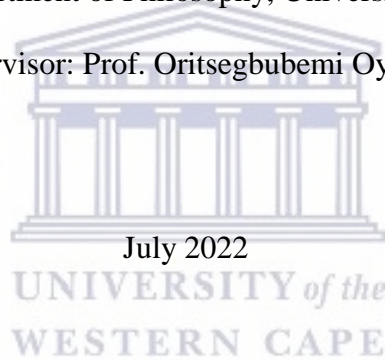


Epistemicide: A Conceptual Analysis in African Epistemology

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ABSTRACT

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Many social scientists, philosophers and theorists have applied Boaventura de Sousa Santos's conceptual neologism, 'Epistemicide', in various fields, in singular reference to a set of mutually distinct phenomena. This raises an immediate philosophical and epistemic question of conceptual plausibility and the validity of the inferences drawn. In this case, a single philosophical term is applied as an explanation for a set of diverse phenomena that have been claimed to occur, not only in the history of ideas but also in the contemporary moment, which is also the context of current debates on African epistemology. However, there has been little research into the philosophical plausibility of the term employed, what concept of 'knowledge' or 'epistemology' is entailed by this term and as a consequence – for African philosophy – whether this concept has any bearing on the field of African epistemology. This study thus proposes a conceptual analysis to test the plausibility of the concept so as to proffer an account with findings drawn from the analysis that may potentially have far-reaching implications on the history of ideas in Africa.

Keywords

Epistemicide; Social Epistemology; Genocide; History of Ideas; Global South; Discourse; Analysis; Conceptual Analysis; Knowledge Production; African philosophy; African epistemology

DECLARATION

I declare that *Epistemicide: A Conceptual Analysis in African Epistemology* is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

Harry Wilson Kapatika

July 2022

Signed: *Hkapatika*



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INTRODUCTION

The term “Epistemicide” appeared for the first time in academic literature towards the turn of the 20th century. Its creator Boaventura de Sosa Santos (1995) theorised its existence, extrapolating from the fields of sociology and social epistemology, to account for an unnamed phenomenon that he had observed as a consequence of the epistemic systems in the ‘Global North’ (First World Countries) and their hegemonic relationship to knowledge production in the ‘Global South’ (Third World Countries, previous colonial territories and so-called ‘4th World’ or indigenous communities). This term was subsequently deployed and taken up by scholars to apply to a gamut of both historical and contemporary phenomena that had in some way precipitated the destruction of entire systems of knowledge outside the purview of ‘Western’ or ‘Westernised’ institutions globally. However, in spite of the gravity of the claim in the term, seemingly deriving its explanatory and historical force from Raphael Lemkin’s ‘genocide’ as a progenitor of Santos’s epistemicide, the concept has been largely under-theorised, ignored or seemingly relegated by philosophers and epistemologists alike.

Thus, the rationale for this study is informed primarily by the concept’s lack of theoretical grounding in epistemic and philosophical discourse, since it has often occupied the general literature as a conceptual given or a term of art, with a set of implied meanings as opposed to a consistent and clearly defined epistemic and/or phenomenal reference. The implication of this present under-theorisation has led to the concept being regarded as a seemingly speculative phenomenon in scholarship, relevant only within the fields of sociology or issues of epistemic or cognitive injustice, but with little scholarship on the entailed meaning and conceptual relations of the phenomenon in question.

For philosophical systems in the “Global South,” such as African philosophy then, questions surrounding epistemicide have great bearing on the epistemic absences, debates and preconceptions of African philosophy and its epistemology. Yet, with the advent of the ever hastening loss of various forms of indigenous cultural epistemic tools, apparent in the surge of language death and the loss of indigenous knowledge systems in present-day Africa, there exists a pressing need to account for these processes. Indeed, there is a significant gap in literature on African epistemology with regards to the philosophical implications of these historical and present-day destructive processes on the discipline and its potential impact on the future of African philosophy. In other words, a clear epistemological account of

epistemicide emerging from a conceptual analysis, if true, would have implications in the history of ideas of African philosophy. Such implications would hold the African continent as a site, not only of historical epistemic injustice but contemporary epistemic injustice relative to knowledge production, given Africa's unique colonial and post-colonial history. Thus, if the concept is shown to be theoretically plausible, this would require immediate consideration on the far-ranging implications on the present state of 'under-developed' epistemology on the continent and questions around the existence of archives of African philosophical literature, all of which can be attributed to a form of epistemic injustice which would require urgent corrective action.

However, the presumption made by Santos and other authors in their application of the concept epistemicide is that there can be a state of events where an 'epistemology' or knowledge systems can be designated for premeditated or intentional collective destruction or 'death', with the ultimate aim being its erasure or extinction. The wide application of the concept by theorists also necessitates an epistemological question on what kind of theory of epistemology is implicitly being advanced that provides epistemicide with foundational plausibility and conceptual coherence.

Thus, in the literature, there exists a problem of conceptual clarity. That is, whether the intended or unintended application of ideas operating within the concept epistemicide ascribes philosophical, epistemic or phenomenological properties to a set of events which may have only been historically associated to concepts in another category such as 'genocide', for example. Equally, an epistemological question arises around epistemicide since Formal Epistemology's own normative account of what epistemology is becomes evidently dichotomous to the pluralistic accounts of knowledge held by 'alternative' frameworks of epistemology. This question is then further complicated when these putative systems are also posited as evidencing the truth of epistemicide, yet appear as incommensurable alongside formalistic approaches. The research problem can thus be stated in the following question: If Santos's account of epistemicide is proven as conceptually applicable by way of conceptual analysis, what are the philosophical implications for the discipline at large as well as the debate concerning the character and existence of African epistemological practice that is currently ensuing in African philosophy?

This study therefore proposes four chapters which include formulating: a background to the concept, a concept analysis, the construction of an epistemological thesis undergirding the

concept and finally an account of its pervasiveness and significance in the African philosophical discourse.

Thus, chapter one seeks to contextualise the concept epistemicide and its philosophical dimensions, as it appears within the literature and as it relates to the domains of philosophy and epistemology. This is achieved through an abridged account of the history of ideas of the concept, disassembling epistemicide into its root concepts, ‘epistemology’ and ‘-cide’, and then presenting an account of the history of each idea as it relates to Santos’s initial formulation (1995), while taking stock of the concept’s theoretical and disciplinary positionality and its usage in scholarship. Therefore, this chapter aims to provide a philosophical background to the subsequent concept analysis, which will aid in comprehension of the concept and its implicit entailments.

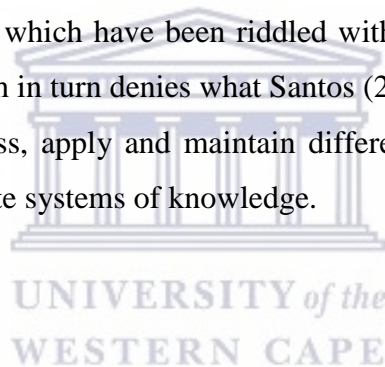
The aim of chapter two then is to furnish a valid conceptual analysis in order to determine whether the concept epistemicide is a plausible concept, applicable to the domain of philosophical and epistemological problems and concerns, while retaining valid inferences. The primary method of concept analysis applied in this chapter is a detection and combination analysis. This is proposed through an assessment of the concept’s linguistic composition which then extends to its definition and application as theorised by Santos (1995) as well as proponents of the concept who apply this idea from various disciplinary domains. The aim of the chapter is ultimately a constructive one, which is to proffer the necessary analytic and epistemological resources to develop a cogent “Epistemicide Thesis” in the following chapter.

Chapter three then formulates an “Epistemicide Thesis” to provide an outline of the conceptual parameters and criteria to be demarcated for plausible applications of the concept in a manner that is philosophically grounded. The aim of this chapter is to proffer a philosophically cogent reconstruction of the argument entailed by the concept and its application as surveyed in the previous chapters. From this thesis, a critical account for the concept can be presented, assessed and analysed which is neither vague nor imprecise but instead accurately accounts for the diverse applications of the concept in the literature while providing a framework for future usage.

Finally chapter four, as a concluding chapter, briefly summarises all findings thus far and enters this evidence into the debate on the question of African epistemology, as raised in the seminal paper by Didier Kaphagawani and Jeanette Malherbe (2003). Herein an assessment of the discourse in African philosophy on knowledge, epistemology and the impact of colonialism on

knowledge production will be assessed and a case will be forwarded that while the concept epistemicide has not been explicitly applied in the literature, evident from the scholarship are theorisations which entail the meaning of the concept as assessed in this study.

Following the considerations above, it is argued that the impetus for a philosophical and epistemological explanation and examination into the putative concept is in order. This would be pursued insofar as it would serve as conceptual tool for explaining the existing material absence of epistemic precedents in the history of African philosophy, where no term in the history of ideas has been posited. It would also underline the necessity to accurately characterise putative traditions of knowledge, as they may appear in the continent, as epistemic traditions so as to ensure that the epistemic or conceptual repositories they retain are not at the threat of arbitrary extinction. Furthermore, pursuing such a question in its output would potentially lead to a broader conception of philosophical and epistemic practice, engendering new research on the concept as well as under-theorised or previously deficient theorisation on alternative forms of knowledge which have been riddled with what Miranda Fricker (2007) terms ‘epistemic injustice’ which in turn denies what Santos (2007) calls elsewhere ‘cognitive justice’ or the freedom to access, apply and maintain different ways of knowing from the cognitive frameworks of alternate systems of knowledge.



CHAPTER 1: A BRIEF BACKGROUND ON THE CONCEPT “EPISTEMICIDE”

This chapter seeks to contextualise the concept “Epistemicide” within a history of ideas as it appears within the literature beyond the discipline of philosophy, especially in the social sciences, where the concept has found its widest application and expression. In constructing a genealogical account of the concept, this analysis seeks to underline and briefly examine the concept’s core philosophical aspects. This chapter also accounts for the significant debates around its conceptual cognates and theoretical entailments. Therefore, the philosophical issues around the concept’s application in the academic discourse which may inform its usage and/or lack thereof in the history of ideas, will be assessed. To this end, the chapter will be divided into two sections to provide sufficient evidence of the concept’s significance in the general history of philosophical ideas. The first section presents an abridged history of the idea and the second section focuses on the concept’s usage and ambiguities in the literature on epistemicide, ultimately seeking to validate the necessity for a concept analysis which is undertaken in the subsequent chapter.

