

---

## CHALLENGES AND COMPLEXITIES OF DECOLONIZING INTERNATIONALIZATION IN A TIME OF GLOBAL CRISES

---

DESAFIOS E COMPLEXIDADES PARA DECOLONIZAR A INTERNACIONALIZAÇÃO  
EM TEMPO DE CRISES GLOBAIS

---

DESAFÍOS Y COMPLEJIDADES DE DESCOLONIZAR LA INTERNACIONALIZACIÓN  
EN TIEMPO DE CRISIS MUNDIALES

---

*Sharon Stein<sup>1</sup>, Jhuliane Evelyn da Silva<sup>2</sup>*

### ABSTRACT

In this article, we consider possible futures of internationalization in the context of today's many overlapping global challenges and crises. We argue that how one conceptualizes and responds to these challenges and crises will inform distinct approaches to internationalization. In addition to reviewing these different approaches, we emphasize the possibilities offered by a decolonial approach to internationalization. Beyond considering what a decolonial future of internationalization might entail, we also consider the complexities and circularities that often emerge in efforts to actually implement decolonizing changes in higher education.

**KEYWORDS:** Decolonization. Coloniality. Internationalization. Global challenges.

### RESUMO

Neste artigo, consideramos os possíveis futuros da internacionalização no contexto dos desafios e crises globais atuais. Argumentamos que o modo como conceituamos e respondemos a esses desafios e crises informará abordagens distintas de internacionalização. Assim, além de revisar as diferentes abordagens, enfatizamos algumas possibilidades de internacionalização fundamentadas em uma orientação decolonial. Para além de ponderarmos o que seria um futuro decolonial para a internacionalização, também consideramos as complexidades e circularidades que por vezes emergem em esforços para implementar verdadeiramente mudanças decoloniais no ensino superior.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Decolonização. Colonialidade. Internacionalização. Desafios globais.

### RESUMEN

En este artículo, consideramos futuros posibles de internacionalización en el contexto de los desafíos y crisis globales. Argumentamos que la forma en que uno conceptualiza y responde a estos desafíos y crisis informará distintos enfoques de la internacionalización. Además de revisar estos diferentes enfoques, enfatizamos las posibilidades que ofrece un enfoque descolonial a la internacionalización. Más que solo considerar lo que podría implicar un futuro descolonial de la internacionalización, también consideramos las complejidades y circularidades que a menudo surgen en los esfuerzos por implementar cambios descolonizadores en la educación superior.

**PALAVRAS-CLAVE:** Descolonización. Colonialidad. Internacionalización. Desafíos globales.

---

<sup>1</sup> Assistant Professor in the Department of Educational Studies at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC, Canada/ x<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>w</sup>əyəm (Musqueam) Territory. **Email:** [sharon.stein@ubc.ca](mailto:sharon.stein@ubc.ca)

<sup>2</sup> PhD Candidate in Languages at the Federal University of Paraná (UFPR), Curitiba, PR, Brazil. **Email:** [anecomjesus@gmail.com](mailto:anecomjesus@gmail.com)

**Submetido em:** 27/04/2020 - **Aceito em:** 29/07/2020

## 1 INTRODUCTION

In 2017, leading internationalization scholars Phillip Altbach and Hans de Wit predicted the emergence of a “new world order” of higher education internationalization” (p. 3). In their analysis, they discuss the potential impacts of recent global (geo)political shifts on internationalization, with a particular emphasis on the election of right-wing governments. Three years later, we have seen yet more rightward political shifts in several countries, alongside the intensification of various other interconnected global challenges and crises. This includes ecological risks (e.g. climate change, biodiversity loss), societal risks (e.g. involuntary migration, food and water crises, infectious diseases), political risks (e.g. interstate conflict, state crisis), and economic risks (e.g. unemployment, asset bubbles) (FUTURE EARTH, 2020).

These social, political, economic, and ecological shifts have already started to translate into a “new world order” of internationalization. This is evident, for instance, in our home countries of the US and Brazil. Following the election of President Donald Trump and the implementation of a travel ban, also known as the “Muslim ban”, as well as other xenophobic immigration policies and practices, the US is perceived as an increasingly hostile place for international students, staff, and faculty (STEIN, 2018; TODORAN; PETERSON, 2019). While it is not possible to attribute declining international student enrollments to “the Trump Effect” alone (KIM, 2019), as Rose-Redwood and Rose-Redwood (2017) note, “we simply cannot proceed as if it were business as usual within the current political context” (p. II). In Brazil, higher education institutions are dealing with the effects of the Constitutional Amendment<sup>3</sup> in 2016 that froze public investment in health and in education for 20 years, as well as with President Jair Bolsonaro’s forceful attack against left-wing “ideological” content.<sup>4</sup> By the end of 2019, more budget reductions for all levels of education and scholarly research came into effect. The overall result has been to strengthen the focus on higher education’s utilitarian, economic functions, which significantly threatens many social sciences and humanities programs. This shift extends to the context of internationalization, where activities that centre Brazil’s national economic interest are favoured above all else (MARTINEZ, 2016; MENEZES DE SOUZA, 2019).

Beyond the effects of these political shifts, there are growing conversations about the ecological impacts of international mobility (ARSENAULT et al., 2019), and the effects of public health pandemics like COVID-19 on international engagements (LEUNG; SHARMA, 2020). While Altbach and de Wit (2017) were prescient in their prediction of a shifting global education landscape, the overall impacts of these challenges and crises on the international dimensions

<sup>3</sup> Available at [http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil\\_03/constituicao/emendas/emc/emc95.htm](http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/constituicao/emendas/emc/emc95.htm) Accessed on 12 April, 2020.

<sup>4</sup> BARONE, I. Como ficou o plano de Bolsonaro para afastar a influência da esquerda na educação. **Gazeta do Povo**. 26 December, 2019. Available at: <https://www.gazetadopovo.com.br/republica/o-que-bolsonaro-fez-na-educacao-2019/>. Accessed on 11 April, 2020.

of higher education are still emerging. In this article, we take a look at these shifts, and consider different means of responding to them and thus, of (re)imagining the future of internationalization. In particular, we emphasize the generative possibilities offered by a decolonial approach to internationalization in our present time of global crises. In brief, decolonial critique suggests that the existing global system is organized by modern/colonial institutions – including institutions of higher education – that are inherently violent and unsustainable. While on the one hand recent developments might make decolonial futures appear more unlikely than ever, the rapidly changing global context might also offer fragile opportunities to transform mainstream approaches to higher education in unexpected ways.

