

# Education and training, knowledge production, and colonial difference. A perspective from inside Europe

Edgar Forster  
University of Fribourg, Switzerland

**Abstract** Colonialism has ended, but the structure of colonial power persists, and education is a key vehicle for the colonization of the mind. Following the research of the Latin America collective project *modernidad/colonialidad*, this paper analyzes the continuous reproduction of colonial power in European programs on education and training as well as in the production of educational knowledge. The neoliberal impact of European politics affects societies in and outside of Europe and intensifies a hegemonic struggle over educational knowledge production, educational studies, and the humanities. The complex praxis of what I call the ‘epistemic community Europe’ articulates the hegemonic and colonial power. I, then, take a closer look at the elements of this epistemic community and discuss two of them in detail: the ‘scientification’ of politics and the relevance of the human capital approach. The neoliberal turn of European governance produces standardized educational knowledge and, simultaneously, ‘absences.’ Resistance emerges from absent experiences and knowledges, which open the field for decolonial options.

**Abstract** (*German*) Nach dem Ende des Kolonialismus existieren koloniale Strukturen und Denkmuster weiter, und Erziehung und Bildung tragen wesentlich zu ihrer Reproduktion bei. In diesem Artikel werden im Anschluss an Forschungen des kollektiven lateinamerikanischen Projekts *modernidad/colonialidad* Programme der europäischen Politik zu Erziehung und Training sowie zur *Offenen Methode der Koordinierung* auf hegemoniale und koloniale Strukturen untersucht. In einem ersten Schritt beschreibe ich die Governance-Praktiken als *epistemic community Europe*. In einem zweiten Schritt analysiere ich zwei Elemente dieser *epistemic community* genauer: die ‚Verwissenschaftlichung‘ der Politik und die Bedeutung des Humankapitalansatzes. Die neoliberale Politik der Europäischen Union produziert zusammen mit transnationalen Organisationen wie der OECD nicht nur standardisiertes Wissen über Bildung und Erziehung, sondern sie produziert damit auch sogenannte ‚Abwesenheiten‘ und erzeugt damit Alternativlosigkeit. Zugleich aber erzeugen exkludierte Erfahrungen Widerstände und eröffnen das Feld für dekoloniale Optionen.

**Keywords** Coloniality, decoloniality, European Union, governance, education and training, Open Method of Coordination, human capital.

Colonialism has ended, but the structure of colonial power persists, and education is a key vehicle for the “colonization of the mind” (Hickling-Hudson & Mayo, 2012, p. 3). Following the research of the Latin American collective project *modernidad/ colonialidad* (for an overview see Mignolo, 1999; Escobar, 2007), this paper analyzes the continuous reproduction of colonial power in European programs on education and training as well as in the production of educational knowledge.

The neoliberal impact of European politics affects societies in and outside of Europe and intensifies, as I observe in German-speaking countries, a hegemonic struggle over educational knowledge production, educational studies, and the humanities (Aljets, 2015; Forster, 2016). This struggle points to the antagonistic structure of western societies but at the same time, it disguises the colonial dimension of this structure. Therefore, it is necessary to reflect on the hegemonic struggle *and* on the absences, which persevere in this struggle. All at once, the hegemonic struggle opens space to address the articulation of hegemony and coloniality.

In the first section, I provide a rough overview of the EU programs *Education and Training* and the *Open Method of Coordination (OMC)* and discuss how they contribute to educational knowledge production. In section two, I offer an interpretation of policy papers that follows two steps: Using the theoretical frame of modernity/ coloniality, I identify the overall picture of an ‘epistemic community Europe’. In a second step, I take a closer look at the elements of this epistemic community and discuss two of them in detail: the so-called ‘scientification’ of politics and the relevance of the human capital approach in policy papers. The neoliberal turn of European governance produces standardized educational knowledge and simultaneously “absences” (Santos, 2014), as I show in the following section four. Resistance emerges from absent experiences and knowledges, which open the field for decolonial options.