An Abridged History of Ideas Encompassing “Epistemicide”

Boaventura de Sousa Santos, originally applied the neologism epistemicide in the context of legal theory or jurisprudence. The concept was first coined and theorised by Santos in his article, ‘*Three metaphors for a new conception of law: The frontier, the Baroque, and the South*’ (1995), as an intuitively constructed and undefined theoretical term. In its first usage by Santos, the concept would be contextualised within the epistemological debate surrounding the heuristic construction of the ‘Global North and South’, as well as colonialism, capitalism and globalisation as products of western hegemony, broadly construed. Herein, Santos understood epistemicide as a consequence of the foundations of Western modernity and its novel conceptualisation of ‘rationality’ in 16th century Europe.

According to Santos, from this period onwards, other epistemic alternatives would increasingly be discredited or erased, either by the destruction of their epistemic underpinnings or, in extreme cases, through the “genocide of social groups which sustained such knowledge” (Santos 570). In this paper, Santos also proffers another conceptual cognate to epistemicide,

which he argues ‘always accompanied’ epistemicide as practiced by the ‘North’, in another neologism studied in the domain of linguistics in “linguicide” – the sudden disappearance of languages – suggesting a strong conceptual relationship between ideas of erasure acting upon ‘knowledge’ with particular respect to social groupings. Santos would argue that it was in these methods and processes that other alternative epistemic systems were barred and unable to participate in the global epistemic discourse, accounting for certain locales and cultures’ material absences in the wider epistemic canon.

The practice of inventing and extrapolating from novel concepts focusing on particularly social phenomena, as Santos does with epistemicide, is understood distinctly within the central traditions of philosophical thought. This distinction as well as these traditions’ divergent conceptions of ‘knowledge’ have also been predicated on distinct and exclusive rationales which must be accounted for in providing a charitable background to the concept epistemicide. According to Neil Levy (2003), the distinction between the traditions of Analytic Philosophy (AP) and Continental Philosophy (CP), as the two dominant traditions of philosophical thought, have hinged on the former’s methodological congruence with ‘normal science’. The latter tradition is thus characterised as being concerned with issues appearing in literary works, the political and historical concerns of knowledge production as well as other issues relating explicitly to the ‘social’ dimensions of philosophy (Levy 291-293).

The distinction outlined above is of central importance since Levy argues – drawing on Kuhn’s (2012) theory of ‘paradigmatic science’ – that the reason why AP ‘took the paradigmatic turn’ and CP did not was due to the latter’s heightened emphasis on sociological or social issues (Levy 295-296). Thus, the general application of the concept epistemicide by Santos and proponents of the concept can be squarely understood in the philosophical context which responds to and theorises on specific ‘social issues’. This further explains why the concept epistemicide appears pervasively within the literature of the social sciences. Furthermore, it provides the first strong indication that the concept’s usage, concerns and theoretical commitments may fall outside of the conventional domain of formalistic philosophy.

Without expanding on the general implications of Levy’s distinctions, and the obvious overlaps between thinkers and approaches to philosophical problems in the respective traditions, this chapter proceeds from the premise offered by Levy’s general framework. This is done to explain particular trends in the literature so as to account for the reason why the concept has

been theorised in both the philosophical and non-philosophical literature in the manner that it has which will be discussed later in this chapter. We now turn to briefly outlining the philosophical properties inferred by an abridged background of the two central components of the concept epistemicide, ‘genocide’ and ‘epistemology’, their correlation and some key issues which arise in the history of ideas around the content of these concepts insofar as epistemicide is concerned.

In the history of ideas, the concept epistemicide, may be superficially perceived to have some strong correlation with the sociological concept of ‘genocide’ due to the fact that each term shares the morpheme ‘-cide’, as well as the fact that the popular genocide concept historically precedes the application of epistemicide. However, as it will turn out, this is merely related to an association of ideas, which on further analysis appears suspect. In Lemkin’s, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe* (1943), especially in the preface of this work, Lemkin posits a working definition and etymological outline of his sociological concept ‘genocide’ which is of significance in tracing philosophical ideas around ‘-cide’ concepts like epistemicide. Lemkin thus defines genocide in the following terms:

By “genocide” we mean the destruction of a nation or of an ethnic group. This new word . . . is made from the Greek word *genos* (race, tribe) and the Latin *cide* (killing). (Lemkin 79)

Although Lemkin’s concept garnered widespread import within the jurisprudential and sociological fields in the 20th and 21st centuries, Lemkin had not been the first thinker to theorise such an application employing ‘-cide’ and its etymology to formulate a new concept. Indeed, the practice of theorising concepts around the extermination of a population or group of people can be traced back a century earlier to the work of literary critic Heinrich Heine in 1832, as captured in the seventh volume of *The Works of Heinrich Heine* (1893). The work was translated into English by Charles Godfrey Leland. In the context of Heine’s chapter, ‘On French Political Parties’, Leland proffers a translation of a German term employed by Heine into English, situating the idea ‘*Völkermeuchelnden*’ or ‘folk-murdering’ in a footnote with what Leland deemed as its French correlative, ‘*populicide*’. This ‘populicide’ becomes a precedent in the history of ideas around “Epistemicide”, and shows that a simple reduction or conflation of the term epistemicide to genocide or any ‘-cide’ term is misplaced, since the application of the ‘-cide’ conceptual suffix shows that concepts like epistemicide should be

traced to other strongly related concepts which are premised on the idea of ‘killing’ or ‘erasure’ of large numbers of things associated which epistemicide is exclusively concerned with.¹

The philosophical significance of concepts relating to killing of groups of people such as ‘populicide’ and ‘genocide’ in the philosophical literature is also profoundly understated. Credited with the first actual usage of ‘populicide’ in the history of ideas, we find moral philosopher and jurist Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) to whom the word owes its actual origin as a philosophical referent. This claim is evidenced in a study conducted by Mühlberger et al. (2019), gleaned from a software analysis of some 95 000 images from the personal collections of Bentham’s previously unscanned manuscripts where populicide appears. This gives credence to the idea that the concept epistemicide and its progenitor ‘genocide’ is, at least at conceptual level, within the history of ideas, inherited from a genealogy of distinctively moral or ethical philosophical concerns. In this tradition, theoretical concepts are proffered to explain widely observed but unnamed phenomena such as the deliberate mass erasure of a particular social groups.

It therefore follows that epistemicide can accordingly be ascribed and assessed in the philosophical domain especially as hypotheses on ethics, morality and questions of justice, which Santos through his concept epistemicide also seeks to address (Santos 1995; 2005; 2007; 2014; 2019; 2020). This is also true of the limited philosophical literature on the concept genocide for instance, as with the work of Rosenbaum (2001), whose focus on the uniqueness of the Holocaust in relation to other genocide events, raises several ethical and conceptual concerns related to thinkers’ divergent sense of the term.

From this account of the concept epistemicide and its apparently unphilosophical conceptual suffix of ‘-cide’, we can positively trace this idea back to central philosophical issues in the history of ideas. What is also clear from the discussion above is that any concept applied with the Latin word-forming element ‘-cide’ appears to designate a process by which something ‘alive’ becomes ‘dead’ through the act of ‘killing’. This would generally infer a complex casual nexus of terminal relationships – which are usually intentional – between ‘living’ agents, or in this case, agent groups. While Lemkin’s concept ‘genocide’ eclipsed the more obscure and older concept ‘populicide’ in the sociological and legal literature, ‘genocide’ would itself come

¹ The number of terms with a similar ‘-cide’ ending boasts an array of more than 100 different terms in the modern English language alone. While many of the concepts in this group are perhaps tautological and may cause conceptual confusion, the formation of a family of concepts is evident, as with other frequently applied terms that employ ‘-ology’ or ‘-ism’ to qualify particular kinds of concepts.

under increasing need of clarification and disambiguation in the context of what sociologist Martin Shaw (2015) deemed a ‘proliferation of concepts’. Shaw complained that, “[w]hile there is a need for flexible language to describe the varieties of genocide, overemphasis on secondary differences confuses [the] discussion”, and that, “that the many new ‘-cides’ are, in fact, the many sides of genocide’ (Shaw 122).

However, it appears that Shaw’s criticisms refers only to ‘varieties of genocide’ which does not easily map onto the concept epistemicide. This is because the concept deals less so with the mass erasure of particular groups humans – although this is implied by Santos in instances and functions as an implicitly premise within the conceptual unit – and more so with the deliberate destruction of the ‘knowledge’ which those groups are said to contain. Shaw’s criticism would therefore not be satisfactory in explaining the concept epistemicide as a theoretical device, and would similarly miss the way in which the concept epistemicide is also positing an ‘argument by analogy’ or metaphor as in Orlando Patterson’s (1984) socio-historical notion of ‘social death’. Furthermore, this line of reasoning does not account for a wide array of theorists apparent agreement and divergence on an intuitive sense of the concept epistemicide, especially those thinkers focused on the domains of ‘the social’ and ‘knowledge production’, which suggests an active discourse and not merely an ‘overemphasis on secondary differences’. It should be clear then that Santos’s concept would retain some intrinsic ‘philosophical’ properties worth analysing from its seemingly non-philosophical entailment of ‘-cide’ relative to ethical and moralistic concerns; in contrast with the philosophically laden suffixed referent of ‘epistemi-’, in epistemicide.