In this article, we suggest the need to become attuned to these openings when and where they emerge, while remaining vigilant about the potential for further harm that can result from different responses (including from decolonial responses) to our increasingly uncertain, volatile, and interconnected world (AMSLER, 2019; ANDREOTTI et al., 2018; RIZVI, 2019; STEIN, 2019). We also contend that by reorienting internationalization **away** from seeking the continuity of the existing modern/colonial global system, and **toward** engaging with the possibility that this system is ending, we might make space for something new and as yet undefined and unimaginable. This is an approach to internationalization that could prepare us to face “the end of the world as we know it” (SILVA, 2014), which is not the end of the world as such, but rather the end of harmful and unsustainable systems, institutions, and habits of being – which is also the opening for other worlds – i.e. possibilities for existence – to (re)emerge.

The article is organized around three social cartographies that build upon each other in order to ultimately invite consideration of different possible futures of internationalization. Social cartography is a methodology for mapping different discursive, intellectual, affective and existential orientations toward a shared issue of concern (SUSA; ANDREOTTI, 2019). Social cartographies are intended not as definitive representations of reality, but rather as interventions in reality that mobilize particular engagements and conversations (SANTOS, 2007). With these three cartographies, we invite critical, self-reflexive engagements with some of the more notable responses to current and emerging crises, and encourage consideration about what each response assumes, enables, and precludes in relation to internationalization.

## 2 DECOLONIAL CRITIQUES

Because decolonization efforts have been ongoing ever since European colonization began in the Americas over 500 years ago, there is no singular genealogy of decolonial theory and practice. Colonization looks different across different geographies and temporalities, and thus, there are multiple distinct though often overlapping ways of theorizing and practicing decolonization. Different areas of decolonial study have been institutionalized within the colonial academy, including post-colonial, Indigenous, Black, and modernity/coloniality studies. These fields often initially emerged from, or in conversation with, the theorizations and modes of resistance and resurgence that have been enacted by communities who have been subject to racial/colonial violence. Despite the importance of highlighting different approaches, below we emphasize common areas of concern across decolonial critique. After doing so, we briefly address how colonial patterns manifest in the context of internationalization, as well as some of the complexities and nuances of addressing colonization in any particular context.

### 2.1 Basic Dimensions of Decolonial Critique

Decolonial critiques analyze the systemic, historical, and ongoing colonial violence that sustains modern institutions through racialized, gendered, and human-centered processes of exploitation, expropriation, genocide, and ecocide (ANDREOTTI et al., 2018; BYRD, 2011; KING, 2019). Alongside efforts to denaturalize this violence, decolonial critiques create space for fostering alternative modes of knowing, being, and relating, even as these alternatives are frequently pathologized and deemed unviable and even invisible from within the imaginaries and infrastructures of colonial systems. Decolonial critiques differ from more mainstream critical approaches because they refuse the notion that the primary violence of colonization is the **exclusion** of certain populations and communities from the supposedly universal promises offered by modern institutions. To name exclusion as the primary violence of this system is to: 1) invalidate other ways of knowing and being, by assuming that everyone desires access to the same promised futures and direction of social change; and, 2) invisibilize the fact that these modern institutions do not simply exclude ‘othered’ populations, but rather are made possible at the expense of violence against those populations (LEROY, 2016; SILVA, 2014).

In other words, decolonial critiques understand colonial violence as the ‘condition of possibility’ for the modern global system (SILVA, 2014). This means that colonization cannot be interrupted by including previously excluded populations into mainstream institutions; instead, decolonization requires the unravelling of those institutions. This analysis is summarized by the useful formulation of ‘modernity/coloniality’, which indicates that modernity and coloniality are two sides of the same coin, and specifically, that colonial violence serves as the basis of the modern world system (GROSGOUEL, 2013; MALDONADO-TORRES, 2007). In other words, coloniality is the constitutive *underside* of modernity. Here, coloniality is used to refer not to

specific instances or regimes of colonial rule, but rather “to longstanding patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production” (MALDONADO-TORRES, 2007, p. 243).

In addition to the literature reviewed here, our approach to decolonial critique is informed by our work as part of the Gesturing Towards Decolonial Futures collective. Below we offer our first social cartography, which summarizes the interdependent relationship between modernity and coloniality that is theorized in decolonial critiques. Specifically, we identify the ‘promises’ associated with modern economic, political, epistemological, ecological, social, and relational systems, and the often-invisibilized ‘colonial processes’ that enable the fulfilment of these promises (for certain populations). We summarize this cartography in Table 1.

The capitalist economic system offers the promise of perpetual economic growth and wealth accumulation, while invisibilizing the true costs of that promise: that is, racialized and gendered expropriation and exploitation. Here, expropriation refers to the appropriation of the entire value of land, labour, or resources; meanwhile, exploitation refers to underpaying someone for their land, labour, or resources (COULTHARD, 2014; SILVA, 2014). We also note that the capitalist economic system relies not only on the expropriation and exploitation of humans, but of other-than-human beings as well, which we address in more detail with regard to the ecological system. Ultimately, colonial processes of dispossession produce the wealth that is then claimed by the beneficiaries of the modern promise of accumulation.

The political system organized by nation-states promises security by pledging to protect both people and property. In fact, this promise is kept through colonial processes of state and state-sanctioned violence against ‘othered’ communities – especially communities that are predominantly racialized, Indigenous, immigrant, and/or low-income (BYRD, 2011). This violence against marginalized communities and individuals includes removal, confinement, and incarceration (especially of Indigenous and Black populations), domestic policing as well as policing of nation-state borders, and the exporting of state violence abroad through global militarism. Through these colonial processes, the state protects only those it deems ‘worthy’ (generally, white/Euro-descended and wealthy), and the wealth that they have accumulated through exploitation and expropriation in the capitalist economic system.