## **1. European governance on education and training**

In 2010, when the aftermath of the economic and financial crisis shook the world, the European Commission (2010) launched “a strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.” In this paper, leading European politicians draw a picture of Europe in a globalized world. What attracts readers first, is a strong rhetoric of crisis:

Europe faces a moment of transformation. The crisis has wiped out years of economic and social progress and exposed structural weaknesses in Europe’s economy. In the meantime, the world is moving fast and long-term challenges – globalization, pressure on resources, aging – intensify. The EU must now take charge of its future (ibid., p. 5).

The rhetoric of crisis stokes fear and calls for immediate action: “Europe must act to avoid decline” (ibid., p. 8). The European Commission views Europe’s “structural weakness” (ibid., p. 7) as an economic and social problem in a fast moving world and urges strong leadership. The crisis uncovers a structural dilemma in the European Union of strong nation states, but the paper also offers lessons to learn:

Smart growth means strengthening knowledge and innovation as drivers of our future growth. This requires improving the quality of our education, strengthening our research performance, promoting innovation and knowledge transfer throughout the Union, making full use of information and communication technologies and ensuring that innovative ideas can be turned into new products and services that create growth, quality jobs and help address European and global societal challenges. But, to succeed, this must be combined with entrepreneurship, finance, and a focus on user needs and market opportunities (ibid., p. 11f.).

In a globalized world, the European Commission presents Europe as a 'better place': It is economically powerful and built on solidarity. Europe strongly advocates human rights and environmental issues. As a community of values of enlightenment, culture, and education, Europe desires to define itself as a "normative power" (Manners, 2002), i.e. a 'force for the good.' This social imaginary, far from becoming reality, should function as a unifying tenet for member states and demonstrate Europe's power in a globalized world. When talking about 'Europe', I refer to certain figures of imagination whose geographical referent remains somewhat indeterminate. Following Chakrabarty (2008), Europe works as a "silent referent in historical knowledge" (p. 28) and is best used as a "hyperreal term" (p. 27). As any self-perception, it loses the thread to reality in many ways. Its powerful demanding for what counts as 'true modernity' ignores its entanglement with the history of colonial difference and the global South (Dussel, 2000; Quijano, 2007).

The Lisbon strategy opens a remarkable next step in a long history of European cooperation in the field of education and training (Pépin, 2007). Since then, two work programs have been launched: *Education and Training 2010* and the follow-up program *EU Cooperation in Education and Training (ET 2020)*. Education politics is part of the responsibility of its member states, hence, the European Commission has created political strategies and instruments of participation to enforce common policies in education. The *Open Method of Coordination (OMC)* is such an instrument of 'good governance.' More than just an important tool of soft law, it is a powerful platform for generating and circulating knowledge of education and training (European Commission, 2001, p. 17-18).

OMC and the programs *Education and Training* configure the subject matter of my analysis. I address the following questions: What type of knowledge about education does the governing apparatus produce? What

are the mechanisms and processes of knowledge production? What is the hidden logic of knowledge production? I do not restrict the term knowledge to a certain concept of scientific knowledge. Instead, I look at *how* actors in the field produce *and* define knowledge. Furthermore, I do not limit knowledge to the outcome of knowledge production. I am more interested in the complex praxis of knowledge production and its circulation, which includes political decisions, scientific work, and network building, in developing and enhancing values of knowledge production (Forster, 2014). I will begin with a rough overview of the main ideas and working principles of OMC and the programs *Education and Training*.

### **1.1. The Open Method of Coordination**

Created to overcome a political crisis of legitimization, OMC is based on “confidence in expert advice” (European Commission, 2001, p. 15):

Scientific and other experts play an increasingly significant role in preparing and monitoring decisions. From human and animal health to social legislation, the institutions rely on specialist expertise to anticipate and identify the nature of the problems and uncertainties that the Union faces, to take decisions and to ensure that risks can be explained clearly and simply to the public (ibid.).

The need for political decision boosts the role of expert knowledge in different political fields. “These issues become more acute whenever the Union is required to apply the precautionary principle and play its role in risk assessment and risk management” (ibid., p. 16). The tools of OMC include mutual learning from best practice, statistics, benchmarks, and indicators. Monitoring, evaluation, and accountability are important parts of implementation and of improving political decisions. No member state can be forced to implement a policy, but

there are some soft instruments for compelling them, like ‘blaming and shaming’.