However, prior to his theorisation of ‘genocide’, Lemkin also recognised that the mass erasure of human groups was not the only thing that was designated for intentional erasure in these act but that the culture or ‘way of life’ could also be singled out for erasure. Theorising in 1933, and providing groundwork for his later theorisation of genocide, Lemkin explicated the reasons why ‘vandalism’ following from acts of ‘barbarism’ or premeditated mass killings, should be banned in International Law. He thus defined vandalism as the, “[d]estruction of works of art and culture, being the expression of the particular genius of these collectivities” (Lemkin 1933). For Lemkin then, specific productions of ‘art and culture’ could be attributed to ‘collectivities’ and thus be said to be intentionally erased when they no longer had possession of it. Thus we can take ‘art and culture’ here as conceivably reducible to Santos’s account of ‘alternative knowledge systems’ which would yield a strikingly similar description of an intuitive sense one may retain regarding the concept epistemicide, which we will come to assess. It is

important to note nevertheless that even the originator of the earlier and prominent concept of ‘genocide’ was aware of the processes that lead to irretrievable loss of the cognitive productions of collectivities which Santos sought to directly address through his account of epistemicide.

Following the preceding claim, special attention should be paid to what is actually designated by scholars’ divergent sense of the same concept in ‘epistemology’ theorised in the term epistemicide. A set of primarily philosophical debates on the theoretical and methodological character of mainstream epistemology, contextualised in what Santos and other social theorists would term the ‘Global North’, occurring from about the late nineteenth well into the twenty-first century, will assist in clarifying the philosophical sense and domain of ‘epistemi-’, in the application of epistemicide. This is done, not to suggest that epistemological theories like externalism are being erased or that the ensuing debate was an instantiation of epistemicide, but rather to provide a substantive background which is crucial in accounting for why Santos’s “Epistemicide” was employed by mainly theorists focused on ‘social issues’. It will also explain why it was not applied by those thinkers whose focus extended on explicitly analytical, ontological or metaphysical concerns – which does not preclude the mutual coexistence between these fields – evident in Santos’s application of seminal analytic and formalistic thinkers theorising on issues within the domain of SE.²

In the history of ideas, the debate between the formalistic and socialised epistemic traditions presents a scenario in which each enterprise retains their own respective account of the fulfilment of knowledge conditions. This resulted in a state of affairs where the ‘meaning’ and the entailment of ‘knowledge’ was understood in a divergent manner which each tradition held as necessary for actually practicing ‘epistemology’ on their accounts.

Expanding on the line of distinction, as sketched by Levy earlier, in the study of theories of knowledge, two major schools of thought which, developed in the 20th century were predicated on similar concerns as in the epistemic rupture between AP and CP. According to Goldman and O’Connor’s (2021) analysis, two schools in the practice of epistemology are identified being Formal Epistemology (FE) and Social Epistemology (SE), discerned as distinct and divergent philosophical trends. These largely philosophical, cross-disciplinary debates would later come to define the concerns of mainstream epistemology as distinct from other

² T. Kuhn, L. Wittgenstein, P. Hountondji and K. Wiredu for example.

conceptions of epistemology as in sociology, which is best captured in the early variance between the theories of psychologism, logic and phenomenology.

For Martin Kusch (1999), German philosophers in the early half of the twentieth century maintained a concerted academic effort to disassociate the new field of experimental psychology from philosophy proper. This led to an overall epistemic rupture between socialised and formal epistemic approaches as formalistic thinkers rejected new theories of knowledge promulgated by inter-disciplinary philosophers showing an early negation of SE by proponents of FE. For our purposes, some of these criticisms were outlined as follows:

“the tendency to employ ethical notions like 'value' or 'ought' in the theory of knowledge; every form of naive realism; all talk of knowledge as corresponding to reality; any attempt to separate different sciences either in terms of their objects or else in terms of their methods; every definition of culture that made reference to human beings; or speaking of the natural sciences as a product of human culture”. (Kusch 18)

Without noting theorists extended argumentation about these models of knowledge acquisition, these criticisms illustrated that SE theory presented a paradigmatically distinct account of knowledge acquisition against the then canonical account of ‘justified, true belief’ or ‘classical infallibilism’. That is, for proponents of SE, ‘knowledge’ or ‘epistemology’ was not merely reducible to propositional knowledge, logical notation and other formalistic approaches and could thus be necessitated by alternative accounts of knowledge gleaned broadly from the ‘social’ or the ‘psychological’. Goldman and O’Connor thus state that the latter SE trend was generally, “concerned with truth acquisition by groups, or collective agents”, whereas the former FE trend held more stringent conditions for knowledge acquisition predicated on broadly ‘monist’ accounts of knowledge based on ‘individual knowers’ without appeals to their psychology. This distinction is significant in understanding what Santos and others mean by knowledge in a socialised sense, and the way in which they collapse the distinction between formal and social epistemic accounts on their schema.

This debate on the character of ‘knowledge’ in ‘epistemology’, underlying the coining of epistemicide, can be further explicated in the work of Charles Kurzman (1994). For Kurzman’s, the early epistemic debates sketched above could be abridged in the assessment of three broad categories or characterisations of epistemic praxis in this history of ideas. On Kurzman’s

account, the ‘monist’, ‘pluralist’ and ‘agnostic’ epistemic traditions accounted for various theoretical positions between formalistic and socialised epistemology, with the former two being important for the concerns of this chapter (Kurzman 268)

For Kurzman, in the ‘monist’ camp we find strictly analytical and formal epistemic thinkers, like G. E Moore and Russell, the latter of whom is stated by Kurzman to be following in the tradition of Hume and Mill in broadly holding the thesis that knowledge approximates to truth (Kurzman 269). Herein, the foundationalism of Descartes can be identified as a progenitor to this epistemic approach. A brief summary of this account, would be, the idea of ‘justification by certainty’, which further states that the, “chief emphasis in monist epistemologies is the justifiability of knowledge’s truth” (Kurzman 269).

The second kind of epistemological praxis, as outlined by Kurzman, is the school of ‘pluralism’ which advocated for a thesis of ‘knowledge by necessity’, which is often held *contra* the core thesis of the monist camp. Thinkers in the pluralist camp were usually those who theorised in the CP and SE traditions, emphasising the ‘social’ as fundamental to any assessment of knowledge. However, outlying thinkers among pluralists who actually occupy the ‘classically’ opposed traditions of AP and FE would also contribute to a pluralist account of knowledge and are thus included as part of the pluralists’ camp. Evident in Kurzman’s schema of the trend is the emphasis of knowledge in the ‘social world’ such as:

Quine’s background theories; (1969, 50), Wittgenstein’s language-games; (1974, section 403), Winch’s rules; (1958, 24ff.), Adorno’s language and signs (1983, 59-60), Durkheim’s social structure; (1933, 33), Marx and Engels’s classes; (1978, 172-3), and so on. (Kurzman 277)

We now have enough of a foundation to show the deep disciplinary split between the fields of study in the philosophical meanings ascribed to ‘knowledge’ and ‘epistemology’ within philosophy itself as well as the discipline of sociology or social theory which Santos theorises the concept epistemicide in.

Thus, the history leading up to the initial theorisation of the concept epistemicide is argued to be contextualised within the non-formalistic and socialised epistemic tradition of SE, which is easily set within the academic fields of sociology, education, decolonial or postcolonial studies, linguistics, philosophy other disciplines in the humanities. This focus however, does not

mutually exclude formalistic concerns from the concept's history, since in the literature on epistemicide, jurisprudential and applied linguistic frameworks have further informed the concept's usage. The evidence for these claims are predicated on a review of much of the 'Epistemicide literature' written from 1995 to 2021, in which the concept epistemicide is explicitly applied by proponents in support of their arguments. We now turn to the background of applications of the concept epistemicide in the literature on epistemicide, to provide further support for a conceptual analysis of the term, in order to disambiguate and make explicit some of the issues addressed thus far.

A Philosophical Background of "Epistemicide"

In the initial theorisation on the existence of epistemicide, Santos (1995) extrapolated from the fields of sociology and SE to account for an unnamed phenomenon in the erasure of knowledge of particular groups. Santos argued such processes occurred and would occur as a consequence of the epistemic hegemony of the 'Global North' (First World Countries) and their relationship to knowledge production in the 'Global South' (Third World Countries, previous colonial territories and indigenous communities). This term would be subsequently taken up by scholars to apply to a range of both historical and contemporary phenomena that had in some way caused the destruction of entire systems of knowledge outside the purview of 'Western' or 'Westernised' institutions, globally.

Gayatri Spivak's (1988) influential notion of 'epistemic violence' accounted for a prior conceptual formation that described one of the senses in which the concept epistemicide would come to be applied by Santos, who drew heavily from Spivak's thought, as evident in the literature on epistemicide. Spivak's novel theoretical conceptualisation thus showed early correlative observations by theorists, which predated Santos's first application of the term epistemicide in the literature, also evident in Valentin-Yves Mudimbe's (1988) 'epistemological ethnocentrism' concept.

For Santos however, as well as other proponents who applied the concept epistemicide, they did so, predicated on a similar set of theoretical commitments and intuitions. Thus, various traditions of scholarship in the mid-20th century arose which broadly focused on post-colonial, socio-political, historical and sociological thought, and these would come to inform the later characterisation of epistemicide by Santos and others. Eminent theorists who impacted the

Lusophone School of sociology and Marxist thinkers, labels by which Santos identifies, are important in understanding the moving parts of the concept within Santos's schema. The era of post-colonial scholarship works, which Santos would draw on in the literature on epistemicide formed part of inter-disciplinary studies, and were originally contextualised within Latin America and later in Africa and Asia. This scholarship would also generally be studied within the discipline of sociology as these works addressed 'social issues' caused by colonialism and its after-effects on pedagogy, knowledge production and social organisation in colonised societies. Such works included those of Freire (1970), Gramsci (1971), Rodney (1972), Wallerstein (1974), and Said (1978).