The knowledge system premised on universal reason promises that a single way of knowing is universally valuable and relevant, and assures a totalizing form of knowledge that can be used to make predictions or engineer outcomes. Historically, it is European/Western knowledge that has claimed this position of ‘universality’ within the modern/colonial world system (MALDONADO-TORRES, 2007; SANTOS, 2007). The colonial cost of this promise of universality is that it has been premised on denial of the value and even of the existence of other knowledge systems. In order to maintain the position of universality, these other

knowledge systems have been devalued, repressed, and in some cases eradicated entirely.

The social system organized by hierarchy promises the opportunity to maintain and/or improve one's status and social position. This promise is enabled by colonial processes that naturalize the unequal distribution of resources, and the conditionality of value as determined by one's productivity. Although the promise is that resources are allocated depending on one's hard work, talent, and perhaps a bit of luck, in general they tend to be distributed along existing racial, gender, economic, and other hierarchies. Ultimately, this modern promise of mobility comes at the cost of denying the inherent worth of all beings (ANDREOTTI et al., 2018).

The ecological system is premised on a human-centered (anthropocentric) and extractive approach that not only maintains humans as separate from 'the environment' or 'nature', but also places the value of human life (especially white people) over and above other-than-human beings. This promise of human separation and supremacy is premised on a colonial process through which, rather than the entirety of living beings that **includes** humans, 'the environment'/'nature' is reduced to a set of discrete 'resources' that are separate from humans and whose only purpose is to be put to human use. Through these colonial processes, not only are certain species reduced in numbers or even entirely extinct, but they are also treated as objects of consumption rather than as living entities.

Finally, the relational system is premised on a fantasy of separation that promises individualism, independence, and unrestricted autonomy, and that comes at the cost of denying one's interdependence with, and responsibility to, all other beings (SILVA, 2014). It is this denial of relationality that is the prerequisite for all of the other modern/colonial systems, as it is only once we deny our interdependence with all other beings that we can place them into social categories of difference (racial, gender, economic) and rank those differences into hierarchies that can then be used to rationalize exploitation, expropriation, and other forms of violence to ensure one's own political and economic 'security', and epistemic certainty.

**Table 1.** Cartography of modern promises and the colonial promises that enable them

	<b>Modern promise</b>	<b>Colonial process</b>
<b>Capitalism (economic system)</b>	Continuous economic growth and wealth accumulation (accumulation)	Racialized expropriation and exploitation of humans and other-than-human beings (dispossession)
<b>Nation-state (political system)</b>	Security through state protection of people and property; cohesion through shared national identity (security)	State violence in the form of policing and confining ‘othered’ communities, policing borders, and global militarism (sanctioned violence)
<b>Universal reason (knowledge system)</b>	A single, universally relevant knowledge system that offers certainty, predictability, consensus (universality)	Suppression and attempted obliteration of other knowledges; knowledge used to index and control the world (epistemicide)
<b>Hierarchy (social system)</b>	Status and upward socio-economic mobility distributed as justly earned rewards (mobility)	Naturalization of inequality; worthiness is conditional and determined by one’s perceived capacity for productivity (conditionality)
<b>Extractive human-centrism (ecological system)</b>	Infinite consumption of ‘natural resources’ for human use (consumption)	Biodiversity loss; pollution; ecological destruction; denial of agency and vitality of other-than-human beings (destruction)
<b>Separability (relational system)</b>	Independence, individualism, and unrestricted autonomy (autonomy)	Refusal of interdependence and its related responsibilities; commodification of living beings (denial of accountability)

## 2.2 How Colonialism Shapes Internationalization

The dynamics of the modern/colonial global system significantly shape the internationalization of higher education, as they shape the global landscape of higher education in general. Western academic institutions have accumulated numerous advantages through centuries of colonial relations. As a result, the global higher education landscape is characterized by a highly uneven distribution of resources, unequal and extractive relationships between institutions and academics in wealthier and poorer nations, and an over-representation of Western knowledge systems in both teaching and research (GROSFUGUEL, 2013; STEIN, 2017). The Western (especially English-speaking) academy is still generally understood to be the intellectual centre of the world, and Western knowledge is widely considered to be the most valid and valuable knowledge system, against which all other knowledge systems are measured (NANDY, 2000; SANTOS, 2007). Even when individuals or institutions have a critique of how that epistemic and political economic Euro-supremacy shapes higher education contexts, they generally must still navigate these inherited colonial hierarchies in some way – including in the context of internationalization.

The coloniality of internationalization is evident in the directional flows of international students, predominantly from non-Western to Western nations (OECD, 2020). This directionality is both informed by and further reifies the notion that the West is the intellectual centre of the world. In the contemporary era of marketized internationalization in which many institutions charge a premium for international student tuition, as compared to domestic students, this also allows for a continuous flow of economic resources to the West through tuition and other spending (JOHNSTONE; LEE, 2014).

Notably, while the previous, aid-based approach to internationalization in Western nations was less focused on income than today's trade-based approach, the aid model was still dominated by colonial logics, particularly in the way it framed the education of international students from non-Western and poorer nations as a form of international aid or "charity" (STEIN; ANDREOTTI, 2016). This approach reached its zenith during the Cold War. While aid may be preferable to trade, this approach was still premised on a paternalistic investment that presumed the West is not only the apex of education, but also the height of development and progress. In this framing, the greatest (and most benevolent) good is to transfer the West's supposedly universal knowledge to the rest of the world. Apart from paternalism, this aid-based approach to internationalization was also premised on the desire to socialize international students as good capitalist subjects who would go on to become political and economic leaders in their home countries and would be sympathetic to the geopolitical and economic interests of their former host country (McCARTNEY, 2016).

