

...one cannot “unsettle” the “coloniality of power” without a redescription of the human outside the terms of our present descriptive statement of the human, Man.
Sylvia Wynter

MORE-THAN- HUMAN PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

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Tehseen Noorani and Julian Brigstocke



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CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

Foundation Series

Today we are increasingly seeing calls for universities to collaborate with communities in designing and conducting research. While such calls are to be welcomed they tend to suffer from a historical blind-spot that ignores the fact that research collaboration – partnerships, participation (call it what you will) – is a deep and powerful research tradition that dates back beyond the recent emergence of calls for ‘co-produced’ knowledge.

This series of reviews developed as part of the AHRC’s Connected Communities Programme, sets out to make visible some of these traditions of collaborative research. In doing so, the series aims to:

- help those who are new to the field to understand the huge wealth of history and resources that they might draw upon when beginning their own research collaborations;
- help those who seek to fund and promote collaborative research to understand the philosophical and political underpinnings of different traditions; and
- support those working in these traditions to identify points of commonality and difference in their methods and philosophies as a basis for strengthening the practice of collaborative research as a whole.

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Research collaboration is a deep and powerful research tradition that dates back beyond the recent emergence of calls for ‘co-produced’ knowledge.

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The eight reviews in the series were developed to provide eight very different 'takes' on the histories of collaborative research practices in the arts, humanities and social sciences. They do not pretend to be exhaustive, but to provide a personal perspective from the authors on the traditions that they are working within. As we worked together as a group to develop these, however, a number of commonalities emerged:

1. A critique of the mission-creep of scientific knowledge practices into the social sciences and humanities, and of the claims to produce universally valid forms of knowledge from specific limited institutional, cultural and social positions.
2. A commitment to creating research practices that enable diverse experiences of life and diverse knowledge traditions to be voiced and heard.
3. A resistance to seeing research methods as simply a technocratic matter; recognising instead that choices about how, where and with whom knowledge is created presuppose particular theories of reality, of power and of knowledge.
4. A commitment to grapple with questions of power, expertise and quality and to resist the idea that 'anything goes' in collaborative research and practice. There are better and worse ways of developing participation in research practice, there are conditions and constraints that make collaboration at times unethical.

At the same time, a set of names and events recur throughout the reviews: John Dewey, Paolo Freire, Raymond Williams, Donna Haraway appear as theorists and practitioners who provide powerful philosophical resources for thinking with. Critical incidents and moments reappear across the reviews: the rise of anti-colonial movements in the 1950s and 1960s, of second wave feminism and critical race theory in the 1960s and 1970s; of disability rights movements in the 1970s and 1980s; of post-human and ecological analyses in the 1990s and 2000s. Read as a whole, these reviews demonstrate the intellectual coherence and vibrancy of these many-threaded and interwoven histories of engaged scholarship and scholarly social action.

The first of the reviews, by **Kevin Myers** and **Ian Grosvenor**, discusses the long tradition of 'history from below' as a collaborative enterprise between researchers, archivists, curators, teachers, enthusiasts, local historians, archaeologists and researchers. They discuss the emergence of the 'professional historian' alongside the rise of the nation state, and the way in which this idea was challenged and deepened by the emergence of activist histories in the mid-20th century. They investigate the precedents set by the rise of groups such as the History Workshop movement and trace their legacies through a set of case studies that explore feminist histories of Birmingham, disabled people's histories of the First World War and the critique of white histories of conflict emerging from the work of black historians and communities.

Two of the reviews explore currents within participatory and critical research traditions. Niamh Moore explores these traditions through the lens of feminist philosophies and methodologies, while Tom Wakeford and Javier Sanchez Rodriguez explore the history of participatory action research (PAR) and its ties to social movements outside the academy.

Niamh Moore's review highlights the strategic contributions made to participatory research through the traditions of feminist and indigenous methodologies. Drawing on Donna Haraway's metaphor of the cat's cradle, Moore explores the way that these different traditions have learned from each other, fed into each other and been in (productive) tensions over the years. Importantly, she makes visible the common threads of these traditions, including a concern with questions of power, matters of voice, agency and empowerment and reflexivity. She identifies examples that include: popular epidemiology and women's health; the controversies and emerging insights arising from the publication of the book 'I Rigoberta Menchú' (a collaboration between Rigoberta Menchú, a Guatemalan activist and Peace Prize winner and anthropologist Elisabeth Burgos-Debray); and the online Mukurtu platform for sharing and curating community stories.