Briefly assessing Santos application of the concept in his significant works, we can formulate a general account of its usage among proponents to highlight some concerns around the concept's usage. In Santos's earliest works, Santos would apply the concept epistemicide intuitively, drawing on the internal cognates of epistemicide in both 'epistemology' and 'genocide' and their own particular connotations and conceptual inferences to inform his own usage and application of epistemicide. In an early article entitled, "The Fall of the Angelus Novus: Beyond the Modern Game of Roots and Options" (1998), Santos justifies his application of epistemicide with reference to a novel 'methodological orientation' of 'diatopical hermeneutics' which referred to a socialised epistemological orientation which held the view of a fundamental incompleteness of all cultures as an implicit consequence of their epistemic production and canon which can be said to never be fully complete. After this, Santos engages in a conceptual unpacking of his notion of epistemicide within the parameters of its cognates. By 'designating' or defining "Epistemicide" as "the murder of knowledge" (Santos 103). Santos proceeds to argue that:

Unequal exchanges among cultures have always implied the death of knowledge of the subordinated culture, and hence the death of the social groups that possessed it. In the most extreme cases, as that of European expansion, epistemicide was one of the conditions of genocide.

(Santos 1998: 103)

The concept epistemicide would later come to gain more exposure in the discourse, especially in Santos's 'General Introduction' of the widely cited, multi-volume, co-authored work, '*Reinventing Social Emancipation: Toward New Manifestos*' (2005; 2007). In the introduction to the series, Santos begins by situating this text, and consequently the concept epistemicide,

in the broader context of cognitive justice and what Mario Novelli (2008) notes in their critical review of Santos's work as the, "ongoing analytical, theoretical and epistemological debates surrounding the possibility of the construction of alternative forms of globalisation based on social justice and solidarity" (Novelli 2008).

The concept epistemicide, according to Santos in this introduction, appears as a consequence of two premises or hypotheses that he forwards in support of a theory of 'alternative modernity', which supposedly allows for disenfranchised and marginal groups to fully participate in society. Santos describes these two 'premises' as being 'epistemological' and 'socio-political'. Where the former is most relevant for our present epistemological concerns in the application of epistemicide, the latter relates to empirically verifiable social phenomena which exposes the historical hegemony or unequal exchanges of North-South relations. This is another vector of meaning which Santos subtly builds into his concept. For Santos, the epistemological premise pertains to this account's core thesis that both formal science and social science are undergoing a crisis of 'epistemological confidence'. As a result, according to Santos's analysis of history and modernity, "in the name of science, epistemicide has been committed, and the imperial powers have resorted to it, to disarm any sort of resistance of the conquered peoples and social groups" (Santos xvii).

These claims however fall into the literature of critical de-colonial scholarship proffered against globalised Capitalism, legacies of Western Imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism as well as the epistemic hegemony of Western science on other forms of knowledge production. Interestingly, Santos makes several claims in such formative texts (1995, 1998, 2000, 2005, 2007), in the development of the concept of epistemicide, but remarkably takes them as theoretical givens evidenced by the historical realities of the above processes.

In the third volume of his *Reinventing Social Emancipation*, Santos (2008) attempts to provide a precedent for his claims, where he draws on a significant earlier work in the literature on epistemicide. He states that, "the case of the indigenous peoples of the Americas and of the African slaves, this suppression of knowledge, [was] a form of epistemicide" (Santos xix). Santos indeed attempts to provide a robust conceptualisation of epistemicide potentially satisfying the lacuna of case examples in the literature on epistemicide, but again raises further questions as to whether such events are definitive of the concept or only an account of 'extreme cases' of epistemicide.

From the claims above, we discern the sense in which Santos would generally define the parameters of the concept as broad while retaining an explanatory or hypothetical function as a heuristic. In fact, in future applications of the concept, Santos appears to rely on prior theorisations already proffered in some of the early works addressed above. For instance, when Santos publishes his seminal multi-authored text, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against Epistemicide* (2014), which was originally published in Portuguese in 2010 and later expanded into a three-volume work, Santos reprocesses the exact same account of epistemicide as present in the previously cited article (1998). Thus in Santos's arguably most popular work, responsible for much of the general discourse by non-proponents on epistemicide, a chapter with a revised title of the article appears in the text as, "Another Angelus Novus Beyond the Modern Game of Roots and Options", lending credence to the notion that much of Santos's and other proponents usage of the concept can be traced back to Santos's earliest usages of the concept.

From a brief assessment of the literature on epistemicide, we can thus establish that the concept's typical application is framed within Santos's paradigmatic usage, primarily as a SE heuristic. This is further supported in the work of other authors from the literature who apply the concept based on the parameters defined by Santos, or in reference to another author who has applied the concept within Santos's framework. This includes the works of Knijnik (1997); Ramose (2003; 2019), Baloyi and Ramose (2010); Nyamnjoh (2012), Karnedi (2012), Grosfoguel (2013), Budd and Tandon (2015), Lephakga (2015), Gulson and Fataar (2015), Bordet (2016), Haartlep and Scott (2016), Masaka (2017), Sockbeson (2017), Ololajulo (2018), Mills and Lefrancois (2018), Mukherjee (2019), Ndlovou-Gatsheni (2018; 2020) and Zhao (2020) for instance. Evident, in this pool of literature is the clear absence of any formal epistemologists. In spite of this, there is also a large frequency of theorists who do apply the concept in the context of Africa, and are thinkers within African philosophy such as Dennis Masaka and Mogobe Ramose who are concerned with the concept from a distinctively epistemological standpoint. In fact, it is the application of the concept epistemicide within African philosophy, although severely limited, which lends greater plausibility to the import of epistemicide as a philosophical problem worthy of analysis.

In more recent publications, Santos (2019; 2020) continues to expand the theoretical scope of the concept, applying the concept to various contexts generally framed within his own paradigmatic application accounted for thus far. However, critical assessment of the concept itself by proponents is less prominent in the literature, since most authors within the framework of SE appear to hold similar theoretical commitments and assumptions which are traceable to

Santos's understanding of the term. While critical interventions by Masaka (2017) and Ramose (2019) provide philosophical warrant for epistemicide in their critical and philosophical usage of the concept, proponents generally proffer little to no explicit analysis of the concept itself in the literature.

Nevertheless, a general assessment of its various usages by proponents also suggests a divergence amongst theorists on several issues relating to the concept. Such issues would include whether epistemicide entails genocide or other '-cide' concepts and vice versa? Whether the processes of epistemicide are reversible? What constitutes the 'death' of knowledge and whether 'death' or 'killing' are applied in a biological sense? And finally whether epistemology and knowledge can be conflated and, in this case, could be plausibly held to be reducible to 'knowledge systems' and culture which is theorised as equivalent with epistemology. Furthermore, given Santos's position on culture as constitutive of epistemology, is not epistemicide merely a synonym for 'cultural genocide' which seems to accurately define social groups and the knowledge they contain and practice being erased.

Santos also does not specify how these 'alternative knowledges and sciences' that he contends have been destroyed or disproportionately affected, actually qualify as 'knowledge' or 'science' in the first place, in explicit propositional rather than prescriptive terms. Nevertheless, Santos relies on the thesis of epistemicide to explain why these knowledges have been 'disqualified' and several theoretical interventions in his work such as the 'ecology of knowledge' thesis propose equitable assessment of all epistemological systems whether canonical, formalistic, putative or otherwise.

Thus, a further question could be raised on the parameters of the concept in question, such as a criteria for the conditions in which it can be said that "Epistemicide" occurs, raising further concerns on the limits and appropriate zone of application. It is argued then that an intuitive sense of the concept epistemicide is insufficient to provide the explanatory and ethical force that Santos and other proponents' wish the concept to retain. Thus, a conceptual analysis is proposed to provide a critical assessment of the literature on how various authors have applied the concept. From this point, a rigorous demarcation of the concept, a cogent epistemic background upon which to apply the concept and the construction of a general thesis that makes explicit the intuitive commitments held by a proponent applying the concept can be furnished.

In conclusion, this chapter has attempted to assess the history of the origin and application of the idea epistemicide and its cognates, especially within its relevant and generalised conceptual

domain of namely SE and sociology. Furthermore, in seeking to situate the concept in relation to its implied references and explicitly philosophical and epistemological debates, a brief history of ideas in the literature has been undertaken in reference to analytic philosophy, continental philosophy, African philosophy and epistemological practice around epistemicide. This chapter has also alluded to some of the presumed epistemic systems which are at the heart of the discourse around epistemicide. In order to account for the absence of theoretical application of the term in mainstream or formalistic philosophical debate, this chapter has attempted to show the diverging epistemic concerns that informed its initial conceptualisation by Santos and its under-theorisation in the philosophical literature. Furthermore, it has sought to underscore the importance of the concept in the discourse of African philosophy which provides philosophical warrant to the concepts assessment, in which questions of epistemic erasure have been attended to by thinkers, but without providing a robust account which takes into consideration the serious philosophical, ethical and epistemic implications of something correlative to epistemicide on philosophical and epistemological practice.



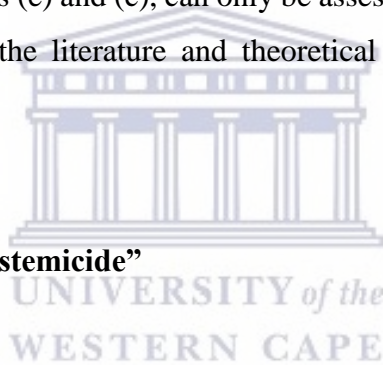
CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS OF “EPISTEMICIDE”

The aim of this chapter is to undertake an analysis in order to determine whether and in what sense the concept “Epistemicide” (E) is plausible and applicable to philosophical and specifically epistemological problems and concerns. The primary method of concept analysis applied in this chapter is a concept-disassembly and combination analysis. This is proposed through an assessment of the concept’s linguistic composition which is achieved by decoupling the term in order to make sense of its more basic parts – ‘episteme’ and ‘-cide’ – independently. As the concept could be intuitively understood as corresponding to some state of affairs relating to ‘the murder of knowledge’, this analysis will explicate the various philosophical and theoretical commitments entailed by the concept’s components and general application. The raw data for this analysis is drawn from instances of direct applications and enumerations of the concept (E) in the literature. Thus, the aim of this concept analysis is twofold. Firstly, to ascertain whether concept (E) is internally coherent at a conceptual level which would provide further philosophical grounding to the claims posited by proponents of (E). Secondly, the central thesis of this chapter seeks to illustrate the coherency of the concept (E), beyond its intuitive application and diverse application. This analysis will therefore provide the necessary analytic and epistemological resources to develop a cogent “Epistemicide Thesis”, as presented in the subsequent chapter.