Although internationalization is not limited to issues of international student mobility, this has often been the predominant focus. Nonetheless, it is important to consider other dimensions of internationalization as well. For example, international research partnerships continue to favour partners from the Global North (MENEZES DE SOUZA, 2019). Meanwhile, many service(-learning) abroad programs are still oriented by a paternalistic framework that invites Western students to imagine themselves in the role of helpers or even "saviours" in relation to their non-Western host community. The community is in turn rendered as lacking adequate skills and knowledge, and their structural disadvantages are understood to be a result of that 'lack' rather than a product of colonial relations in which Western students are complicit.

### *2.3 Complexities of Colonization in Relation to Internationalization*

The above section briefly captures how broad colonial patterns shape internationalization. Yet it is also important to briefly address how the complexities and nuances of colonial relations in different contexts further complicate the possibilities for how we might respond to today's challenges and crises. These colonial complexities contribute to "a cacophony of contradictorily hegemonic and horizontal struggles" for justice (BYRD, 2011, p. 53) within a modern/colonial global system. Cacophony and contradiction make simplistic responses to colonization impossible, as a move toward justice in one context or on one front



can have unintended consequences that further colonial dynamics elsewhere.

We note first the fact that coloniality has both local and global dimensions. For instance, the US is widely understood to hold a position of political and economic hegemony within the modern/colonial world system, particularly since World War II. Yet beyond its global position, the US also maintains a colonial system in its internal domestic context. The US has been identified as a “settler colonial” country, indicating that its existence is premised on the ongoing occupation and dispossession of Indigenous lands by non-Indigenous peoples (BYRD, 2011; COULTHARD, 2014). Rather than a single historical moment, settler colonialism is an ongoing mode of social, political, and economic organization. Alongside the structure of settler colonialism, the US is also organized by structural anti-Blackness shaped by slavery and its afterlife (KING, 2019; LEROY, 2016). When this domestic colonial context is considered, it complicates critiques of colonization that only focus on inter-state global power relations. For instance, international students are marginalized and exploited as (often racialized) non-citizens; at the same time, they may be seeking access to the benefits of a system built on dispossession. In other words, we need to both interrupt patterns of harm against international students, and consider “the ongoing conditions of colonialism that continue to make the United States a desired state formation within which to be included” (BYRD, 2011, p. xvii).

Consideration of complexities also complicates narratives of colonization in Brazil, which is in a colonial position in relation to the Western world, having been colonized by Portugal for hundreds of years and being still marginalized within the global economic system, despite its BRIC status. However, the Brazilian state is also a colonial power internally. An incident related to recent Amazon fires illustrates this complexity. When the French president Emmanuel Macron critiqued Bolsonaro’s handling of the fires, Bolsonaro accused Macron of having a “colonialist-mindset”, in an attempt to deflect the fact that his own government was responsible for weakening environmental protections and Indigenous rights that contributed to the fires. Meanwhile, the Brazilian Ministry of Education hires the British Council to research, advise and plan the new national curriculum for basic education in teaching and learning English, rather than recognizing the highly capable Brazilian researchers and teachers who work in this area. Finally, Brazil has relationships with other “Global South” nations in the context of higher education, especially African and Latin American countries, for instance through the University for International Integration of the Afro-Brazilian Lusophony (UNILAB). While not oriented by profit, these connections tend to be rooted in a developmentalist framework that risks reproducing colonial (racialized and paternalistic) patterns of engagement. In sum, attending to the complexities and contextual nuances of the modern/colonial global system will be important once we move to consider different possible approaches to internationalization in response to today’s unprecedented global challenges and crises. Before we do that, however, we consider the character of these challenges and crises in the section below.

### 3 CONTEMPORARY GLOBAL CHALLENGES AND CRISES

Around the world, higher education is increasingly called upon to lead efforts to address various challenges and crises. As Wells (2017), Chief of Higher Education for UNESCO, writes,

never before in recent history has the role of higher education been so intricately tied to the economic, social, and environmental fabric of the modern world. The demands from all stakeholders for quality, robust and diverse systems of higher education to take an active responsibility in addressing the challenges of the world's pressing issues is likewise unprecedented. (WELLS, 2017, p. 31).

The response of higher education institutions and associations to these demands is varied, but evident in the context of internationalization. For instance, institutions have adopted the UN Sustainability Goals as an orienting framework for both sustainability and internationalization efforts, and embraced “global challenges” and “grand challenges” as a guiding framework for research collaborations (POPOWITZ; DORGELO, 2018, p. i).

Yet even as higher education frames itself as a natural leader of efforts to address global challenges and crises, a paradox also arises: if universities, as it is generally believed, are deeply embedded in the societies and systems they serve, then can they address the challenges and crises that have emerged as a result of the violence and unsustainability of those same societies and systems? The way that one answers this question will depend, in part, on how one diagnoses the root causes of today's “wicked problems”, as well as one's desired futures and horizons of hope. Before we consider different possible answers to this question and their implications for internationalization, we review some of the emerging challenges and crises.

#### *3.1 Considering Global Challenges and Crises*

While the challenges and crises that we currently face are difficult to disentangle, for the purposes of analytical clarity, in this section we consider the challenges and crises related to each of the discrete systems we addressed earlier and the modern promise/colonial process that characterizes each. From a decolonial analysis, these promises/processes are understood as the root causes of current challenges and crises, which are the more acute manifestations of the systemic, historical, and ongoing violence and unsustainability of the modern/colonial global system. In this way, these challenges and crises are the result of the breaking of modern promises that are no longer tenable and were only ever viable for a small minority of people.

For instance, with regard to the epistemological system, no single mode of knowledge is adequate to the task of accounting for and responding to the complexity of the present moment. This means that the modern promise of achieving consensus through reasoned debate can no longer be maintained (BAUMAN, 2000). While the rupture of the lie of universal reason has generative potential for challenging centuries of European epistemic hegemony and pluralizing knowledge, it has largely led instead to a cacophony of competing perspectives, many within echo chambers, as well as an amplification of the loudest, most sensationalized

voices (ANDREOTTI et al., 2018). To take another example, the promise of wealth accumulation through the capitalist economic system has always been unevenly available and has always come at the cost of exploitation and expropriation. However, today its precarities, impoverishments, and debts are increasingly generalized to a wider portion of the population (FUTURE EARTH, 2020). Due to space limitations, it is not possible to review each of these issues in detail. Instead, we offer a summary of this social cartography in Table 2, below.

