus, solely focusing on pre-colonial African knowledge, for example, would not be what she is promoting. Given what Fanon (1961) and Bhabha (1994) allude to in terms of culture evolving along with our hybrid identities, relevance needs to reflect this.

In Caroline's understanding of decolonisation, she places less emphasis on whether knowledge is local, but

focuses on how it can be critiqued and re-envisioned locally and *made* relevant:

*'...and I think by encouraging students to **apply it to their own contexts** and to take concepts and to test them ... we are not definitely not coming in with "this is the way it is and this what it is all about all", we are coming in with concepts that participants can test in their own environment and talk about in their own environment.'* (Caroline, MI07F3W)

Francois, on the other hand, raised concerns of superficial attempts to make content look more relevant:

*'I am very wary of saying that just because **your example is closer to people's lives** that you have **adapted it to local contexts**. I actually don't trust that... **I don't think that it would make much difference**. I think that I see all these school textbooks where they replace Jannie with Thabo and I think what the hell. Just because you call somebody Thabo you say that this is now digestible for Xhosa speaker. I think not.'* (Francois, MI05M3W)

When he says, 'it won't make much difference', this is understood as it won't make much difference to their material conditions, which he elaborates on in later sections.

For Priya, who had a more global-facing MOOC model, relevance meant that something specifically tailored towards African contexts might exclude students from outside the continent.

*'So decolonizing the curriculum here would probably mean including some of the **other voices** as well. South African scholars or African scholars, readings from the continent, students call for more visibility of indigenous knowledges ... But globally, if we are offering a MOOC to the world and we have only South African scholars who are being represented on the course then **aren't we excluding students from outside** the continent? We want to certainly give them exposure to the South African voices because the MOOC is located very much here, but at the same time we want to have other voices as well that would speak to a **more global audience**.'* (Priya, MI12F3B)

For Mishqah, spreading African scholarship globally was not a limitation, but a feature and the goal:

'One [objective] was ... around getting [University 3's] content research out there to the global audience ... To showcase African scholarship, African research and African teaching.' (Mishqah, MS05F3B)

We see here that MOOC designers have different understandings in terms of relevance. Firstly, what making a MOOC relevant means; whether it needs to be *from* and *for* the community it aims to reach, or if it is enough to be *made* relevant to the target group. Secondly, who the tar-

get group is; whether it is aimed at the local or the global impacts on how one goes about make a MOOC more relevant. Thirdly, whether the showcasing of local knowledge is useful to and desired by others; would the global audience appreciate a local touch and cross-cultural learning or feel excluded by its lack of applicability to their own context?

Unpacking epistemic injustices

Nnenne articulates a nuanced understanding of the role of race and nationality in overcoming epistemic injustices, highlighting that the mere identity of being black or African does not always translate to a decolonised outcome:

*'So there is this **epistemological** grounding as different from you so even if you, even if you living here, you're an African ok, you are **black** like me and you standing here, is your epistemology African? Because you have just been here, doesn't make what you produce a decolonised thing. So, while I am saying that the person who is black or who is an African ... It's a factor but not the factor.'* (Nnenne, MI09F3B)

Loyiso makes a similar point through highlighting how we shouldn't toss away the work of white intellectuals:

*'...Basil Davidson who has written 70 books on Africa. He is white. He is British. He is ex-military. ... I think oh my gosh he's got so much that I can take from his material! How do I dismiss all of this work, dedicated all of these years by this white person? It is not a straightforward answer ... there's a lot of dynamics to be considered. Of course, an outsider will always have their limitations for whatever reason, on the basis that they are an outsider, but we should be careful again, **our definition of an outsider**, is it culturally, is it based on race, what is it you know?'* (Loyiso, MI20M1B)

Monique pushes this point further, through the example of African politicians who may perpetuate rather than combat epistemic injustices. She further highlights the general difficulty in delineating where knowledge is from regionally:

*'Then there's the thing of, like, what are **indigenous knowledges** and **Western knowledges**? ... I'm not sure that it's enough that the people you interview are **African politicians** instead of ... whatever ... It's an intellectual trap that you can only decolonize when you've divided in your mind what are Western knowledges and indigenous knowledges.'* (Monique, MS03F1W)

Ahmed goes on to describe justice as something that is completely colour-blind:

'The person presenting the MOOC should be a person who is committed to the enhancement of justice.... If you have a person committed to justice you will

become **colour-blind**. So even the very idea of race to me is a human construct. **There is no such thing as race**. We create those false categories. And then we will assign it to particular people. I will never look at myself as belonging to a particular race. That is a human invention.' (Ahmed, MI10M4B)

This understanding of justice differs drastically from other interpretations of justice presented here, which place at least some emphasis on historic racial injustices.

Whilst most MOOC designers sought to address epistemic injustices through their content and approach, Monique uniquely pointed out how such injustices are also embedded in the technology, i.e. the MOOC platforms, limiting and guiding how one should think and act.

'...whatever knowledge or information you have, it's behind an interface. And that interface in the same way as a grammar and a syntax, it shapes what is possible to say and think. And that interface is very very very much **produced in the Global North**.' (Monique, MS03F1W)

The different conceptualisations of epistemic injustices highlighted here bear resemblance to Jansen's (2017) categorisations of the breadth of decolonial discourses, of which I draw on three. The first argues for Africanisation; a replacement of European knowledge by local, indigenous knowledges (critiqued by Nnenne and Loyiso). This stance allows for marginalised knowledges to be reclaimed but runs the risk of nativism or the co-option of local knowledges for political and national agendas (Mamdani 2016). The second argues for Afro-centrism; the decentring of European knowledge and recentring of local and indigenous knowledges (promoted by Nnenne and Loyiso). The caution with this is romanticising local and indigenous knowledges as infallible, however, as with all knowledges, marginalised knowledges are equally fallible and open to deliberation (Hodgkinson-Williams and Trotter 2018). The third stance argues that knowledges are entangled and inseparable in a way that is not regional, but rather travelling across space, and evolving with time (described by Monique).

These MOOC designers acknowledge that while race, region and nationality are important factors to consider, their inclusion does not automatically translate to epistemic injustices being addressed. This point is articulated well by decolonial thinker Grosfoguel (2007: 213):

'It is important here to distinguish the 'epistemic location' from the 'social location'. The fact that one is socially located in the oppressed side of power relations, does not automatically mean that he/she is epistemically thinking from a subaltern epistemic location. Precisely, the success of the modern/colonial world-system consist in making subjects that are socially located in the oppressed side of the colonial difference, to think epistemically like the ones on the dominant positions.'

Inclusive practices and processes

The importance of having just processes, beyond outcomes, was emphasised by MOOC designers who focused on epistemic injustices. Nnenne makes a crucial point that one needs to be explicit and conscious throughout the design process, including a multiplicity of voices, in order to not promote colonial agendas.

'we appealed to the **cultural context** by being **conscious** of reaching out to the diversity within our framework. I think that's one thing – by being conscious of the **presentation of ourselves**... If it's not conscious, you will end up promoting **colonial agenda** ... the first 5 meetings we talked about the **ethos** ... we had these conversations across board. We had the **black** South African, the **white** South African, we had a **Muslim**, we had [an] **African foreigner** ... we all came together ... And our aim was to remove anything that could be a barrier to people accessing this MOOC. And so, we needed that knowledge base around the **sensitivities within the diversity** ... we had to remove anything that makes them want to say "No". Or, "they are not speaking to me". Or, "they are not reaching me."' (Nnenne, MI09F3B)

Plurality was not only emphasised in the design level but also in the implementation, where the MOOC was consciously created to encourage contributions from participants, particularly participants from low-resourced or rural communities:

'The intended outcomes of the MOOC is to get people **co-creating** knowledge ... We wanted them to tell us. To upload documents, to give – and people did it, – send videos of things happening where you are. We wanted people to not only talk about themselves and what they were doing, but **the community of practice** in their area.' (Nnenne, MI09F3B)

Ahmed further emphasised co-creation of knowledge as emancipatory, giving students the platform to voice their thoughts, ideas and opinions, and to challenge what they were being taught:

'I mean not to be dependant only on the professors for knowledge constructs or knowledge ideas ... I found out that the comments students made, the insightful contributions they made to the course ... taught me that it IS possible [online] for students to **speak their minds, construct ideas, disagree with others, and even to take issue with me** ... and **even extend some of the ideas and examples that I exposed them to** ... and that's also how I see a MOOC ... as an online course whereby students construct meanings.' (Ahmed, MI10M4B)

Here a distinction needs to be made between a course that theoretically explores concepts of justice and which aims to liberate the mind, which is what Ahmed describes,

and a course that is *designed* and *implemented* in a way that strives for justice, which is what Nnenne describes. Although Ahmed focused on co-creation of knowledge, it was at the implementation stage, and with little effort to overcome material barriers that limit the plurality of voices. For Nnenne, emphasis on including a plurality of voices from inception to implementation, addresses both cultural-epistemic and material barriers.

Material and political injustices

Addressing cultural-epistemic or material injustices should not be seen here as mutually exclusive but rather as different leverage points for what needs to be optimised to strive towards a more just world. Words that were used to describe material injustices were *'equality'*, *'economic'*, *'resources'*, *'fair'*, *'access'*, and *'infrastructure'*. Words that were used to refer to local politics were *'townships'*, *'local'*, *'municipalities'*, *'society'* and *'community'*. This section is presented through the narrative of Francois, whose main concern was material injustices in light of political injustices. His sentiments are complimented or contrasted with opinions of other MOOC designers where necessary.

Critiques of decolonisation

In highlighting the need for equality and fairness, Francois felt that decolonisation was not the solution, where he conceptualised decolonisation as a rejection of everything Western and colonial, including the white citizens of South Africa:

*'What I would like it to mean is a **fair deal** for everybody in the country ... you could **decolonise** and still have an enormous amount of **injustice**. And I suppose that is my problem with it. If you just – in the extreme situation – if you kind of went **completely Albanian** and you kicked out all the whites and you have a totally isolated society clearly you have decolonised, obviously, because you **have no colonial links** anymore, you have a totally insular society, only inward looking and that could be a beautifully equal and fair society but it could just as well be an utterly unfair and cruel society.'* (Francois, MI05M3W)

In Francois' interpretation, decolonisation does not automatically deal with issues of justice. While South Africa achieved political emancipation in 1994, he felt there has not been much visible change:

*'I believe South Africa **decolonised** in 1910... I think that we have had 23 years of ANC government and we have seen very little impact on Apartheid.'* (Francois, MI05M3W)

At first glance, Francois' words seem harsh, but beneath it lies a deep concern for material inequity in the country that has not been addressed. For Francois, more emphasis is needed on material and economic justice rather than on (his conceptualisation of) decolonisation:

*'And I am not sure what people are talking about in terms of **decolonising** actually captures what I suppose the term is **social justice**, or something like that, **economic liberation, cultural liberation** and so I am struggling with the idea of decolonising... what it really means.'* (Francois, MI05M3W)

The interpretation of social justice as addressing resource inequalities was also shared by David.

*'So, the whole background in South Africa is one of inequality and **social injustices** as it were, so we placed the MOOC very clearly in that context of **scarce resources and inequalities**.'* (David, MI11M3W).