Preliminary Analysis

When confronting Santos’s (1995) application of the concept (E) we can begin by disassembling its linguistic components into its meaningful constituent parts so as to infer what the concept would most likely mean or refer to in a general sense. Therefore, “Epistemicide” (E), conceptually disjoined, yields ‘epistemi’ (e) and ‘cide’ (c). Let (e) stand for ‘epistemi-’, which designates a general neutral sense of the concept, ‘epistemology’, as a theory of knowledge; and let (c) stand for ‘-cide’ or the Latin word-forming element meaning ‘killer’ drawn from the Latin, ‘-cidium’, meaning ‘a cutting’ or ‘a killing’, usually applied to a large or inestimable number of things which can be terminated.

It therefore follows that, given the apparent denotative entailment of both (e) and (c), we can understand each to be independently functioning concepts holistically aggregated by (E). Thus (e) would generally be understood to refer to ‘epistemology’ or ‘episteme’ which usually entails theories of knowledge and knowledge systems and are generally conflated; while (c) is expressed in terms that relate to ‘killing’ but also to ‘death’ and the more intentionally connotative term in ‘murder’. If we take (E) to be strongly related to other concepts with ‘-cide’ endings such as ‘homicide’, ‘genocide’ and ‘pesticide’, we would generally defer to the ‘murder’ or ‘killing’ concepts, with the former carrying a greater moral force in this case. Thus (e) and (c) stand as primary representations of the concept-domain of “Epistemicide”, and, if analytically consistent, the concept ought to contain inherent properties which render something like ‘truth’ or ‘new knowledge’, which would have epistemic significance and philosophical import. We thus begin our analysis an intuitive sense of (E) which could also be constructed in the reductive designation of (E) as, “the murder of knowledge’. However, this intuitive sense of (E) and its parts (e) and (c), can only be assessed in light of the evidence – or applications of the concept in the literature and theoretical discourse from its first usage onwards.



Analysis of ‘episteme-’ in “Epistemicide”

We should thus proceed with assessing the literature to establish what proponents of (E) actually mean by the concept and its parts to establish evidence-based framework for assessing the concept’s coherency. Let us take Santos’s (1995) original theorisation of the concept (E) as well as his paradigmatic and most cited definition of the concept (2014), as the starting points of our analysis:

(U1) Alternative modes of conceiving regulation and emancipation in Europe and elsewhere were thereby discredited, both by destruction of knowledges upon which they were grounded (by epistemicide, that is) and by the oppression and, in extreme cases, genocide of the social groups whose practices sustained such knowledges. (Santos 1995: 570)

(U₂) I designate *epistemicide* the murder of knowledge [...] Unequal exchanges among cultures have always implied the death of the knowledge of the subordinated culture, hence the death of the social groups that possessed it. In the most extreme cases, such as that of European expansion, epistemicide was one of the conditions of genocide. (Santos 2014: 92)

From analysis of (U₁) we can immediately begin enumerating the entailments of knowledge in (e) relative to its functioning within the broader concept (E). In this application, we note the use of the non-standard pluralised ‘knowledges’ as opposed to formalistic and perhaps monist definitions of ‘knowledge’, confirms that, for Santos, a pluralistic account of knowledge is functioning within (e) and therefore (E). The character of this knowledge, expressed by Santos, is defined by the, ‘social groups whose practices sustained such knowledges’, indicating that in the first application of the term (E), the in-built account of knowledge or (e) was conceived of as fundamentally ‘social’. This is significant as ‘knowledge’ is defined by its social properties and expresses an SE account of knowledge which, in the case of (E), is not generally reducible to propositional knowledge but rather a broader account of knowledge; as evident in pluralistic epistemic praxis outlined by Kurzman (273).

From an assessment of (U₂), Santos superficially appears to conversely apply a formalistic sense of knowledge. However, from the gamut of Santos’s applications of (E), as assessed below – as well as his sociological orientation toward ‘knowledge’ – ‘knowledges’ in fact entails formalistic accounts of ‘knowledge’ as well as the ‘alternative knowledges’ or ‘non-scientific knowledges’ which Santos (2007; 2014) seeks to argue has primarily been the victim of (E).

We should thus assess the epistemological strength of Santos’s (2014) twin ‘sociology of knowledge’ theses behind the application of (E) in (U₁) and (U₂), alongside ethnoepistemologist James Maffie’s framework, which is discussed below. For Santos’s the two theses being the, ‘ecologies of knowledge’ thesis and ‘epistemologies of the South’ thesis, ultimately seeks the politically egalitarian imperative of ‘knowledge democracy’ within epistemic praxis, and therefore acts as a response to resolving and averting future cases of (E). Therefore, (e) on Santos’s usage, designates ‘scientific’, ‘marginalised’, ‘alternative’ and ‘non-scientific knowledges’, as Santos defines them, to be considered as ‘epistemological’ collectively, with each concurrently retaining an independent epistemic character. The ‘ecologies of knowledge’ thesis for instance, provides Santos’s epistemological framing of the

aforementioned. This thesis, which Santos derives from the sociology of knowledge paradigm, addresses issues related to Fricker's concern of 'epistemic injustice' through 'democratising' epistemology by way of naturalistic and epistemic terms drawn from environmental, historical, political, philosophical and sociological assessments and theorisations.(Santos 188-206).

It should also be remarked that (e), as seen above, is theorised from the framework of SE and this is further evidenced when Santos, in discussing his thesis, affirms an account of (e) predicated on, "the post-Kuhnian approach, developed in the North, and postcolonial studies, mostly carried out in the global South" (198).

For Santos then, these SE approaches to knowledge, are characterised by their epistemic pluralism and emphasis on the 'social'. These approaches hold that all valid systems of knowledge including formal epistemological theories are systems of 'local knowledge' while positing a theory of knowledge expressed in the following socialised epistemological terms:

[T]hat the subject of scientific knowledge, far from being an abstract, homogeneous, culturally indifferent subject, is rather a very diversified set of subjects, with different histories, trajectories, and cultures and producing scientific knowledge having equally diversified objectives (Santos 2014: 198).

Therefore, to understand how 'episteme' (e) in the concept (E) operates, as above, we should look to the domain of SE, where pluralistic knowledge frameworks are theorised by social epistemologists. One such epistemologist Maffie (2005), theorising outside of the literature on epistemicide, but writing primarily within the domain of SE and the fields of indigenous knowledge philosophy, sets out an epistemic framework which makes explicit, the implicit claims posited on the nature of (e) by Santos thus far. Maffie (2005) submits a set of broad and explicit theoretical commitments on his account of a social epistemic framework, which appear to express the significant but under-theorised philosophical and epistemological accounts of (e) in the surveyed applications of (E). For instance, Maffie's framework places epistemological significance on leaving *a posteriori* questions open on the nature and aims of knowledge and epistemology, as well as arguing that the question of unity and relativism should be settled in a similar fashion. These epistemological claims, present in Santos's work, albeit implicitly, thus enters putative and non-formal systems into the general epistemic discourse by holding the formal epistemic criterion for propositional knowledge and monist or foundationalist epistemological accounts as secondary to present and essential epistemic concerns (Maffie 2005).

Thus, one may argue that the (SE) framework captures the epistemic claims expressed in (U1) and (U2) and in its commitments to ‘knowledge’ in the sense of its entailment by plural ‘knowledges’. For the epistemic claim to be valid in (e) however, applications of (E) would generally be corroborating a knowledge-claim which can be formulated as the follows: ‘in any application of (E), there is a valid correlation to a state of affairs as defined by (E), as proven with necessary warrant or evidence’. The question of the plausibility of ‘knowledges’ or (e) is consequently affirmed, if the claim by which (E) is made, is also valid. This would be achieved without regress into questions of relativism in the entailment of formal epistemologies and propositional knowledge alongside pluralistic and socialised accounts of knowledge and its production. This is especially significant, when read in line with Santos (2007) and Fricker’s (2007) twin intuitions of ‘cognitive justice’ and ‘epistemic injustice’, where the superficial absence of propositional or formal accounts appear as not explicitly ‘epistemic’ to observers’ intuitions and as a consequence alternative knowledge systems are denied epistemic status in an unjust or unfair manner (Fricker 2007).

While neither SE, nor the ecologies of knowledge thesis are fundamental to the concept (E), these ‘socialised’, ‘pluralistic’ and ‘non-essentialised’ features of (e) as expressed by the concept as deployed by Santos thus far appears as fundamental to its ‘epistemic’ sense. However, Santos’s sense of (e) can indeed be further explicated by the ecologies of knowledge thesis and other SE frameworks, as seen in the usages of (E) below:

(U3) From different angles and perspectives I tried to show how dominant epistemologies have resulted in a massive waste of social experience and, particularly, in the massive destruction of ways of knowing that did not fit the dominant epistemological canon. This destruction I call epistemicide. On the other side, I defined the main traits of the epistemologies of the South as ways of knowing born in the struggle against capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy. Such concepts as the sociology of absences, the sociology of emergences, ecologies of knowledges, and intercultural translation were central to this endeavor. (Santos, 2014: 238)

(U4) [T]he epistemologies of the South start from two premises: (1) the understanding of the world by far exceeds the Western understanding of the world; and (2) the cognitive experience of the world is extremely diverse, and the absolute priority given to modern science has entailed a massive

epistemicide (the destruction of rival knowledges deemed to be nonscientific) that now calls for reparation. (Santos 2014: 296).