**Table 2.** Cartography of current challenges and crises of different modern/colonial systems

	<b>Modern promise/ colonial process</b>	<b>Emerging challenges/crises</b>
<b>Capitalism (economic system)</b>	Accumulation/ Dispossession	Growing competition for fewer ‘good jobs’; high debt; precarious, under-/un-employment; flattening/declining wages; affordability crises for housing, health care, food; market instability
<b>Nation-state (political system)</b>	Security/ sanctioned violence	Fortification of borders and police forces; far-right populism; extreme nationalism; cancellation of social, welfare and labour rights; state sanctioning of racial and gender violence
<b>Universal reason (knowledge system)</b>	Universality/ epistemicide	‘Fake news’; breakdown of communication; polarized social/ political debates; echo chambers; incitement to violence
<b>Hierarchy (social system)</b>	Mobility/ conditional worth	Stagnant or declining social mobility; scapegoating of marginalized communities as perceived ‘cause’ of stagnation; hyper-individualism and further hoarding of resources
<b>Extractive human-centrism (ecological system)</b>	Consumption/ Destruction	Biodiversity loss/extinction; extreme weather; polluted air/water; ecological collapse; desertification; rising temperatures and seas; release and spread of new viruses and diseases
<b>Separability (relational/existential system)</b>	Autonomy/ denial of responsibility	Mental health crises; sense of hopelessness, meaninglessness, and worthlessness; lack of accountability; social breakdown

We note that current crises may be only the beginning winds of a larger “storm” that is brewing. We also note that when we describe these challenges in relation to different systems, we are focusing on the effects for those who had previously had access to modern promises. Those who have always been on the receiving end of the underlying colonial processes generally experience these crises in more intense ways – as an amplification of existing patterns of violence and unsustainability. Thus, for instance, while many communities in the US are experiencing extreme weather as a result of crises of the extractive ecological system, only a few, highly marginalized communities experience difficulty in accessing clean water. Meanwhile, in poorer nations, precarious access to potable water is more generalized due to higher levels of pollution and desertification, and lower levels of state services, both of which

are ultimately linked (although not exclusively attributable) to higher levels of consumption and carbon usage by wealthier nations (FOSTER; HOLLEMAN; CLARK, 2019). Similarly, while the declining promise of social mobility has resulted in arrested prosperity in wealthier nations, for instance, children being worse off than their parents, in poorer countries the result is more intense, potentially resulting in a loss of peoples' jobs/livelihoods altogether. We therefore emphasize an important distinction between the ways that communities of high-intensity and low-intensity struggle experience current challenges and crises.

Finally, we reiterate that while we have placed these crises and challenges into distinct categories, many of them are deeply intertwined. In particular, we want to bring attention to the close but underexamined relationship between ecological destruction and systemic, historical, and ongoing violence against marginalized communities. For instance, the Trump administration's efforts to expand and fortify the existing US border wall as a means to reinforce nation-state sovereignty and block potential migrants and refugees from Latin America have led them to blow up the land of a sacred, legally protected area (McNAMARA, 2020). This site houses both rare species and Indigenous burial sites. Meanwhile, the 2019 fires in the Amazon were fed not just by rising temperatures and drier conditions, but also by the intensified deforestation that was enabled through the weakening of environmental protections and Indigenous rights by President Bolsonaro's administration in Brazil (SYMONDS, 2019). Even as it is increasingly hard to deny the reality of these converging crises, there is no consensus about how to respond to them. In the following section we consider some of these possible responses.

### *3.2 Possible Responses to Global Challenges and Crises*

Altbach and de Wit (2017) predict the coming of a 'new world order' of internationalization, which we understand as deeply linked to the wider developments reviewed above. Below we review a social cartography of different possible responses to contemporary challenges and crises, and in Table 3 we consider how each response relates to different elements of the modern/colonial global system. Ultimately, we draw on this cartography to consider how each response fosters different futures of internationalization.

The **system restoration** response is rooted in reactionary analyses that identify the root cause of today's challenges and crises as a betrayal of the true values of the modern/colonial system, and thus seeks to return to a romanticized earlier era – generally, one in which no or fewer rights and opportunities were available to racialized and Indigenous people, women, and low-income communities. These communities in turn may become targets for scapegoating, that is, they are blamed for causing the current crises, and, thus, their exclusion, expulsion or even extermination become viewed as viable modes of responding to the crises.

The **system adaptation** response is rooted in liberal analyses of emerging crises. This response views the contemporary moment as one in which a recalibration is needed, one that stays true to the underlying values, ideals, and promises of the modern/colonial system, but that recognizes the need to adapt the way they are achieved in a new context. The emphasis here is not on enacting deep structural changes, but rather on making individual choices (e.g. to reduce, reuse, recycle), revising government policies, supporting new market mechanisms (e.g. carbon trading), and developing technological innovations that can ensure the continued relevance and sustainability of the underlying system in the context of changing times.

The **system transformation** response is rooted in more critical analyses that suggest a much deeper, more structural reform of the current system is required. Some of these responses prioritize enabling previously marginalized populations to not only participate in, but also lead political action, economic alternatives, and social change. From this approach, the goal is to radically reimagine the existing system, or perhaps even replace it with an alternative existing system (e.g. in the case of the economic system, replacing capitalism with socialism).

Finally, the **system hospicing** response is rooted in decolonial analyses that suggest the current global system is inherently harmful and unsustainable, and current crises are the most recent manifestations of a *longue durée* of social and ecological violence (ANDREOTTI et al., 2015). In this sense, rather than prioritizing system reform, emphasis is on learning from the repeated mistakes of the current system, inviting disinvestment from its promises, and creating space for other possibilities to emerge, especially those that are viable but unimaginable from within dominant imaginaries of justice, responsibility, and change. The term hospicing indicates recognition of the inevitable decline of the system, but a commitment to enabling it to die with dignity rather than hastening its demise or keeping it on life support; the other side of hospicing is welcoming the birth of what comes after it, without smothering it with projections.