Wakeford and Sanchez Rodriguez's review is written from the position of individuals who situate themselves as both activists and academics. From a perspective both inside and outside the academy, they make visible the traditions of participatory action research that have evolved in social movements and their interaction with academic knowledge. They explain how PAR emerged as a practice that seeks to intervene and act on the world through disrupting assumptions about who has knowledge, and by building intercultural dialogue between those whose interests have historically been marginalised and those experts and institutions in dominant positions. They discuss the contributions of Paolo Freire and Orlando Fals Borda, as well as the emergence within universities of centres for Action Research and indigenist approaches to research before exploring recent examples of PAR from the Highlander Folk School in the US, to the Cumbrian Hill Farmers post Chernobyl, to questions of Food Sovereignty in India (amongst others).

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Central to many attempts to build collaborative research practices is a turn towards the arts and arts methodologies as a means of engaging with different forms of knowledge. Such a turn, however, can often overlook the distinctive and sustained tradition within contemporary arts of reflecting upon the question of how publics can come to participate in arts practices. Our series therefore includes two reflections on this question from different perspectives:

First, **Anne Douglas**' review offers a 'poetics of participation in contemporary arts', locating the turn to participation in contemporary arts within a wider history of 20th and 21st century arts and politics. She highlights the huge range of work by artists and arts co-operatives who are seeking to make work through participatory forms, and the deep scholarly tensions and debates that surround these practices. She explores through this rich history the debates over whether participation has become instrumentalised; whether the art/life divide should be preserved or eroded; the links between participatory aesthetics and cybernetic ethics; and the capacity for participation to challenge alienation and neoliberalism. Recognising arts practice as itself a form of research and inquiry into the world, she concludes with a set of powerful reflections on the role of the freedom to improvise and the importance of participation as a moment of care for and empathy with the other.

Second, **Steve Pool**, community artist and academic, reflects on the related but different traditions of community arts as they might relate to social science research. He considers what researchers in the social sciences might need to know and understand about artistic traditions if they desire to mobilise arts practice within the social sciences. He discusses the increasing democratisation of tools for making, the potential for them to open up artistic practice to publics as well as the importance of recognising that such practices are part of wider traditions and philosophies about the value and purpose of art. In particular, he discusses the tension between the idea of artistic autonomy – art for art's sake – and artistic democracy – the democratic creativity of all individuals. He foregrounds the way in which the community arts movement was also allied to a wider politics that moved towards cultural democracy and explores the contemporary practice of artists working in and with social science through examples such as Nicola Atkinson's 'Odd Numbers' and the Community Arts Zone's 'Being Cindy Sherman'.

More recent traditions of collaborative research characterise our final three reviews which take on, respectively, the way that design theory and practice are playing an important role in reshaping society, products and services; the emergence of new technologies to facilitate new forms of collaboration; and the increasingly urgent injunction to develop research approaches that enable collaboration with the 'more-than-human' others with whom we share the planet.

Theodore Zamenopoulos and **Katerina Alexiou** discuss the field of co-design and its underpinning theories and methods. They argue that Design as a process is always concerned with addressing a challenge or opportunity to create a better future reality, and explore how co-design has evolved as a process of ensuring that those with the life experiences, expertise and knowledge are actively involved in these making new tools, products and services. They observe how the participatory turn in this field has been concerned with both changing the objects of design – whether this is services or objects – *and* with the changing processes of designing itself. They highlight four major traditions and their distinctive approaches, before exploring the politics and practices of co-design through case studies of work.

Chiara Bonnachi explores how the internet is enabling new forms of collaborative knowledge production at a massive scale. She locates this discussion in the traditions of citizen science and public humanities, and examines how these have been reshaped through the development of hacker communities, open innovation and crowd-sourcing. In this process, she discusses the new exclusions and opportunities that are emerging through the development of projects that mobilise mass contribution. She examines the cases of MicroPasts and TrowelBlazers that demonstrate how these methods are being used in the humanities. In particular, she explores the ethical questions that emerge in these online collaborative spaces and the need for a values-based approach to their design.