Without enumerating on the various frameworks, theories and ‘epistemologies’ Santos posits, it is clear that the SE account is indeed consistent with the notion of ‘knowledge production’ in the social sciences and informs Santos’s sense of (e). Maffie, like Santos, also conceives of traditionally ‘non-scientific’ knowledges as being part of epistemological praxis. In (U3) ‘knowledge’ or ‘ways of knowing’ are pluralistic and relate to both putative and formal systems that hold ‘knowledge’ as the end of their practice and therefore participate in epistemology as already stated above. It argues that due to a historical legacy and the contemporary politics relative to (E), other epistemic systems that were and are being denied from the status of epistemology or (e), are therefore, as a consequence, being erased or undergoing (c). Furthermore, (U3) broadly construed, affirms that the SE frameworks and theories do account for pluralistic knowledges and ‘ways of knowing’ which are central in comprehending Santos’s two theses, his notion of (e) and therefore the general concept (E). The cognitive justice condition, intrinsic to the functioning of knowledge condition in (e) as apparent in (U4), furthermore, posits an epistemologically significant theory of cognition which explains the relationship between the mind and knowledge, fundamental to any epistemological account, explained in further detail, in the succeeding chapter.

Evidence of this account of knowledge and epistemology related to a ‘thick’ or wide conception of epistemology as in ‘Epistemologies of the South’, is also present in other theorists in the literature on epistemicide, and is a central point of contention in the North-South debate. If we use the domains of African education and philosophy as well as experimental linguistics in the literature on epistemicide as further examples, we are presented with a similar account of epistemological pluralism for (e). This further shows that implicit to instantiations of (E), are a set of prescriptive claims that appear to follow from the imperatives of cognitive justice and epistemic injustice which are also contained in proponents’ sense of (e), as evidently addressed in the claims below:

(U5): The reversal of epistemicide will inevitably undermine existing dominant interests and challenge the citadel of western paradigms and scientific epistemologies of knowledge. Hence we should expect processes of circumscribing and pre-empting the entry into discourse of indigenous African epistemology. (Lebakeng et al. 2006: 74)

(U6): In this light, epistemicide becomes part of the hegemonic group's strategy to deny the humanity of the dominated group. But the realization of attempts by the dominant cultures to destroy the knowledge paradigm of the dominated people precedes de Sousa Santos's (2005) naming of this practice as such (Hountondji, 1990; Taiwo, 1993). (Masaka 2018: 287)

(U7): The interlinguistic transfer of metaphor can thus be claimed as a revealing marker of potential domain loss or epistemicide through the erosion of local specialized culture, or the creation of cultural gaps. (Bordet 2016: 3)

It appears then that theorists' general sense of (e), is on one hand, itself, denied by the conceptual entailment of (E), where (e) undergoes a process of (c). However, on the other hand, and at a prior stage, (e) is also affirmed by the fact that knowledge and epistemology are understood within a broader, pluralistic, SE framework. Hence, for the very fact that (E) does exist, this further affirms the pluralistic status of (e), in the same way that genocide affirms ethnic, socio-cultural or religious difference. Thus, (U5) and (U6) both affirm the concepts of knowledge diversity and cognitive or epistemic justice as addressed through their application of (E). There is also a significant epistemic claim expressed in (U6), which draws a correlation between the observation of processes of (E) on (e) as well the discipline of epistemology itself, where Masaka (2018) holds that literature in African philosophy, attest to similar states of affairs in (E), prior to the concept's original application. This argument shows that theorists and philosophers attempted to respond to a state of the affairs which lacked a relevant concept to explain an observed phenomenon. Consequently, these findings further strengthens the general epistemological claim being made by proponents of (E) in the history of ideas.

If we address the way in which knowledge or epistemology is conceptualised in (U5) and (U6), we find that these concepts are not theorised in the 'value-free' or 'culturally-neutral' manner which formal epistemic praxis implies can be retained. Rather, it intentionally implicates, 'provincializes', 'localises' and identifies signifiers of ownership related to knowledge or

epistemic production which are otherwise considered as universal, publically accessible and independently verifiable, as general philosophical givens. If we assess, as in (U5), the terms applied by Lebakeng et al. (2006) related to (e) such as ‘dominant’, ‘western’, ‘scientific’, and ‘indigenous African’ which are all descriptive categories and identifiers, it appears that these knowledges are theorised as possessed, owned or strongly connected to people of a particular region and origination, social status, methodological orientation or ‘life-world’ occupation. This account of knowledge, which is corroborated in SE accounts, further establishes, in the midst of ethical and prescriptive claims, a set of metaphysical intuitions on knowledge on (e) most visible in (U6).

These metaphysical claims relate to the nature of knowledge and therefore (e) as proponents of (E) apply the concept. It thus underlies the fundamental ‘social’ nature of knowledge on an SE account, where knowledge is defined by those who group together around a particular object, theory or practice of knowledge and whose identity consequently becomes inextricably bound up with that knowledge or knowledge production. Therefore, knowledge can be defined by its social genesis and its social impact in comparison to other knowledge systems and is therefore not exempt from human agency which primarily obtains in the social world through variables such as political power, social marginalisation as well as bias or prejudice. In (U6), the applications of terms such as the ‘hegemonic group’, ‘dominated group’, ‘dominant cultures’ and ‘knowledge paradigm’, furnishes additional evidence supporting an SE theory of knowledge in-built into proponents’ usage of (E) as well as their sense of (e).

On this picture, ‘knowledge’ is analysed by its social origin and functioning, where Kuhnian ‘paradigms’ can become or are theorised as inherently ‘hegemonic’. This is achieved through an analysis of the general historical record or the history of ideas. Herein, ‘dominant’ and ‘dominated’ knowledge systems are constructed through their power relations and the identification of their processes of non-epistemic but distinctly political or social means of disenfranchisement, as studied in postcolonial theory. The upshot of this hypothesis however, is that these ‘knowledge’ systems are at the mercy of the members of its ‘groups’ which Masaka alludes to, suggesting that (e) functions less like a strictly formal scientific system and more so like that of a Kuhnian ‘paradigm’ or even a ‘culture’. The underlying metaphysical claim for (e) therefore holds significant implications for knowledge and epistemology, as paradigms or cultures, which can be assessed as ‘ways of being’, appear parallel to Santos’s ‘ways of knowing’. This theoretical commitment appears to posit the claim that cultural plurality infers

epistemic plurality, which we have already noted, is at the core of Santos's 'ecology of knowledge' thesis.

In (U7), Geneviève Bordet theorising (E) from the field of linguistics, relates (e) to 'domain', and thus when reference is made to 'domain loss', a parallel claim of (E) is made by Bordet, but from the framework and analytical terminology of applied and experimental linguistics. Bordet like Santos and other proponents therefore do not appear to solely mean propositional knowledge by (e), although it could be conceivably entailed, since Bordet references (E) and its effect on the knowledge of language which is a prerequisite to any propositional formulation of knowledge. Since languages are fundamentally pluralistic, the knowledge of language as forming part of 'language families' is evidentially pluralistic, notwithstanding the universal grammar (UG) thesis and the Sapir-Whorf hypotheses. Therefore, Bordet's application of 'domain' further substantiates the entailment of culture and other social processes in a general sense. However, for Bordet and linguists, 'domain', applies more formally, to epistemic demarcations of a particular knowledge systems. While 'domain loss' in its most extreme form in linguistics reflects another '-cide' concept in linguistics being 'linguicide' or the 'death of languages'. Linguicide, would conceivably also lead to the death of meaning which is epistemologically relevant and provides credence to assertion that for proponents of (E), where the most extreme form of loss of (e) within any disciplinary or non-disciplinary domain, is conceivably entailed by (E).

From further assessment of (U7), what undergoes 'domain loss' is in some sense (e), which in linguistics, defines the inability to communicate in a language on all the levels of 'Language use for Specific Purposes' (LSP). Therefore, (E) or 'domain loss' for Bordet as a linguist, would follow from a lack of access to or the development of, necessary and sufficient LSP resources, which as a result, leads to a loss of 'domain' in language-based communication or information transfer. Thus 'domain loss', in its most 'extreme form' in linguistics is 'linguicide' which is equivalent with (E). This expresses the implicit claim in the concept (E) that, 'episteme' (e) entails 'lingui-' or 'language' as a subset of what is constituted by (e). As 'culture' and 'language' are generally inextricable in social analysis, these concepts seem to be also entailed as forms of (e), by proponents of (E).

Thus, erasure of culture and language as forms of (e) are therefore occasioned by (e) in proponents application of (E). The usages of the concept in (U6), (U7) and even (U4) reflect in their sense of (e) that the underlying concept of 'knowledge' forwards a metaphysical claim

that there is a functioning ‘cultural’ pre-condition for any instantiation (e) to exist. This account of ‘knowledge’ or ‘epistemology’ then, is consistent with SE’s centrality of the ‘social’ in the construction and functioning of epistemology or (e).

When Santos (2014) provides a theoretical account of his ecologies of knowledge thesis, he includes a significant section entitled, ‘Relativizing the Distinction between the Internal and External Plurality of Knowledges: The Case of African Philosophy’. This section further circumscribes (e) as entailing both externalist and internalist accounts of knowledge in spite of their antithesis in formal epistemology – an entailment in line with Santos’s cross-cultural aims. Herein, Santos conceives of ‘knowledge diversity’ as intrinsic to his notion of (e), taking up the major debate in African philosophy on the nature and character of African philosophy in relation to Western philosophy on the question of ‘difference’ implied by the use of ‘African’ as a qualifier of philosophical activity. Additionally, Santos enquires into the possibility of inter-cultural dialogue and whether (e) can therefore obtain through diversity or plurality. Santos, in this section affirms this, with examples of the theories of two seminal professional African philosophers, Kwasi Wiredu and Odera Oruka (Santos 202-205), who serve as exemplars of cross-cultural philosophy and the independent epistemic character of African as opposed to the dominant tradition of formal Western philosophy, on Santos’s account.