## **1.2. EU programs *Education and Training***

The European Council justifies its initiative for the first working program *Education and Training 2010* as follows:

The European Union is confronted with a quantum shift resulting from globalization and the challenges of a new knowledge-driven economy. These changes are affecting every aspect of people’s lives and require a radical transformation of the European economy. The Union must shape these changes in a manner consistent with its values and concepts of society and also with a view to the forthcoming enlargement (Lisbon European Council, 2000).

The strategic paper describes general policy objectives and the call for using the *Method of Coordination*.

Objectives include:

A substantial increase in the “per capita investment in human resources”;

the reduction of the number of 18 to 24-year-olds with only lower-secondary level education;

the development of schools and training centers, all linked to the Internet, into “multi-purpose local learning centers”;

the definition of new basic skills: “IT skills, foreign languages, technological culture, entrepreneurship and social skills”;

the promotion of the mobility of students and teachers;

and the development of a common European format for curricula vitae, which helps to assess acquired knowledge (ibid.).

By way of these strategic policy goals, European governance institutions and member states entered a process of translation, specification, and operationalization which led to three strategic goals and thirteen sub-goals (Council, 2002; Odendahl, 2011, p. 377-385).

I will use the following detailed description to elucidate *how* politics works and *why* I connect hegemony to social sciences: Hegemonic power is exercised through ‘scientification’ of politics. It leads to a technical process that conceals political decisions. To illustrate this, I would like to point to the first strategic goal of the working program 2010. It defines the “European Knowledge Area” (Council, 2002, p. 4). Five sub-goals compose the strategic goal:

Objective 1.1 – Improving education and training for teachers and trainers

Objective 1.2 – Developing skills for the knowledge society

Objective 1.3 – Ensuring access to ICT for everyone

Objective 1.4 – Increasing recruitment to scientific and technical studies

Objective 1.5 – Making the best use of resources

Each sub-goal consists of a summary, the description of “key issues,” and the “organization of the follow-up.” For a better understanding, I clarify this regarding the first sub-goal “Improving education and training for teachers and trainers.” Four key issues are at stake:

identifying the skills that teachers and trainers should have, given their changing roles in a knowledge society;

providing the conditions which adequately support teachers and trainers as they respond to the challenges of the knowledge society, in conjunction with initial and in-service training from the perspective of lifelong learning;

securing a sufficient level of entry to the teaching profession, across all subjects and levels, as well as providing for the long-term needs of the profession by making teaching and training even more attractive;

attracting recruits to teaching and training who have professional experience in other fields.

The “organization of the follow-up” lists indicators for measuring progress and “themes for exchanging experience, good practice and, as appropriate, peer review” (ibid., p. 7). It is astonishing (or should I say frightening) to see how far political decision-making goes. The *Council* proposes even a listing of “key competencies,” although there is no common understanding of basic skills or key competencies (ibid., p. 7-8). In the follow-ups, the general goals remain unmodified, but benchmarks and indicators have constantly been revised and reduced. In 2007, the European Commission designed *A coherent framework of indicators and benchmarks for monitoring the Lisbon objectives in education and training*. Finally, the Council (2007) came to an agreement about sixteen indicators. In the follow-up program *Education and Training 2020*, which covers the period from 2010 until 2020, new strategic goals were adopted. New benchmarks on mobility, employability, acquirement of language skills, and even more rigorous benchmarks define the follow-up. The *Open Method of Coordination* remains an important instrument of decision-making but with some changes in the procedure: Sectors divide a period, and each of them has to define priorities and steps of progress. A dense network and a strict timetable characterize the cooperation between member states governed and monitored by the EU governance apparatus. Odendahl (2011) criticizes this type of politics as “increasingly close-meshed” [“noch engmaschiger”] (p. 387).

## **2. The hegemonic and colonial logic of European politics**

The Lisbon strategy includes a global perspective: “The Union has today set itself a new strategic goal for the next decade: to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion” (Lisbon European Council, 2000). The politics of the European Commission reacts to the transformation of productivity of capitalist production from a more material to immaterial work and addresses the human capital as the heart of knowledge production. Therefore, the homogenization and strengthening of education and training define one of the primary goals of European politics (European Commission, 2015).