**Table 3.** Cartography of responses to current and emerging crises of the modern/colonial system

	<b>System restoration (Reactionary analysis)</b>	<b>System adaptation (Liberal analysis)</b>	<b>System transformation (Critical analysis)</b>	<b>System hospicing (Decolonial analysis)</b>
<b>Diagnosis of the root cause(s) of current crises</b>	The core principles of the modern global system have been corrupted (principles presumed to ensure existing hierarchies)	The modern global system is being operated with out-of-date practices that are not responsive to the current context	The current iteration of the modern global system is exclusionary and thus limited in its ability to deliver its promises to everyone	Current challenges originate in the colonial underside of an inherently violent and unsustainable modern global system
<b>Response to crises of the modern/colonial system as a whole</b>	Restore the system to a previous, 'purer' version of itself	Revise the system (especially policies and best practices) to adapt and ensure its health and continuity	Radically remake the system to ensure greater equity and sustainability going forward	Learn from mistakes of a declining system, welcome possibilities for different systems emerging in its wake
<b>Response to crises of capitalism (economic system)</b>	Intensify existing processes of exploitation, expropriation, and extraction to ensure continued economic growth and expansion	Enact minor reforms to the existing economic system and ensure funding for certain social protections (e.g. access to healthcare)	Radically reform the economic system (e.g. greater wealth redistribution) <i>or</i> enact alternative economic systems using existing models (e.g. socialism)	Interrupt the perceived sense of scarcity and desire for accumulation so that generosity and the reciprocal circulation of resources can orient a different economy
<b>Response to crises of nation-states (political system)</b>	Heavily enforce borders, ensure the state (police and military) is equipped to protect promised securities, progress, and order	Reinvigorate public trust in the existing governmental structure, seek common ground, reaffirm rule of law	Expand immigration, demilitarize the police, redress past wrongs, reorient governments toward social justice and social welfare	Challenge the presumed benevolence of the nation-state, (re)learn how to relate and coordinate ourselves outside of its logics
<b>Response to crises of hierarchy (social system)</b>	Rollback efforts to ensure equality of opportunity across race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ability	Reinforce existing efforts to ensure greater equality of opportunity within a hierarchical system	Expand efforts to ensure equality of opportunity <i>and</i> redistribute resources to lessen existing hierarchies	Cultivate reminders of the intrinsic value of all living beings, in which all are both insufficient <i>and</i> indispensable

<b>Response to crises of extractive human-centrism (ecological system)</b>	Either deny the existence of ecological crises, or prepare for them by hoarding food, water, supplies, guns, etc.	Address through personal change, minor policy reforms, market mechanisms, and technological innovations	Ambitious policy efforts, and social movements, (e.g. the student strikes, Extinction Rebellion, efforts under the banner of climate justice)	Mend relationships (between humans, and humans and other-than-human beings) so we can face ecological crises together
<b>Response to crises of separability (relational system)</b>	Scapegoat / punish / blame / target marginalized populations	Share practices and resources that can ensure functionality in the existing system	Support collective wellness practices for/ led by marginalized communities	Activate a sense of entanglement with, and responsibility to, everyone/everything

### 3.3 Different Futures of Internationalization in Response to Global Challenges and Crises

We now use the above cartography of responses to current and emerging crises to briefly review some of the possible futures of the internationalization of higher education, and relate these futures to some important questions that emerge from each analysis.

A future of internationalization rooted in **system restoration** reiterates knowledge as a commodity to be sold and consumed, prioritizes economic growth, frames Western knowledge as universal, and positions (Western-led) human progress and development as the ultimate goal. The primary role of higher education is to ensure both individual and national economic success and global competitiveness. Efforts to democratize access or redistribute resources (e.g. through institutions like UNILAB) are deemed irrelevant and even harmful and unjust, as they are seen to divert resources away from more deserving populations. Questions that orient this approach are: How can we ensure that Western knowledge is not further compromised by critical or decolonial knowledges and critiques? How can we reclaim the higher education resources that are currently being directed to ‘othered’ communities in ways that threaten the entitlements and continued success of mainstream/dominant communities?

A future for internationalization rooted in **system adaptation** would critique neoliberal approaches to internationalization (e.g. the “export”/“trade” model of student mobility). Because there is no question of whether Western/Westernized higher education is the only or ideal form of education, or whether it supports healthy, sustainable forms of existence, the focus is on expanding access to this education, in an effort to support (global) social mobility. Questions that orient this approach are: How can we responsibly manage/redirect/conservate institutional resources so that we can avert or mitigate current crises and return to a path that will ensure we can widely share the benefits of human progress? How can our institutions produce knowledge that can help lead us out of current crises to ensure system continuity?

A **system transformation** approach to internationalization futures seeks to remove all economic barriers to access (e.g. free education) and to enact epistemological change by centering othered voices, knowledges, people, and frames of reference. Different from system adaptation, system transformation questions the dominant modern/colonial system. Having identified these harmful structures, this approach seeks to either (radically) reform or replace the existing system with a predetermined alternative that can offer the same promise of certainty and security that are offered by the currently dominant system (STEIN, 2017). Questions that orient this approach are: How can we support the leadership of marginalized (including international) faculty, staff, and students so that they can guide us out of current crises and toward more equitable futures? How can we restructure internationalization efforts to enable the free movement of people and the decommodification of (diverse) knowledge?

Finally, **system hospicing** challenges the very meaning and purpose of internationalization, and of higher education as we know it. This approach views today's crises as indications that the still-dominant modern/colonial system cannot be indefinitely sustained, and comes at great cost. Rather than simply supporting students and faculty to accumulate knowledge "about the world", it invites them into ongoing and critical self-reflexivity that seeks to support the identification and interruption of investments in harmful and unsustainable modes of engaging "in/with the world". That said, system hospicing considers both short- and long-term possibilities for the future. It does not demand we quit our jobs, research, and studies to do something potentially different right away. Rather, it asks us to mourn, disinvest, and learn from the false and harmful promises offered by a modern/colonial system, and to consider the possibility of alternatives that are viable but unfathomable from within that system. We discuss this approach further in the following section, and offer orienting questions of the system hospicing approach to internationalization in the conclusion.