Tehseen Noorani and **Julian Brigstocke** conclude the series with an exploration of the practice and philosophy of ‘more-than-human research’ which seeks to build collaborative research with non-human/more-than-human others. They discuss its philosophical foundations in pragmatism, ecofeminism and indigenous knowledge traditions and identify some of the theoretical and practical challenges that are raised when researchers from humanist traditions begin to explore how to ‘give voice’ to non-human others. In the review, they consider how researchers might expand their ‘repertoires of listening’ and address the ethical challenges of such research. To ground their analysis, they discuss the work of the Listening to Voices Project as well as accounts of researcher-animal partnerships and projects that draw on Mayan cosmology as a means of working with sustainable forestry in Guatemala.

This collection of reviews is far from exhaustive. There are other histories of collaborative research that are under-written here – there is much more to be said (as we discuss elsewhere) on the relationship between race and the academic production of knowledge. Each of these accounts is also personal, navigating a distinctive voiced route through the particular history they are narrating.

Despite this, at a time when politics is polarising into a binary choice between ‘expert knowledge’ and ‘populism’, these reviews show, collectively, that another way is possible. They demonstrate that sustained collaborative research partnerships between publics, community researchers, civil society, universities and artists are not only possible, but that they can and do produce knowledge, experiences and insights that are both intellectually robust and socially powerful.

Professor Keri Facer

Dr Katherine Dunleavy

Joint Editors: Connected Communities Foundation Series

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Julian Brigstocke is a cultural geographer at Cardiff University, working on power, aesthetics, posthumanism, and spaces of authority. He is author of *The Life of the City* (Ashgate) and co-editor of *Listening with Non-Human Others* (ARN Press) and *Space, Power and the Commons* (Routledge), as well as a special edition of GeoHumanities on *Spaces of Attunement*. Current research projects include work on culture, creativity and social change in a favela in Rio de Janeiro, and a Newton funded creative residency exploring the geo-aesthetics of sand, focusing on controversial land reclamation projects in Hong Kong. He was Principal Investigator on an AHRC funded project *Participation's 'Others': A Cartography of Creative Listening Practices*. He is bringing together these different strands of work together in a monograph, provisionally titled *The Aesthetics of Authority*.

1. INTRODUCTION

At a time of global warming, ecological destruction and mass species extinction, when the texture of everyday life is becoming increasingly mediated by technology, researchers are asking how humans might enter into less violent, destructive and alienating relationships with non-humans such as animals, plants, the earth, spirits, technologies and objects. The humanist ideal of an autonomous, rational, bounded human self is increasingly regarded as a fantasy. According to 'more-than-human' and 'post-humanist' research paradigms, human life is constituted through a riot of non-human forces, from the microbes in our guts, to the animals, plants and fungi that we live symbiotically with, to the objects that we care for and covet, to the gods and spirits that we summon and which bind us to others. These research paradigms have offered an alternative, *ecological* picture of social worlds, one in which humans are always constituted through diverse webs of non-human life. Gargantuan inequalities in economic wealth between the richest and poorest people, and a surge in decolonizing movements, trouble assumptions that there is something common across all human experience. The form and content of everyday experience is becoming subject to myriad digital and pharmacologic psycho-technologies that are enabling movement between multiple registers of awareness. Beyond the fiction of the autonomous, integrated self, a host of new epistemological, methodological, ethical and ontological frameworks emerge.¹

At their core is a determination to avoid engaging non-humans as mere resources for human society. For many researchers, research *on* non-humans can often fall into the same trap. Mainstream scientific and social-scientific research has tended to view non-humans such as animals as the passive objects of the research practice. Recently, however, efforts have emerged that strive to research *with* rather than *on* non-humans, and to attempt to embed research with non-humans into the same kind of relations of care, collaboration and mutual respect that characterises human research at its best and most ethical. In this review, we will introduce some of the varied ways in which researchers are attempting to work with non-humans through methodologies that invite non-humans to participate actively in the research process, or that find ways of identifying and amplifying the role of non-human *agency* in the construction of research practices. These approaches have been developed most strongly by researchers engaged in issues concerning the environment, ecology, animals, colonialism and decolonisation, science and technology. However, it is a research paradigm that is in principle applicable to almost anything. This is because it insists that human social worlds are *always* 'more-than-human' social worlds, in the sense that they are composed of relations between humans, non-human life,