The way Europe places itself within the world order is complemented by a social imaginary. According to Ian Manners (2002), “normative power” represents a valuable addition to the understanding of the EU’s civilian and military power in world politics. It is a “power over opinion” or an “ideological power” (ibid., p. 239). The concept of normative power is an attempt to refocus analysis towards “cognitive processes, with both substantive and symbolic components” (ibid.). Manners (ibid., p. 242-244) has identified five European core norms and four minor norms that provide the normative reference of the European Union. The five core norms encompass peace, liberty, democracy, rule of law, human rights, and fundamental freedom. The minor norms include social solidarity, anti-discrimination, sustainable development, and good governance.

Despite the fact that the European reality contradicts the social imaginary, it remains a strong political-economic frame of European governance and has to be considered in any interpretation of education and training programs. In the next section, I bring together different elements while painting an overall

picture of the hegemonic and colonial logic of European governance. I then take a closer look at two ways of realizing hegemonic and colonial power.

## **2.1. Epistemic community Europe**

My main assumption is that European politics demonstrates a strong continuation of “global coloniality” as Ramón Grosfoguel (2007) calls the current period in which “non-European people are still living under crude European/ Euro-American exploitation and domination. The old colonial hierarchies of European versus non-Europeans remain in place and are entangled with the ‘international division of labor’ and accumulation of capital on a world-scale” (p. 219). Following the *modernity/ coloniality research program*, a colonial structure of power produced a

specific social discrimination which later was codified as ‘racial’, ‘ethnic’, ‘anthropological’ or ‘national’, according to the times, agents, and populations involved. These intersubjective constructions, product of Euro-centered colonial domination, were even assumed to be ‘objective,’ ‘scientific,’ categories then of a historical significance. That is, as natural phenomena, not referring to the history of power (Quijano, 2007, p. 168).

There has always been a strong epistemology that reproduces and legitimizes repression. Besides knowledge production, it includes the production of perspectives, images, and modes of signification.

What makes the continuation of a specific structure of colonial power possible? First, to locate Europe as a ‘better place’ articulates (and produces as non-existent) an international division of labor along the division of center and periphery. Principles of superiority and inferiority, which refer to global racial/ethnic hierarchies, organize the division of labor. Europe’s focus on

knowledge-based economy reproduces this hierarchy. It harbors the headquarter of production instead of production itself and thus benefits from global exploitation. Europe's economy has its profile in innovation, research, and development as well as in setting standards and providing marketing strategies. But Europe, too, considers itself as a front-runner in establishing cultural diversity, healthy working conditions, and jobs that contribute to individual fulfillment, while at the same time, it outsources mass production knowing that the international division of labor is a precondition for violating laws and fundamental rights of workers. Mental work, knowledge, and sciences are the key drivers for economic development in Europe, and the global South very often serves as the laboratory for the big industry of the global North. All these sectors provide better-paid, high-quality jobs for well-educated people.

Investing in human capital is a key factor for reproducing the structure of colonial power. The new agenda of education draws a line between the educated and the non-educated. Education keeps up the illusion of meritocracy while disguising and reproducing racial, gender, and class hierarchies. Meritocracy and competition provoke each other. Like any hegemonic force, it is as seductive, as it is frightening. The seductive moment derives from the idea that it is upon oneself to be successful. The frightening moment refers to the 'other'. Being educated does mean not to become the 'other,' i.e. excluded and marginalized. From this perspective, the 'other' is seen as the one who wants to occupy 'my' place. The underlying logic of European politics feeds this fear playing with two terms: 'crisis' and 'threat'. Crisis is politically established as natural; it raises threats. Both terms create and place the 'other'.