Therefore we may conclude this section with reference to the sample of the cited usages of (E), in particular respect to (e), by which, we are provided with positive evidence of a generalizable epistemic application of (E) within the framework of SE. Furthermore, we have good reason to hold that proponents of the concept (E) theorise (e) with various SE theoretical frameworks, in which the distinct and often opposing concepts, paradigms and theories of ‘knowledge’ and ‘epistemology’ are interchangeably understood as operating in (e). What is considered as a condition for (e) then, is the implicit epistemic claim that: given the plurality of culture and language among human groups in the social world, knowledge should also be pluralistic. Furthermore, it is held that those groups operating in a social world who engage in ‘knowledge production’ are consequently identified by their grouping or locus as well as the knowledge they produce such as ‘African philosophy’ or ‘Indigenous knowledge systems’ which are most comfortably accounted for by the SE framework.

Analysis of ‘-cide’ in “Epistemicide”

Turning to (c), we should ask, when proponents apply (E), and appear to intuitively posit the claim that ‘knowledge’ can be ‘murdered’ – i.e., is subjected to something comparable to intentional processes which ultimately lead to physical “death” – what is the philosophical entailment of this position, as apparent from the literature? Of equal significance is the concerns of whether (c) in (E), includes all of the features of physical death, e.g., the cessation of an existing substance, erasure, irreversible and permanent loss. We should also want to know whether the concept (E) is subordinated to the concept ‘genocide’ or other ‘-cide’ concepts and must therefore entail intentionality in each case of its application? The aim then is to underline the instantiations of the extensions of ‘murder’ and ‘death’ according to proponents of (E), when they apply the term (E). After establishing this evidence, we can articulate a relationship between (e) and (c) where we can address whether theorists of (E) actually hold that knowledge is permanently and irreversibly destroyed through (E), whether some kind of intentionality is involved, and whether it is the case that what ‘dies’ is a thing like a substance or rather the death or end of an epistemic system, process or grouping described analogically.

Beginning with Santos’s paradigmatic applications of (E), in (U1) and (U2) we have what appears to be contrasting senses of (c) in nuanced terms. In the latter usage and application of (c), a superficial analysis proposes that Santos’s use and understanding of ‘-cide’ in relation to (E) suggests intentionality. This is significant as (U2), which is taken from the most widely cited and authoritative text on the concept in the literature (Santos 2014), holding that (E) by virtue of (c) would refer to the intentional destruction or killing of groups leading ultimately to ‘death’. This line of reasoning may be argued because Santos applies the term ‘murder’ in stating the, ‘murder of knowledge’ as opposed to ‘the ‘death’ of knowledge’, in this case. This would assume that ‘death’, in this case, appears as a consequence of ‘murder’. Of course, the term ‘death’ does not indicate explicit intention nor does it contextualise or describe the nature of the thing upon which the incident of ‘death’ is occurring.

Analysis on (U2) thus far seems to suggest for Santos, in the very definition of the concept, that when genocide occurs it is typically accompanied by a prior state of affairs defined by (E). On this account, from a superficial reading of the function of (c) in the concept (E), one may hold that it is only possible for (E) to occur when there has been a genocide event, which further secures evidence of (E)’s existence based on the pervasiveness of the widely studied notion of

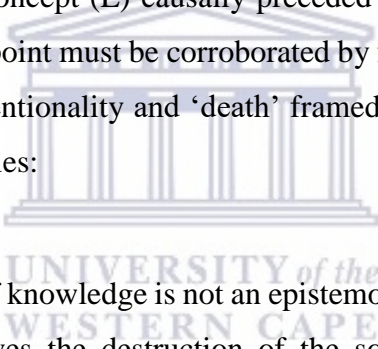
genocide. This application would therefore be consistent with the usage and connotation of 'murder' in (U2) of (c) and establishes a strong conceptual relation between (E) and the intentional termination of a group of people.

However, returning to (U1) we have evidence to the contrary that shows that the intuitive genocide criterion appears less pertinent, when taken in the broader context of the statements in which the concept is conceptualised. It appears that genocide, less than being necessary or sufficient for (E) to occur, is dependent on a conditional state of affairs whereby Santos applies the qualifying phrase, 'in extreme cases'. This suggests that in this causal nexus, in the social world, genocide as entailed by (E) or even in the processes of (c) is the exception and not the rule. In spite of these findings, the applications analysed establishes an evidence-based intuition about the concept (E), whereby genocide has a strong conceptual relation to (c) in (E), as discernable in the shared '-cide' element. The strong relation between the concepts provides evidence that one sense of (c) in the concept (E) relates to actual physical genocide of people as a condition of fulfilment of (E).

In (U1), like (U2), Santos delineates the conditions in which (E) through the function of (c) is concomitant with genocide. For Santos, this could either be fulfilled by an episteme being 'discredited', as well as undergoing 'destruction' and 'oppression' in (U1), while in (U2), 'murder', 'death' and subordination would account for the sense of (c). A simple analysis of the terms related to the function of the (c) in these applications of (E), lend credence to the idea that intentionality and non-intentionality are simultaneously being accounted for (c) in the concept (E). To illustrate this point, we could note that 'murder' and 'death' refer to divergent understandings of intentionality and culpability. In this case, 'death' is an inevitable biological process and a natural phenomenon that can be said to occur 'naturally', that is, without any intentional actor causing this state of affairs. Although 'death' can be conceivably caused by both an intentional and an indirect cause, there is generally no explicit entailment of intentionality in the notion of 'death'. Whereas 'murder' like 'genocide' are concepts emanating from ethical or moral observations of the social world which define a state of affairs occasioned by culpable actors and agents who possess intentionality. Other terms like 'subordinate', 'discredited', and 'oppression' also contained in the sense of (c) suggests for proponents that (c) occupies a spectrum between the neutral 'death' processes and the intentional and culpable 'murder' processes.

In light of these somewhat irreconcilable findings relating to intentionality of (c), this may lend greater credence to an independent conceptual status of (c) from the concept genocide and other ‘-cide’ concepts which would entail Santos’s prima facie sense of (c) in (E), as in ‘murder’ or ‘killing’. We may want to hold this position, since notions like ‘subordinate’ and ‘discredited’ relating to (e) as well as ‘oppression’, refers to distinct processes ranging from intentional and indirect forms of erasure to direct non-lethal processes erasure, which consist of a wider set of processes accounted for than an intuitive sense of (c).

These ‘wider processes’ however, as assessed in (U1) and (U2), cannot be conceptualised outside of the actual persons affected by (c) relative to (e) for Santos and some proponents. As clearly expressed by Santos, (c) is understood to be directly linked to social groups or its members, which are constituted by identity with their epistemic production or heritage (e), and are thus affected by (E) in ways that render (e) ‘destroyed’ or ‘oppressed’. For Santos, it appears in his initial theorisations of (E), (c) functioned in such a way that it conditionally designated that only in extreme cases the concept (E) causally preceded genocide and was conceivably occasioned by it. However, this point must be corroborated by further usages of the concept so as to work out the degree of intentionality and ‘death’ framed by (c) in a clearer sense. Here we can cite the following examples:



(U8): The destruction of knowledge is not an epistemological artifact without consequences. It involves the destruction of the social practices and the disqualification of the social agents that operate according to such knowledges. In mainstream economics the particular intensity of the significant spectator has imposed an especially arrogant single view, and, as a consequence, the epistemicide has been broader and deeper. (Santos 2014: 153)

(U9): [Epistemicide refers to] the decimation or near complete killing and replacement of endogenous epistemologies with the epistemological paradigm of the conqueror. (Nyamnjoh 2012: 130)

In (U8) as further explication of our understanding of how (E) functions, we note again that Santos’s notion of “epistemological artefact” is theorised within the SE framework and therefore relates to the social world in which (c) as ‘the destruction of knowledge’ is

conceptualised to be operating in. Since (e) is theorised as a non-artefact, the temporality constraint on the concept is detached and Santos, like other proponents, conceive of (E) especially in its destructive functions contained in (c), as being observable and definable in the past and present as well as in the future. In this case relative to processes of erasure contained in (c), (E) like the concept genocide, share a similar empirical basis, whereby particular conditions occasion the existence of the phenomenon in question. In (U8), Santos clearly affirms the necessity of ‘social agents’ as the main agents and victims of (E) through the effects of (c) on (e) but clearly expresses this in a graded sense by use of both terms ‘destruction’ and ‘disqualification’ in his account of (E) as conditions which are supposed to satisfy the sense of (c) in (E).

This graded or spectrum-based approach to intentionality and degree of destruction is clearly shown in Santos’s example of ‘mainstream economics’ in (U8) as an instance of (E) – where the term ‘mainstream’ is interchangeable with the earlier ‘dominant’, ‘western’ and ‘hegemonic’ terms, while ‘economics’ would be substitutable with ‘epistemology’. Here, Santos identifies a particular approach to knowledge or epistemology defined by a ‘significant spectator’ who conceivably holds social, cultural and economic power or influence to impose their will on how economics functions and what can be considered ‘economic’. It is not clear from the above that (c) as in its root sense ‘killing’ is captured by this extrapolation. This, once again moves us away from any direct sense of physical or object death. However, economic decisions may have impacts that occasion indirect causes of ‘murder’ and ‘death’, as in the case of post-colonial Africa’s ‘structural adjustment programmes’ which lead to severe famine, shortages and lack of basic facilities in some countries.

Herein, one may suggest that economic decisions which lead to loss of local industries can also mean ‘death’ of local knowledge systems as shown in a parallel case of local industry in India by Mukherjee (2019) in the literature on epistemicide. Therefore, Santos appears to apply as a trained sociologist, C. Mills’ (1959) idea of the ‘sociological imagination’, through which we can come to understand how seemingly non-epistemic factors such as ‘economic decisions’ effected by legislation and policy can have far-reaching ramifications on the producers or groups who sustain knowledge systems. On this picture, ‘economic decisions’ can therefore relate to (E) and constitute a form of (c) which entails something like Fricker’s (2007) second form of epistemic injustice in the concept of hermeneutical injustice, which at the level of discourse occurs at a prior stage, “when a gap in collective interpretive resources puts someone

at an unfair disadvantage when it comes to making sense of their social experiences” (Fricker 1).