¹ Epistemology concerns the nature of knowledge, while methodology concerns how we come to know, ethics concerns how we engage relationally and ontology concerns the nature of what exists.

and lively materials. Everyday social relations are always more-than-human social relations, animated by the agency of non-human forces.²

This review is set against the foil of a 'Western conception of the person as a bounded, unique, more or less integrated motivational and cognitive universe, a dynamic centre of awareness, emotion, judgement, and action organised into a distinctive whole and set contrastively both against other such wholes and against its social and natural background.'³ As such, the review raises challenging and provocative questions for research that presupposes such a unit of analysis. Do standard participatory research methods such as interviews, focus groups and consultations often ignore how non-humans participate in the making of knowledge and power? Are there ways in which innovative research practices might enable more-than-human actors to participate more fully? How do experiments in non-human collaborative research problematise the assumptions, frameworks and ethical guidelines of participatory research paradigms, perhaps even changing the meaning of 'participation'? What debts do more-than-human research methodologies owe to the wealth of knowledge found amongst indigenous, enslaved and colonised peoples who have often been regarded as 'non-human', treated as 'objects' rather than 'subjects' of research, and had their ontologies of more-than-human entanglements and agencies ridiculed and exiled?

There is something inherently difficult about the negatively-defined category of the 'non-human'. Whilst it is easy to think of human/non-human in terms of a clear distinction between 'society' and 'nature', this distinction has been widely criticised by many writers who argue that nature is always social.⁴ For example, there is no such thing as nature that has not been affected by or co-constructed with human social forces – especially in an era (known as the '*anthropocene*') in which human action has permanently transformed the surface of the Earth, including its atmosphere and its waters. Rather than talking of the 'non-human', therefore, throughout this review we will follow the lead of the geographer Sarah Whatmore's book *Hybrid Geographies*, and refer to 'more-than-human' research, where the notion of the 'more-than-human' is intended to convey a sense of the hybridity of social worlds. Social relations are made up of much *more* than human relations, and the concept of 'more-than-human' societies captures this diversity of forces, bonds, attractions, and interactions between humans and non-humans. So, in the rest of this review, we will refer to the 'more-than-human' to minimise privileging the 'human' in contrast with its absent 'other'. All of the approaches we will describe here aim to unpick clear distinctions between nature and culture and between human and non-human, by emphasising the web of relations that mutually compose and bind them and avoiding placing the human at a level that sits above that of the non-human.

- **Section 2** turns to the historical context of more-than-human participatory research.
- **Section 3** outlines three broad conceptual orientations informing current research trajectories.
- **Section 4** describes a variety of projects conducting research in this field.
- **Section 5** offers a brief summary and discussion of this review.

² Bennett 2010; Whatmore 2002.

³ Geertz 1983: 59.

⁴ See Castree 2005.

2. HISTORICAL ROOTS OF MORE-THAN-HUMAN RESEARCH

Although the field of non-human participatory research is relatively recent, it draws on diverse traditions that are united in their commitment to challenging Enlightenment ideas of the human, as well as to critiquing humans' mastery and exploitation of nature. Although there are many different kinds of history we could tell in order to convey something of the intellectual and ethical debts of more-than-human research, here we will focus on the legacies of *biopolitical*, *pragmatist*, *ecofeminist* and *decolonial* thought. We write self-consciously from our positions as professional academics within the Western university sector – a sector that works within a context of patriarchal, white and middle-class dominance. We have selected the order below to trace the history of the Western academy's *engagement* with various forms of more-than-human theorising, rather than a history of when these various forms of theorising emerged.

2.1 Biopolitics and the emergence of ecological understandings of the social

Michel Foucault has traced the emergence in Western thought from the 18th century of a growing awareness of, and interest in governing, the life processes of entire human populations (and connecting these to the life processes of individual bodies). Foucault refers to this as the 'biopolitical' constitution of modernity.⁵ In fields as varied as statistics, biology, medicine, engineering and economics, there was a growing awareness of the importance of environment and 'milieu' in determining the possibilities of human society. Increasingly, power became focused on improving society's health, vitality and strength. Visions of a society as an organism became widespread. This contributed to powerful forms of racism that judged some races to be healthy, energetic and advancing the species, while other races were considered degenerate, sickly and a threat to the health of the species as a whole.⁶