Second, the introduction of a dividing line between superior and inferior is supported by the following political imaginary that Europe addresses internally and

to the world: As a normative power, Europe does not only expound important values to the world, but in a sophisticated way, introduces these values and political principles. Through this positioning, there is the creation of an inferior and morally deficient 'other'. The 'other' lacks creativity and intelligence for innovation; the 'other' lacks education too. His community is neither economically nor politically developed, and therefore he is unable to establish democracy and freedom. In European images, the 'other' lacks self-organization and the knowledge for building up a stable order, but on the other hand, naturally seems to desire western values. The picture of the 'other' mirrors the "mystified image of the European's own patterns of producing knowledge and meaning" (Quijano, 2007, p. 169), which are far out of reach of the dominated. "Later, they taught them in a partial and selective way, in order to co-opt some of the dominated into their own power institutions. ... Cultural Europeanisation was transformed into an aspiration" (ibid.).

Third, while there has never been open racism all over Europe, European governance creates a political culture that reproduces a hegemonic and colonial structure of power. It normalizes the idea of superiority and inferiority and thus contributes to normalizing racism. From this perspective, coloniality is a constitutive pillar of European thinking (Castro-Gómez, 2000, p. 510). Its strongest 'weapon' is the creation of its locus of enunciation. There is no such relational perspective in European policy papers, which acknowledges "diversality" (Mignolo, 2000, p. 743), but a universal perspective from nowhere. Referring to Santiago Castro-Gómez, Grosfoguel (2007) defines the "point zero" as "the point of view that hides and conceals itself as being beyond a particular point of view, that is, the point of view that represents itself as being without a point of view" (p. 214). Establishing a point zero replaces a specific locus of enunciation for universalism. Today, this kind of

universalism refers to an “evidence-based knowledge” (OECD, 2007), which represents “the only one capable of achieving a universal consciousness” (Grosfoguel, *ibid.*). At the same time, non-Western knowledge and minor forms of Western knowledge are dismissed. “The disembodied and unlocated neutrality and objectivity of the ego-politics of knowledge is a Western myth” (*ibid.*). The ‘zero point’ universalizes the locus of enunciation, and universalism serves as the “instrument of juridical and social control within nation-states” (Castro-Gómez, 2000, p. 512).

## **2.2. Scientification of politics**

In a recent issue of the *Journal of European Integration*, Adler-Nissen and Kropp (2015) focus on a sociology of knowledge in the politics of the EU and they assert that “the social sciences and the EU are deeply interwoven”:

On the one hand, European integration contributes to the production of particular forms of knowledge and specific research questions (e.g. the Eurobarometer, EU framework programs, cross-national and cross-disciplinary mega-projects and various kinds of statistics used in benchmarking national performance). On the other hand, social science knowledge shapes European practices and institutions (e.g. the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), the free movement of people and counter-terrorism) (p. 156).

They conclude:

Fifteen years after a path-breaking special issue promoted a constructivist (but not explicitly sociology of knowledge) approach to European integration (Christiansen, Jorgensen, and Wiener 1999), we still lack a systematic understanding of how academic ideas and social knowledge shape

European governance and the other way around (ibid.).

‘Scientification’ of politics is not a given reality; it is foremost a self-description of European politics by politicians and scientists. Social sciences do not replace politics, but ‘scientification’ has created a new type of interconnectedness between politics and social sciences, and the *Open Method of Coordination* realizes this kind of interconnected governance. It creates and legitimizes hegemonic power under the political condition of a liberal democracy:

First, political actors, NGOs, and experts build epistemic communities who generate considerable peer pressure. Secondly, OMC works with a background of huge databases that provide “evidence-based knowledge”. Data also serve as a reference for strong competition. Thirdly, OMC meetings create a culture of consensus of what counts as relevant knowledge. “Cognitive hegemony,” as Strassheim (2001, p. 7) puts it, is based on rationality, knowledge, (social) sciences and comparison. European Union member states with middle-range economies cannot easily withdraw without suffering damage of legitimation.

‘Scientification’ replaces the political for politics. According to Chantal Mouffe (2005), politics is about the ontic, i.e., about political decisions on social, cultural and economic affairs. The political is, in contrast, the ontological dimension of politics: ‘How do we want to live’ defines the starting point for shaping our society. But in the background of technocratic decisions, the political continues to organize politics. Therefore, ‘scientification’ does not refer to a pure, abstract picture of social sciences but to a very complex praxis that represents hegemonic power. Three related topics are relevant here: evidence-based knowledge, scientific-political networks, and the illusion of *tabula rasa* and zero point. One of the key documents of evidence-based knowledge in the

context of governance is *Evidence in Education* by OECD (CERI, 2007). It refers to all of the three topics.