Francois aptly points out that systemic barriers to access need to be addressed:

*'People are excluded from **access** they are being **systematically repressed**. Umm and so if you reduce the amount of repression, that's not yet **decolonising**.'* (Francois, MI05M3W)

From this discussion, we can see that the vagueness of decolonisation discourses, and its potential to even perpetuate injustice, steers Francois away from its use. While current decolonial processes place emphasis on cultural-epistemic emancipation, particularly in higher education institutions, economic emancipation and structural change at a societal level have not yet been achieved, and, as Francois and David point out, this impacts the everyday lives of South Africans.

Addressing material injustices at a societal level

A main motivator behind South African MOOC designers supporting MOOCs was that they promoted free education. Riyaadh highlights how open education can address financial barriers to education, and how that in itself is a goal:

*'How is Africans marginalised in terms of education? ...They are **marginalised in terms of money**, they are **marginalised in terms of fees** that they have to pay. So if the open educational resource can give them at least something, then they are not as marginalised...'* (Riyaadh, MS06M4B)

Francois by contrast feels there is an overemphasis on educational access, without focusing on the broader material inequity in society such as unequal wealth distributions and poorly resourced townships and rural areas:

*'I have come to the conclusion that education isn't inherently a force for liberation. And if everybody has the same level of education then nobody will break out of their position so if suddenly, all of the **people in the townships** in South Africa had a good matric, that would make no difference at all.'* (Francois, MI05M3W)

His use of the word liberation, in line with the rest of his argument, is assumed here to mean economic liberation, rather than a Freirean (1970) liberation of the mind. Francois then brings this critique to online education initiatives that aim to democratise access to knowledge:

*'In terms of social justice, I don't think that supplying online courses could remotely replace the inequalities we have in the school system in South Africa. **We still have Apartheid...** I think that anything affective that you provide, will be used more by people who already have advantage than it would be by people that are less advantaged. I think that **if you want to do something about social inequality you have to do it absolutely deliberately.**'* (Francois, MI05M3W)

His sentiments on online education's inability to address structural inequalities were shared strongly by Loyiso, who critiques the *'roll out [of] an online program which is going to go to the depth of the Western Cape and reach the people that cannot access Stellenbosch University'*. Highlighting the stark inequalities of the *'very poor communities'* that were removed to the outskirts by the violent way that the town of Stellenbosch was established, he elaborates:

*'Firstly, where are these people going to get **PC's**, again **maintaining these machines**, again with no **security** where they are. How will they actually maintain and you gonna *copa* [pay for] all of that. So, I think it is fictitious to say that what we are doing is going to get to that target group. Unless we think beyond the actual module and we go into the social aspect of it, which is, getting a buy in from the **local municipalities** in those areas to say maybe create **an internet cafe**, or the **schools** that you have, after hours, make them **accessible to the community** to come in and whatever. But do you see what I am saying? We are moving away from just this material and IT and laptops, now you are going to the **social phenomena** ... we are now talking politics.'* (Loyiso, MI20M1B)

Being aware of the technical constraints in marginalised communities, numerous MOOC designers sought ameliorative efforts to overcome this through making content low-resolution and downloadable in zip files (Monique, Nnenne, Caroline), ensuring mobile compatibility (Priya, Riyaadh), and creating transcripts for those that cannot watch the videos due to technological constraints, hearing impairments or difficulty with understanding English (Mishqah, Craig). WhatsApp was also used as a less data-intensive platform to have more in-depth free-flowing discussion among participants (Monique, Richard).

We see in this section that open education helps in the way of overcoming the barriers of fees to accessing education, however without the additional structural changes at a societal level, as similarly highlighted by Warschauer (2003) and Langa et al. (2017), open educational resources cannot really reach the people who would most benefit

from them. Both Francois and Loyiso highlight the need to go beyond the university and education space and into broader society if we are to address injustices at a structural level and a political level.

Discussion and Conclusion

This paper aimed to investigate how MOOC designers conceptualise injustices, and how they attempted to address these injustices in and through their MOOCs. The Dimensions of Human Injustice Framework proved beneficial in seeing where MOOC designers placed emphasis and where they fell short, in terms of conceptualising and addressing injustices.