This environmental sensibility travelled across fields and disciplines. In economics, there was a growing awareness that economic life could be subtly manipulated by tweaking environmental variables such as interest rates. Modifying the economic 'climate' through subtle adjustments of multiple variables (interest rates, tax thresholds, import duties, etc.) became an important way of controlling human populations without having to limit individual freedoms. Across many spheres of government, a growing awareness emerged of how environments affect human behaviour and determine the healthy vitality (or weak degeneration) of society. These 'biopolitical' rationalities of governing generated new forms of racism, power and control – particularly through the control of sexuality – but also lay behind resistance and welfare

5
Foucault 2007.

6
McKinlay 2009.

•
*An experience of
interpenetrated self
and world is necessarily
a more-than-human
experience.*
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projects such as slum clearances, social welfare programmes and environmental politics. They legitimised many forms of technocratic authority, valorising the unquestioned expertise of scientists, doctors, economists, engineers, urban planners and so on.

Foucault's account of different ways of thinking about the relation between environments and society, and the importance of rationalities and experiences of life, growth and vitality in modernity, set an agenda for an important, ongoing scholarly effort to re-imagine the concept of life and the different forms of liveliness that animate human societies. His central challenge, which continues to animate more-than-human research, is for us to recognise that what counts as life or non-life, and what value we give to different kinds of life, should be considered a fundamental political question of modern times.⁷

2.2 Pragmatism: knowledge, environment and democracy

In the early 20th century, this interest in humans as embodied, environmentally sensitive beings amongst European intellectuals led to some radical ways of rethinking the nature of the human. The philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche argued for a fundamental overturning of the category of the human, requiring a new morality based on life, vitality and creativity, rather than a life-denying Christian morality of good, evil and endlessly deferred pleasure.⁸ Meanwhile, the philosophy of the American pragmatist John Dewey developed an environmental, 'naturalistic' theory of knowledge, experience and politics, starting from an account of the development of knowledge as an adaptive human response to external conditions that is aimed at an active restructuring of those conditions. Experience itself arises from an interaction between organism and environment: 'experience', he wrote, 'is heightened vitality... it signifies active and alert commerce with the world; at its height it signifies complete interpenetration of self and the world of objects and events.'⁹ This concept of experience also enabled a theorisation of the arts as vital in contributing to an awareness of the tensions between humans and their environment, as well as the resolution of those tensions. For Dewey, art has the capacity to bring to consciousness 'an experience that is unified and total'.¹⁰ Moving beyond Dewey's own thinking, we might add that such an experience of interpenetrated self and world is necessarily a *more-than-human* experience.

Dewey's thought has had a profound influence on contemporary understandings of participatory research and democracy. Dewey insisted upon the importance of discussion, consultation, persuasion and debate in the enactment of democratic life. He argued that democracy as a public discussion is the best way of dealing with conflicts of interest, because it is an experimental mode of enquiry through which we can develop a new conception of what our interests are. Central to this view of democratic life was an influential conception of 'publics'. Against the conventional, abstract notions of democracy as being carried out in an ideal public sphere, Dewey insisted that publics emerge through distinct socio-material entanglements. He argued that in technologically complex societies, in which innovation and change is the norm, the nature of what exactly makes up, holds together and animates a public is precisely the issue that is at stake. Noortje Marres takes this one step further to argue that publics are more-than-human, socio-technical constructions.¹¹

7
Blencowe 2012.

8
Ansell Pearson 1997.

9
Dewey [1932] 2009: 19.

10
Ibid.: 15.

11
Marres 2012.

Unlike much humanist participatory research, more-than-human research insists on the link between Dewey's conception of publics, and his ecological way of thinking that always situated knowledge and experience in the context of the interaction between bodies and their environment.¹² Dewey himself remained within a fairly conventional assumption about the differences between human and non-human collectives. A public, Dewey argued, is grounded in the capacity of humans to observe and reflect upon the unintended consequences of collective actions. For Dewey, only humans are capable of transforming an incoherent collective into a self-conscious, reflective public. So whilst Dewey's thought has had a powerful role in traditions of more-than-human participatory research – particularly in his ecological theory of knowledge and experience, and his recognition of the role of more-than-humans in the composition of publics – his thought does not go far enough in recognising the vital role of more-than-human actors in the constitution of democratic publics.¹³