‘Scientification’ of politics is a technical process that links different platforms, administration sectors and political institutions including transnational organizations like the OECD. In short, ‘scientification’ is about:

- Defining benchmarks and indicators that realize general political goals and establishing a robust theoretical framework, including key terms that give the procedure of operationalization a politically valuable direction.
- Creating standards for collecting data and creating huge data pools, which enable the comparison of member states and international comparative analysis; the evaluation of national and European achievements of benchmarks; and the linking of data sets for generating governance knowledge (e.g., risk factors for health problems or unemployment).
- Creating political-scientific networks to establish goals, benchmarks, indicators, standards of measurements, methods, theoretical frameworks that all fit together and are unidirectional. These activities are the precondition for accumulating knowledge and avoiding conflicting scientific results. One type of institution that is favored by OECD, European Commission, and some member states is brokerage agencies, which are key stakeholders in linking politics and social sciences (CERI, 2007, p. 53-108). As the OECD states in *Evidence in Education*, brokerage agencies can be extremely effective and highly professional, but of course, they are “not neutral, instead usually marshalling research evidence that would reinforce their particular policy priority” (ibid., p. 26).

The hegemonic power is twofold: to enforce consent and to declare the process of decision-making an irreversible one. When OECD launched *Evidence in Education* in

2007, one of the goals was and still is the accumulation of knowledge. Toulmin (1992) shows that there is a rich tradition of making a clean sweep. Constructing a point zero' creates a universal point of view and annihilates the history and historical reflexivity. Further, it allows producing decision-making knowledge. But disrupting history, as Toulmin also demonstrates, does not work. Knowledge never gets rid of its always antagonistic history. Evidence-based knowledge tries to camouflage the antagonistic structure of society and to annihilate the 'other'. The second part of generating irreversibility of a historical process is to introduce a compelling structure of path-dependency. The ideology of 'there is no alternative' is politically produced. Together with social sciences and related organizations, *Eurostat* plays a key role in supplying the Commission and other European institutions with data. This 'service' broadens the definition, implementation, and analysis of Community policies. Just from an abstract point of view, one can separate research from policies, i.e. the generation of indicators and implementation of large-scale testing from the creation of policies. Accumulation of knowledge includes the sequencing of politics into little steps. Each of them doesn't seem to be a decision-making step and does not need political legitimation. At this point, path-dependency replaces the political.

### **2.3. It's all about human capital**

'Scientification' is the formal dimension of European politics; the human capital approach is its material dimension.

Efficient investment in human capital through education and training systems is an essential component of Europe's strategy to deliver the high levels of sustainable, knowledge-based growth and jobs that lie at the heart of the Lisbon strategy, at the same time as promoting personal fulfillment,

social cohesion and active citizenship (Council, 2009).

Although there have always been elements of a liberal tradition like 'personal fulfillment', the human capital approach is essentially for governing the population from an economic perspective. In his work, Gary Becker (1976; 1993) states that a primary determinant of a country's standard of living is how well it succeeds in utilizing the skills, knowledge and health of its people. Following this path, the European Union's politics provides a strong market economy and invests into people's education and training.

If politics and social sciences consider skills and competencies as a capital, they turn biographies into the scientific object of 'life course', which is structured by the idea of accumulation. Life course politics raises important questions: First, what are the most efficient ways of capital accumulation? Accumulation always includes an early start since the acquirement of incorporated skills needs some time. For the reason of accumulation as well as other reasons for family and gender politics, there is a focus on early childhood education in many European Union member states. Unlike earning 'dead knowledge', which is pejoratively called *l'art pour l'art*, accumulation aims at useful skills and competencies that enable entrepreneurship, thus, productive knowledge. Secondly, what type of risks endangers the accumulation of human capital? European politics and OECD pay special attention to health issues and risk factors for children and youth:

The concerns stem not only from the claims of social justice but also from the need to develop high-level skills, in as many young people as possible, in order to maintain employment, productivity levels, and economic prosperity. This is a situation that is further exacerbated by the increasing number of

retired citizens and the falling birth rate (CERI, 1995, p. 3).