For those MOOC designers who saw cultural-epistemic injustices and the dominance of Eurocentric discourses as the main issue, they focused on contextual relevance, plurality of knowledge and recognition of cultural diversity through inclusive practices and processes, as part of their aims. From this perspective, the privileging of marginalised knowledges is considered fair, given the historical atrocities against these worldviews, and the need to challenge dominant epistemologies. While there is a need to privilege marginalised knowledges and people, there are, however, concerns about the risk of overcompensation, such that privileging local and indigenous knowledges can lead to an unfair rejection of the global knowledge base, and could lead to essentialism, fundamentalism and nationalism (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015). On the other hand, to become colour-blind, as Ahmed argues, takes the opposite extreme of ignoring the entanglement between race, gender, class, culture, location, marginalisation and structural inequalities (Grosfoguel 2007). Thus, a balance needs to be struck between approaches.

In addressing cultural-epistemic injustices in MOOCs, there are also different stages where dialogical and inclusive processes can be introduced. In the case of Nnenne, a *justice-as-process* approach was taken from the inception of the MOOC to include a plurality of ideas, and a diversity of cultures. She felt that this is when the ethos is formed and the most crucial stage of input. At the level of implementation, challenging dominant discourses can be done by including diverse and pluralistic content, and creating room for interaction and co-creation of knowledge, as in the case of Ahmed. However, as Priya points out, in the global space of MOOCs with complex heterogenous participants, it can be difficult to have content that is relevant to everyone, thus emphasis needs to be made pedagogically to include diverse voices and critical thought from the participants themselves. As both physical and virtual learning spaces become more diverse in an increasingly global world, shifting from thinking of *justice-as-content* to *justice-as-pedagogy* may be more beneficial to educators.

Focusing more on material injustices, Francois argued that the emphasis on relevance in curriculum should not overshadow the need to address material injustices as there is little benefit in tackling cultural-epistemic injustices within education systems to which the marginalised have no access. Both Francois and Loyiso emphasised that not only do material injustices need to be addressed simultaneously, they also need to be addressed structurally

beyond the educational space, at a community, municipal and national level. In contrast, those that emphasised the geopolitics of knowledge production, such as the prominence of Eurocentric epistemologies, viewed places that reproduce racial and ethnic subjugation, particularly the university space, as the locus where liberating education needs to be promoted (Mamdani 2016). Thus, by only problematising external, colonial, and neo-colonial sources of injustices, particularly cultural-epistemic injustices, educators may overlook domestic powers of oppression and material inequalities. Alternatively, those who focus on material and economic injustices, may overlook the cultural-epistemic power imbalances and dominant epistemologies that dictate the framing and the functioning of societies and global relations.

Making MOOC designers aware of the multiple dimensions of injustice that need to be overcome in MOOC design and implementation can enable them to strive for more multi-pronged efforts to conceptualise, design and implement MOOCs in more holistic justice-oriented ways that better support the diversity of learners. Such a MOOC would make a conscious effort to address cultural-epistemic injustices as well as material injustices from conceptualisation, bearing in mind both intranational and international sources of dominance and oppression. From this, a multi-dimensional justice-oriented MOOC model that better enables MOOC designers and learners to tackle injustices can begin to be envisioned. As illustrated, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to addressing injustices. Rather, this depends on the purpose of the MOOC, and the target group for which the MOOC is intended.

The practical attempts of these South African MOOC designers to address injustices and the concerns they raise, as highlighted in this paper, can be seen as a guide and motivation for the MOOC space in general to take greater strides in creating and implementing MOOCs in more justice-oriented ways. As Lambert (2018) highlights, openness in and of itself is not automatically justice-oriented but needs a concerted focus in order to address injustices. The practices drawn from these MOOC designers lead the way to a more justice-oriented open education space.

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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