2.3 Ecofeminism

One of the most powerful traditions of Western thought is the one that associates men with culture and reason, and women with nature, embodiment and emotion. This identification of women and nature has been the cornerstone of Western patriarchy, justifying the idea that men's place is in the public sphere of reasoned debate, and women's place is in the private sphere of reproduction and domesticity.¹⁴ It is unsurprising, therefore, that traditions of feminist thought have offered the most important and innovative insights about the relationship between humans and non-humans, and it is feminist geographers, anthropologists, and philosophers who in recent years have produced some of the most compelling insights into more-than-human research.¹⁵

During the 1980s, with foundational texts such as Merchant's *The Death of Nature*, a body of 'ecofeminist' thought explicitly brought together feminist and ecological politics and emphasized the radical interconnectivity of humans, animals, spirits and the earth.¹⁶ As a political movement, ecofeminism always stressed that its spiritual and cultural dimensions were inseparable from its political actions. It became associated with pagan religious traditions, aiming to develop ways of thinking and experiencing that were based on embodied, intuitive relations with the earth. Ecofeminism made a series of important arguments about the interconnections of all systems of unjustified domination. Domination of women, it was argued, was closely connected to the domination of the poor, people of colour, children and nature. The ecofeminist philosopher Karen Warren refers to these unjustifiably dominated groups as 'Others', whether 'human Others' (women, ethnic minorities, etc.) or 'earth Others' such as animals, forests and land.¹⁷ Warren's reference to "Others" is meant to highlight the status of subordinate groups in a broad system of domination, subordination and 'othering'. For example, Warren argues that so-called 'natural disasters', such as droughts or floods, disproportionately affect women, the poor, children and people of colour – and thus reveal themselves as being not 'natural' at all, but bound up in multiple social, political and economic systems of domination and exclusion.

12

For example, Blue 2015.

13

See Blue and Rock 2014.

14

Intersectional critiques of race and class have since problematised this narrative as excluding the experiences of women outside of the white middle class. For example, Lorde 2013.

15

For example, Colebrook 2014; Dixon 2016; Haraway 2008; Plumwood 1993; Probyn 2016; Stengers 2015; Whatmore 2002.

16

Merchant 1990. For an excellent early discussion of ecofeminism, see Plumwood 1993.

17

Warren 2000.

This ecofeminist ethos of developing an ecological sensibility that connects multiple forms of domination has been central to participatory more-than-human research. However, ecofeminism (or at least, some versions of it) have been subjected to important critiques that have helped shape the current landscape of more-than-human research. For example, many researchers worried about ecofeminists' acceptance of the idea of an intrinsic connection between women and nature.¹⁸ Relatedly, one might be cautious of ecofeminism's faith in ideas of living 'organically' or 'in harmony' with nature, in light of Foucault's critique of the 'biopolitical' constitution of modernity discussed earlier. Some researchers are also wary of ecofeminism's apparent suspicion of technology, which is viewed as serving the degraded, 'instrumental' rationality of patriarchal, capitalist domination. For example, as we will explore in the next section, the work of writers such as Donna Haraway and Isabelle Stengers has offered new ways of thinking about the relationship between feminism, nature, science and technology, and spirituality. These new approaches draw on and extend many of the most important insights of ecofeminism, whilst fully embracing the 'artificial', hybrid and technological aspects of more-than-human worlds. The most famous statement of this departure from ecofeminism is Haraway's remark in her *Manifesto for Cyborgs*, 'I'd rather be a Cyborg than a Goddess'.¹⁹

2.4 Decolonizing and indigenous research

It is important to fully recognise that whilst more-than-human research methodologies currently appear new in the canon of Western academic scholarship, there are long, rich histories and traditions of knowledge about the more-than-human that come from outside the Enlightenment tradition, just as decolonizing work has existed for 500 years within and alongside colonization itself.²⁰ Indeed, academic more-than-human research needs to be situated within a history of colonial practices that systematically sought to discredit and dis-member non-Western ways of knowing, and to dehumanize dominated peoples, framed as part of nature so that they could be exploited with extraordinary brutality.²¹ Colonialism is an ongoing system of violence that categorises dominated populations as passive, mute, objects of knowledge. Like patriarchy, it has historically been justified through use of simplistic dualisms between civilised and primitive, culture and nature, reason and emotion and master and slave. Recognising the violence of this, postcolonial and decolonial scholars have highlighted, in addition to material and symbolic violence, the 'epistemic violence' and 'ontological violence' of colonialism: epistemic violence in imposing Western concepts, languages and rationalities while assuming non-Western peoples cannot think; ontological violence in severing the human from the world, and non-Western peoples from humanity.²² Decolonizing and indigenous research has insisted on the need to draw on 'subaltern', marginalized ways of thinking and reasoning, whose origins are not the universities of imperial powers, but the likes of black and indigenous thought and grassroots activist movements, such as the campesino movement in South America,²³ the Zapatistas in Mexico,²⁴ and the decolonizing student movement Rhodes Must Fall in South Africa.²⁵