Given this direction, the new research agenda is turning from large-scale assessments (e.g. PISA) to longitudinal studies and from measurement of students' performances to the explanation thereof. To better understand accumulation of human capital, research tries to decipher principles of life course decisions and factors for a better advancement. The German's *National Educational Panel Study (NEPS)* is an example for this kind of study. Its aims are:

The National Educational Panel Study (NEPS) has been set up to find out more about how education is acquired, to understand how it impacts on individual biographies, and to describe and analyze the major educational processes and trajectories across the lifespan. Some of the questions it is designed to address are: How do competencies develop over the life course? How do competencies influence or not influence decision-making processes at various critical transitions during an educational career? In what way and to what extent are competencies influenced by learning opportunities in the family or the peer group? How are they influenced by the structure of teaching and learning processes in Kindergarten, school, university, vocational training, and further training (NEPS, n. d.)?

Governmentality, as Foucault (2008) puts it, creates a specific type of subjectivity. On one hand, people have to understand themselves in a way that matches with the requirements of a neoliberal economy. They have to conceive themselves as human capital. On the other hand, politics have to take into account the political context of liberal democracy, which gives people the free choice of how they want to live and shape their future. To govern people without patronizing them is the core idea of governmentality (Forster, 2010). Creating life courses

according to the requirements of capital accumulation is the disputable 'privilege' of a small population of the so-called middle-class, who mainly defines life goals such as success or well-being as the fulfillment of economic and educational advancement. The increase of policies, laws, and knowledge creates social imaginaries which configure subjectivity, i.e. the way people see and define themselves: What is important in one's life? What aspirations should one pursue? What does one see as success and failure? What is a fulfilled life? Whose rules does one follow or should follow? Who should have the authority to declare such rules? Foucault (2007) tellingly addresses resistance to the politics of governmentalization: "How not to be governed like that, by that, in the name of those principles, with such and such an objective in mind and by means of such procedures, not like that, not for that, not by them" (p. 44).

### **3. Other ways: Postcolonial directions beyond European Union politics**

The aim of my research was to analyze the hegemonic power of European politics on the basis of policy papers: the complex praxis of generating, enforcing, and legitimizing knowledge about education and training including establishing an epistemic community. It creates social imaginaries about governance and the production of subjectivity, which extorts a narrow model of life course as well as continuous effort of education and self-education. Although sometimes introduced as an opposing model to the neoliberal turn of educational studies, the German concept of *Bildung* follows this track. In fact, it resists some ideas of the human capital approach but is nevertheless closely connected to individual evolvment and corresponds with the logic of development and modernity.

As social sciences are themselves an important part of hegemonic power, a double critique is necessary: the critique of hegemonic power in Europe (Cortez-Ramirez, 2015) and a critique of the concepts that social sciences use to criticize hegemony. In the long history of critical theory, Pierre Bourdieu (1992) provides a more recent example. His article *Thinking about limits* is about “double historicization” (p. 38): “It is evident that the structures of thought that I am going to put to work in my discourse, the oppositions that I use, are historically constituted. The categories of thought through which you are going to listen to what I say to you are also situated and datable” (ibid.). Double historicization includes a reference to the locus of enunciation. The construction of categories is dependent on historical and geopolitical situatedness. It articulates “the epistemological unconscious in the given society” (ibid., p. 47).

From a world-system perspective, Wallerstein (2010) promotes a similar point: Social sciences are deeply involved in the epistemological frame of the field of analysis. The perspective of ‘developmentalism’ is part of the Euro-centered idea of modernity:

This perspective assumed that all states were engaged in ‘developing’ (which for many meant ‘becoming nations’), that their progress along this path could be measured quantitatively and synchronically, and that on the basis of knowledge derived from such measurements, governments could in fact hasten the process, which was a highly commendable thing to do. Since these states were proceeding down parallel paths, *all* states were intrinsically capable of achieving the desired results. The only serious intellectual question was why many resisted doing so (Wallerstein, 2010, p. 168; see also 1995).