#### 4 DECOLONIAL APPROACHES TO INTERNATIONALIZATION

Decolonial scholarship sees most institutional internationalization efforts in Western and Westernized universities, including in many universities of the Global South, functioning within the mainstream model of internationalization, i.e. system restoration and system adaptation. For those who are still deeply invested in the dominant global system, these critiques might generate significant resistance. However, as the unsustainability of this system becomes increasingly evident, more people may seek hope in alternative systems but nonetheless seek to retain the promised entitlements, securities, and certainties that were offered by the old system. Approaching decolonial critiques with these entitlements intact can lead one to seek prescriptions for a predetermined alternative (ANDREOTTI et al., 2015).



To seek within decolonial critiques a prescriptive (re)solution would route them back into the same set of colonial entitlements that they seek to challenge. In other words, this would result in the mobilization of decolonial critiques toward creating more of the same (while believing that we are doing something different). In our reading of these critiques – in the system hospicing approach – we conclude that there is no clear pathway for how to imagine and create the world differently, but there is a powerful reminder that other worlds are possible. Thus, rather than framing decolonial critiques as if they offered an “alternative approach to internationalization,” we frame them as the basis of useful questions about the limits of existing approaches to internationalization. These critiques also offer invitations to: identify and interrupt colonial entitlements; “dig deeper” (develop more complex and nuanced analyses); “relate wider” (accept our responsibility to everyone/everything without turning our backs to our complicity in harm); “connect the dots” (understand relationships between different knowledges and struggles); disinvest from the promises of the existing system (promises of certainty, security, exceptionalism, social mobility, continuity); cultivate a sense of discernment (about where and how to focus one’s energies and resources in a wider ecology of relations); and to activate exiled capacities (that we have numbed or forgotten).<sup>5</sup>

Because a decolonial approach to internationalization is more of an orienting direction, a process, and a movement than a predefined strategy or plan, we emphasize the importance of strategic engagement with potentially decolonizing actions in the short-term as we gesture toward the long-term possibility of a future for internationalization that imagines higher education *otherwise* (that is, beyond the modern/colonial political, economic, social, intellectual, ecological and relational systems identified in Section 2.1). For instance, it may be that the only available spaces for engagement in our institutions are conversations related to system adaptation or transformation approaches to internationalization futures. While approaches to decolonial critique that seek a position of ethical or theoretical purity might refuse to engage these conversations altogether, from the system hospicing approach, we can engage with them in an effort to mobilize resources and mainstream discussions in directions that might both mitigate harm within the existing system and also push the limits of what is currently institutionally imaginable. We can do this work alongside other, extra-institutional decolonizing efforts, as it does not require us to invest our horizons of hope in the continuity of the current system, nor does it absolve us of complicity in the ongoing harm of that system. Instead, it requires that we develop the discernment to map our responsibilities alongside what it is possible to do within our own contexts – recognizing that however we decide to engage will be problematic, difficult, contradictory, and offer no guaranteed outcomes.

---

<sup>5</sup> As noted before, we emphasize a distinction between high-intensity and low-intensity struggles, and emphasize that the approach to decolonization we elaborate here is oriented toward what this looks like for those in low-intensity struggle – who make up the majority of staff, students, and faculty in higher education institutions.

## 5 CONCLUSION

We have argued that the rapidly changing global context can be seen as a generative, if fragile, opportunity to rethink mainstream approaches to the internationalization of higher education – and specifically, to imagine **internationalization otherwise**, in ways that are inspired by decolonial critiques and exceed what is possible in the dominant modern/colonial system. We finish this text by reflecting on the COVID-19 pandemic, ongoing at the time of our writing. The way the spread of the virus has unfolded has confirmed how the modern/colonial global system works, disproportionately affecting already marginalized communities. Beyond this, we note that although the virus has upended daily life for communities in both high- and low-intensity struggle, many people still seek a return to “normal” and “business as usual.” Ultimately, however, the virus is likely just a preview of what is to come; today’s political environmental, economic, relational, cognitive and affectional crises may only continue to intensify in ways that make it impossible to preserve existing systems and their promises.

In other words, this virus may be the beginning of “the end of the world as we know it.” Decolonial critiques, and the communities that have resisted colonization for hundreds of years, affirm that other worlds are possible, even if they are currently unimaginable for many. Engaged with this possibility, we conclude with a series of questions that could orient a system hospicing approach to higher education internationalization in the current context: What kind of internationalization could prepare us to face this end, as well as new beginnings? What kind of internationalization could support us to hospice a dying world, and learn from its mistakes so that it can ‘die well’, rather than striving to keep it alive at all costs because of our enduring attachments to its shiny (but violent and unsustainable) promises? What kind of internationalization could prepare us to welcome new worlds with discernment, humility, and compassion, rather than cling to our perceived entitlements and exceptionalisms? What kind of internationalization could open us up to being taught by emergent crises, instead of trying to predict an unknown future or relying on simplistic solutions offered by a dying world? What kind of internationalization could support us to “grow up” and out of our colonial immaturities?

## REFERENCES

ALTBACH, Philip G.; DE WIT, Hans. Trump and the coming revolution in higher education internationalization. **International Higher Education** v. 89, p. 3-5, 2017.

AMSLER, Sarah. Gesturing towards radical futurity in education for alternative futures. **Sustainability Science**, v. 14, n. 4, p. 925-930, 2019.

ANDREOTTI, Vanessa et al. Mapping interpretations of decolonization in the context of higher education. **Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society** v. 4, n. 1, p. 20-40, 2015.

ANDREOTTI, Vanessa et al. Mobilising different conversations about global justice in education: toward alternative futures in uncertain times. **Policy & Practice: A Development Education Review**, v. 26, p. 9-41, 2018.

ARSENAULT, Julien et al. The environmental footprint of academic and student mobility in a large research-oriented university. **Environmental Research Letters**, v. 14, n. 9, p. 1-9, 2019.

BAUMAN, Zygmunt. Education under, for, and despite postmodernity. In BRON, Agnieszka; SCHEMMANN, Michael (Eds.) **Language, mobility, identity: Contemporary issues for adult education in Europe**. Munster: Lit Verlag, 2000, p. 27-43.