18

On the history of ecofeminism, focusing on the issue of essentialism in particular, see Gaard 2011.

19

Haraway 1987.

20

Sandoval 2000.

21

Trinh 1989.

22

Fanon 2008; Mignolo 2009; Spivak 1988; Wynter 2003; see also Moore on feminism in this series.

23

Holt-Gimenez 2006; Borras Jr 2010.

24

See <http://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/>; see also Holloway 1998.

25

See <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2015/nov/18/why-south-african-students-have-turned-on-their-parents-generation>; see also <http://theconversation.com/what-a-new-university-in-africa-is-doing-to-decolonise-social-sciences-77181>

These histories of thought show that academic researchers can learn a lot from indigenous knowledges. Historically, it is well established that much anthropological research concerning indigenous peoples participated in, and justified, colonial violence.²⁶ It has also been criticised for being 'extractive': appropriating the knowledges and experiences of indigenous peoples to further academic careers, rather than to be of any benefit to the research participants themselves.²⁷ However, some research has also engaged with indigenous knowledges in more collaborative and respectful ways that often draw on shared activist and participatory research projects. Such work recognises the imperative to avoid either appropriating or 'stealing' these knowledges, on the one hand, or denying the usefulness of indigenous knowledges for contemporary global ecological problems, on the other. Similarly, it is important not to assume that indigenous peoples have a pure, authentic, unmediated or uncompromised relationship with the natural world. An important series of anthropological works such as Marisol de la Cadena's *Earth Beings*, Elizabeth Povinelli's *The Cunning of Recognition* and Viveiros de Castro's *Cannibal Metaphysics* show how indigenous practices interact in complex and often violent ways with Western rationalities and systems of power.²⁸ Such research helps illuminate, and seek ways of moving beyond, the structures of reason in Western traditions of thought.

For example, Deborah Bird Rose, working with the Yarralin people in the Northern Territories of Australia, has shown how Indigenous views of human identity create the foundations for an ethos of ecological respect, restraint and recognition, which has much to teach dominant cultures.²⁹ Rose shows how, in contrast to the future-oriented rationalities of the West, which frame the past as having already finished, Yarralin society orients itself towards origins. The past – the 'Dreaming' – is not finished, but continues in all living bodies whose origins are in the Dreaming, through ceremony, creation and music. Memory, place, dead bodies and genealogies hold stories that are painful but also constitute relationships of moral responsibility. This way of experiencing time makes possible a way of relating to death that is less alienating and more sustainable than Western rationalities that desire to 'overcome' death or hold it at bay for as long as possible. Death is part of life, a return to the land that nurtures life. This vision of death, Rose argues, enables a way of thinking about the land as a 'nourishing terrain', and of death as a nurturing, material continuity with ecological others.

Academic researchers in the field of more-than-human research have much to learn from decolonizing traditions of research on the one hand, and indigenous worldviews on the other. Contrary to extracting methodologies, concepts, or theories, this entails joining forces with decolonizing and indigenous ethics of care and responsibility, sharing intellectual and political commitments and developing modes of 'border thinking' that escape the dominant forms of rationality of Western reason.³⁰

Learning from decolonizing traditions of research on the one hand, and indigenous worldviews on the other entails joining forces with decolonizing and indigenous ethics of care and responsibility.

26
Tuhiwai Smith 2012.

27
Todd 2016; see also Participatory Action Research review in this series.

28
de la Cadena 2015; Povinelli 2002; Viveiros de Castro 2014.

29
Bird Rose 2000.

30
Mignolo 2012. For a recent example, see Liebert 2018. On ways of thinking about care in more-than-human worlds, see Puig de la Bellacasa 2017.