Critical thinkers including Bourdieu and Wallerstein contest the hegemonic power of the West and the social

sciences that support the power structure. But, as Bourdieu puts it, limits have to be thought. One example is “the notorious operational definition” (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 42), which is at stake in the production of evidence-based educational knowledge production. But critique of hegemonic power does not go far enough, as it does not touch the colonial power structure. Hegemonic and colonial power are two different but overlapping concepts which represent different histories and refer to different theoretical concepts. The difference is sharply articulated by Audre Lorde (2007/1984): “The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.” A fundamental restriction of critical analysis of hegemonic power is the starting point for a shift to postcolonial directions.

A first direction is to look at the production of absences within Europe. Here, hegemonic power points to colonial power. A sight at the UNESCO atlas of European languages in danger offers an image of diverse cultures across Europe (Moseley, 2010). Languages and cultures are suppressed or absorbed by nation states, which disobey cultural spaces that do not go along with political borders. These spaces are “borderlands” (Anzaldúa, 2012) in many ways. People and cultures of almost forgotten borderlands are one of the main topics of the Austrian writer and essayist Karl-Markus Gauss. His books include *Die sterbenden Europäer [The dying Europeans]* (2001), *Die Hundeesser von Svinia [The dogeaters of Svinia]* (2004) and *Die fröhlichen Untergeher von Roana [The laughing losers of Roana]* (2010). Among many others, he observes the communities of Aromanians, Roma, Arbëreshë, the Sephardim. As an ‘independent scholar’, writer, and essayist, he creates for himself a transgression of borders.

Elisabeth Tauber’s (2004; see also 2014) exceptional ethnographic work on *Gypsies in South Tyrol* represents another example of “epistemic disobedience” (Mignolo, 2009) and studying borderlands. How do Sinti children and their families interact with and interpret schooling?

As Tauber shows, the European education policies completely fail to meet the Sinti culture when nation state and European standards measure success, define problems and benefits, without taking into account cultural diversity:

But here we are moving along a non-Gypsy level of argumentation. The measuring of success of ethnic minorities at school and the terminology of 'ethnic school failure' is ethnocentric. And indeed, Sinti show us how the categories of success and ethnic school failure are empty as their children have to do another job at school, namely, the job of going on, following the Sinti way of thinking. This way of thinking expresses itself through silence and invisibility (Tauber, 2004, p. 19).

When Tauber asked the Sinti what can be done to improve the poor experiences of their children at school, the responses seemingly articulated frustration and passivity: "They said that nothing could be done" (ibid., p. 17). While Tauber insisted asking for possible improvements, the Sinti broke this looking for solutions, which include the acceptance of the nation state's frame of schooling. Their responses challenge the underlying logic of schooling. Unlike addressing issues of modernity and enlightenment, they provide an interesting way of border thinking: "Yes I know that they suffer, but our children must know how the Gadže [non-Sintis] are. ... They must not follow the Gadže way of thinking, they must keep the Sinti way of thinking" (ibid.). These responses show an escape from "mental control" as Ngugi Wa Thiong'o states: "To control a people's culture is to control their tools of self-definition in relationship to others" (quote from Hickling Hudson & Mayo, 2012, p. 3).

Learning from the Sinti experience to keep their own way of thinking leads me to a postcolonial direction. Here, the task is to confront European ways of life with non-Western ways of living and thinking. One prominent

example is *Ethics of liberation* by Enrique Dussel (2013), which points to a concept of “trans-modernity”.

Trans-modernity (as a project of political, economic, ecological, erotic, pedagogical, and religious liberation) is the co-realization of that which it is impossible for modernity to accomplish by itself: that is, of an incorporative solidarity, which I have called analectic, between center/ periphery, man/ woman, different races, different ethnic groups, different classes, civilization/ nature, Western culture/ Third World cultures, et cetera. (Dussel, 1993, p. 76).

The analectical refers to the fact “by which every person, every group or people, is always situated ‘beyond’ (ano-) the horizon of totality” (Dussel, 1985, p. 159). Thus, the analectical moment opens us to the other. “Its proper category is exteriority” (ibid.). – Finally, what is the responsibility of European Humanities? “To know how to listen to the word of the other” (ibid.).

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