BYRD, Jodi A. **The transit of empire: Indigenous critiques of colonialism**. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2011.

COULTHARD, Glen S. **Red skin, white masks: rejecting the colonial politics of recognition**. Minneapolis, MN: Univ. of Minnesota, 2014.

FOSTER, John B., HOLLEMAN, Hannah; CLARK, Brett. Imperialism in the Anthropocene. **Monthly Review**. 1 July 2019. Available at: <https://monthlyreview.org/2019/07/01/imperialism-in-the-anthropocene/> Accessed on: 8 February 2020.

FUTURE EARTH. **Our future on earth 2020**. Available at: <https://futureearth.org/publications/our-future-on-earth/> Accessed on 1 February 2020.

GROSFUGUEL, R. The structure of knowledge in westernised universities: epistemic racism/sexism and the four genocides/epistemicides. **Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge**, v.1, n. 1, p. 73-90, 2013.

JOHNSTONE, Marjorie; LEE, Eunjung. Branded: International education and 21st-century Canadian immigration, education policy, and the welfare state. **International Social Work**, v. 57, n. 3, p. 209-221, 2014.

KIM, Stephanie. Is Trump to blame for falling international enrollment? **University World News**. 20 November, 2019. Available at:

<https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20191119073438177> Accessed on: 10 February 2020.

KING, Tiffany Lethabo. **The Black shoals**: offshore formations of Black and Native studies. Durham, NC: Duke Univ., 2019.

LEROY, Justin. Black history in occupied territory: on the entanglements of slavery and settler colonialism. **Theory & Event**, v. 19, n. 4, 2016.

LEUNG, Mimi; SHARMA, Yojana. International student flows extend fallout from coronavirus. **University World News**. 29 January 2020. Available at: <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20200129174911175> Accessed on: 10 February 2020.

MARTINEZ, Juliana Zeggio. **Entre fios, pistas e rastros**: os sentidos emaranhados da internacionalização da educação superior. Tese (Doutorado em Letras). Faculdade de Filosofia, Letras e Ciências Humanas, Universidade de São Paulo, 2017.

McCARTNEY, Dale. Inventing international students: Exploring discourses in international student policy talk, 1945-75. **Historical Studies in Education**, v. 28, n. 2, p. 1-27, 2016.

MALDONADO-TORRES, Nelson. On the coloniality of being: contributions to the development of a concept. **Cultural Studies**, v. 21, n. 2-3, p. 240-270, 2007.

McNAMARA, Audrey. Arizona national monument, home to sacred Native American burial sites, is being blown up for the border wall. **CBS News**. 7 February 2020. Retrieved from:

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/organ-pipe-cactus-national-monument-blasts-arizona-national-monument-being-blown-up-for-border-wall-2020-02-07/> Accessed: 12 February 2020.

MENEZES DE SOUZA, Lynn Mario Trindade. Introduction: theorizing the South(s) In: FINARDI, Kyria Rebeca. (Org.) **English in the south**. Londrina: Eduel, 2019.

NANDY, Ashis. Recovery of indigenous knowledge and dissenting futures of the university. In: INAYATULLAH, Sohail; GIDLEY, Jennifer. (Eds.) **The university in transformation**: global perspectives on the futures of the university. Westport: Bergin and Harvey, 2000, p. 115-123.

OECD. **Education at a Glance 2019 - Indicators OECD. 2020**. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1787/19991487> Accessed on: 12 February 2020.

POPOWITZ, Michelle; DORGELO, Cristin. **University-led grand challenges**. Los Angeles, CA. Retrieved from: <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/46f121cr>. Accessed on: 10 January 2020.

RIZVI, Fazal. Global interconnectivity and its ethical challenges in education. **Asia Pacific Education Review** v. 20, n. 2, p. 315-326, 2019.

ROSE-REDWOOD, CindyAnn; ROSE-REDWOOD, Reuben. Rethinking the politics of the international student experience in the age of Trump. **Journal of International Students**, v. 7, n. 3, p. I-IX, 2017.

SANTOS, Boaventura de Sousa. Beyond abyssal thinking: from global lines to ecologies of knowledges, **Review**, v. 30, n. 1, p. 45-89, 2007.

SILVA, Denise Ferreira da. Toward a Black feminist poethics: the quest(ion) of Blackness toward the end of the world. **The Black Scholar**, v. 44, p. 81-97, 2014.

STEIN, Sharon; ANDREOTTI, Vanessa. Cash, competition, or charity: international students and the global imaginary. **Higher Education**, v. 72, n. 2, 225-239, 2016.

STEIN, Sharon. Internationalization for an uncertain future: tensions, paradoxes, and possibilities. **The Review of Higher Education**, v. 41, n. 1, p. 3-32, 2017.

STEIN, Sharon. Racialized frames of value in US university responses to the travel ban. **ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies**, v. 17, n. 4, p. 893-919, 2018.

STEIN, Sharon. Critical internationalization studies at an impasse: making space for complexity, uncertainty, and complicity in a time of global challenges. **Studies in Higher Education**, 2019.

SUSA, Rene; ANDREOTTI, Vanessa. Social cartography in educational research. **Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education**. 2019. doi: 10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.013.528

SYMONDS, Alexandria. Amazon forest fires: Here's what's really happening. **The New York Times**. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/23/world/americas/amazon-fire-brazil-bolsonaro.html> Accessed on: 9 February 2020

TODORAN, Corina; PETERSON, Claudette. Should they stay or should they go? How the 2017 US Travel Ban affects international doctoral students. **Journal of Studies in International Education**, 2019.

WELLS, Peter. J. The role of higher education institutions today. **Higher Education in the World**. 2017. Available at: [http://www.guninetwork.org/files/download\\_full\\_report.pdf](http://www.guninetwork.org/files/download_full_report.pdf) Accessed on: 10 February 2020.

**English language editing performed by:** Aline Nascimento Barbosa

**E-mail:** [nasbar.aline@gmail.com](mailto:nasbar.aline@gmail.com)