If we assess (U9) and the application of (E) relative to the function of (c), we note that the term ‘killing’ should connote, as Santos usage of (E) in (U2), intentionality. However, Santos so far appears to suggest that ‘killing’ occurs in degrees which is unlike our concept of ‘physical death’ by murder and appears closer to ‘death’ in a figurative, connotative or theoretical sense, which again suggests a graded or spectral approach to the question of (c) for proponents of the concept. To further illustrate this point, in (U9) the component (c) is conceived of as ‘decimation’ which connotes ‘extinction’ would be on one end of the spectrum while the ‘near complete killing’ which connotes ‘near-extinction’ or ‘endangerment’ would be somewhere in the middle.

In (U8), there is the noteworthy application of term ‘disqualification’ as one sense of (c), a process which can conceivably be reversed and would arguably be only indirectly related to death. This application would be at the other end of the spectrum of (c) as somewhat reversible and contingent. Unlike Santos’s (1995; 2014) ‘murder’ account of (c), both Santos himself and Francis Nyamnjoh appear not to require actual ‘murder’, ‘killing’ or any kind of denotative process of ‘death’ for (E) to occur. Rather, as seen above, proponents’ applications identifies explicit cases of (c) through intentional acts of ‘decimation’ like genocide or ‘disqualification’ of (e), as further evidence of the existence of (E).

When Bordet in (U7), applies the theoretical term “domain loss” from the field of linguistics relative to (E), it is clear that our concept (c) can be further expanded to other ‘-cide’ concepts relating to knowledge as Bordet does with linguistic knowledge. Moreover, the use of ‘loss’ and ‘erosion’ point to something less like physical death, and that for (E) to obtain, neither ‘social agents’ nor groups need to be physically obliterated for (E) to occur. The notion of ‘domain loss’ is thus congruent with one of the senses in which (E) is applied indirectly by proponents. However, by concurrently applying (E) alongside ‘domain loss’ as the latter acting as evidence to the former, Bordet signals the significance of the ‘extreme case’ in which domain loss occurs, which would be far more accurately captured by an extreme form of domain loss in linguicide. Linguicide accounts for the processes that leads to the consequent state of a sudden irretrievable loss of an intangible epistemic property in ‘language’, which can be regarded as a kind of knowledge. This would also extend to all the necessary ‘resources’ for retaining, producing and communicating said ‘knowledge’. However, for Bordet, all that is

necessary for 'domain loss' to occur are the processes which occasion 'cultural gaps' in the creation and sustaining of domains of knowledge conceived of as pluralistic 'knowledges'.

Although '-cide' concepts like linguicide and (E) appear as a secondary derivations of genocide, it appears, from additional analysis, that (c) and concepts like linguicide do not function like the genocide concept and are thus distinct. It also appears then that genocide need not be the master concept to retain the fullest expression of (c) whereby other '-cide' concepts' are said to derive their principle meaning from as argued by Shaw (2015). We can then infer from the relation between (c) and (e) in (E), which aggregates a specific subset of those '-cide' concepts that specifically designate cognitive or epistemologically relevant categories like linguicide or ethnocide, as equivalent to processes of mass erasure or death contained in the concept (E). This underlines the fact that other '-cide' concepts, outside of the literature, which relate to the cognitive and epistemic possessions of social agents are also potentially entailed by the concept (E).

Hence, proponents' use of (c) need not hold that genocide occur as a consequence of (E), but that an instantiation of each event raises the likelihood of the other occurring, since both direct and indirect ramifications of historical and contemporary processes on knowledge systems are broadly assessed. In the literature, this is additionally confirmed in Ndlovu-Gatsheni's (2020) application of (E), where (E), linguicide and genocide are applied concurrently but as distinct concepts. In fact, the usages of (E), infers through (e) that 'language' is a kind of 'knowledge' and can therefore undergo processes of (c) which would equally fulfil the general intension of the concept (E).

Four case studies proffered by Ramon Grosfoguel (2014) in the literature as examples of (E) can provide further evidence to the complexity of concept's component (c), especially relating to intentionality and severity. Grosfoguel identifies four examples of (E) in the 16th century in the historical events in the conquest of Al-Andalusia and subsequent 'epistemicide' of Jews and Muslims, the enslavement of Africans in the Americas, the genocide in the New World and the killing of millions of 'Indo-European' women who were burned alive during the witch-hunts in Europe. For each of these cases, the process of (c) ranged from physical genocide of groups such as that of the New World conquests and witch-hunt cases to other theorised forms of (c) in enslavement or forced imprisonment and the burning of books and pillaging of libraries and artefacts as in the Al-Andalusia case. While the Al-Andalusia case does appeal to an intuitive sense of (E) and the processes of erasure in (c), it would be incorrect to presume the

former cases do not fall into the 'extreme cases' bracket in Santos's application of (E) and consequently do not constitute forms of (E), as the implied ramifications of such cases where mass erasure is taking place. Once again this further supports an expanded approach to processes of (c) or erasure of knowledge conceptualised in (E)

We should therefore express the spectrum of 'intentionality' and 'death' as entailed by usages of (E) to summarise the findings on the meanings accorded to (c) by theorists thus far. Along with these variables another variable captured by this graded approach to (c) is the mutable manner in which proponents conceive of the irreversible to reversible loss of (e) in the processes of (c), which gives further indication of an expanded notion of 'death', 'killing' or 'murder' in (E).

On one end of the spectrum then, we have an account of (c) that is characterised by instances of 'extreme cases', as in the account of (E) and (c) in (U1), (U2) and (U9) respectively. On these usages, the notion of (c), while sustaining an expanded theoretical interpretation of 'death', most explicitly, refers to physical death in the sense of the mass killing of actual people as connoted by other 'murder' concepts like 'genocide' and 'homicide'. This can be read in proponents application of (E) in terms like 'decimation', 'destruction' and 'murder' which express mortal termination in terms of 'physical death'. The loss of (e) is thus irretrievable and the processes of (c) becomes irreversible.

This account of 'killing' or 'murder' of (e), would be, for theorists, extend to intentional erasure or 'physical death' of 'social agents'. This is seen in (U1), (U2) and (U8), where groups that are targeted for erasure carry 'alternative', 'indigenous', endogenous' or 'dominated' knowledge frameworks, and therefore undergo (E) by the intentional actions of morally responsible groups or agents (c) beholden to 'dominant' forms of (e). This notion of (c) could also be conceived of in other forms of intentional 'destruction' not captured in the intuitive senses of '-cide' concepts or in the uses of (c) by proponents. This is apparent in terms like, 'replacement' of (e), as theorised by Nyamnjoh in (U8), where the indigenous (e) no longer exists due to 'dominant' forms of (e) taking their place. At this level, the benchmark of intentionality is clear, as with much of the usages of (E), however, insofar as (c) refers both to 'murder' and 'death', with the former applied in a moralistic and the latter in a denotative sense, it sets apart this conceptualisation of (c) from other uses. In other words, at this end of the spectrum (c) and (E) are theorised as holding equal gravitas to that of genocide as affirmed by theorists working in the U.N., from the literature on epistemicide (Hall and Tandon 2017).

In the middle of the spectrum we have (c) conceived of in hypothetical terms. That is, through an evidence-based assessment of the indirect or direct processes of ‘domain loss’ or the creation of ‘cultural gaps’ which are characterised by both intentional and non-intentional processes overlapping (E) necessitated by (c). A historical example that captures the concept of a combination of direct and indirect processes are the overlapping historical events of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, Colonialism and poverty in modern post-colonial Africa, for example. At this level however, (c) is theorised for some proponents to operate in the ‘processes’ of erasure which are combinations of either/or cases in regard to benchmarks of (c) in degree of destruction and ‘intentionality’ based on available empirical evidence.

As in (U7), ‘death’ has a theoretical function to explain the loss of the knowledge of language through translation which has been caused by either ‘erosion’, agentive ‘creation of cultural gaps’ or a combination of both. If we assess our example of overlapping processes in Africa relative to (E), we could hold that slavery and colonialism clearly led to (E) insofar as a dominant episteme forcefully prevented and still prevents Africans, formerly colonised or oppressed groups in the present-day, from equitable opportunities to ‘create’ their domains in an uninterrupted fashion. However, the question of direct or indirect intention becomes complicated in relation to post-colonial poverty in Africa, and on such understandings of (c) by proponents can only be settled after an assessment of empirical evidence, such as in the case of overlapping contemporary and historical processes where instances of ‘murder’ or ‘death’ are occurring with successive events and must therefore be clearly distinguished.

This hypothetical rendering of (c) where the claim is only established after analysis of evidence, is in fact found in other empirically oriented studies in the literature on epistemicide such as Karnedi (2012), Bennet (2014; 2017), Mukherjee (2019) and Zhao (2020), for instance. For these proponents, who seek to work out the ‘processes’ of (c) and (E), they generally affirm a hypothetical stance in regard to (c). This is generally consistent with sociologists studying genocide, who refrain from designating events as genocide events without prior evidence or the meeting of particular conceptual and empirical criteria for an instance of genocide to truthfully asserted (Shaw 2015).

Finally, on the other end of the spectrum we have applications which are generally clear on the variable of intentionality, but capture a sense in these usages of (E) which theorises the function of (c) as ‘death’ exclusively from ‘murder’, and interprets ‘death’ in a distinctively theoretical manner. On this usage (c) would refer to the indirect processes that eventually lead to ‘erasure’

which would generally not constitute ‘death’, in the traditional sense of the word, but something like ‘death-inducing’ processes. Such applications apply terms like ‘disqualify’, ‘erosion’ and ‘strategy to deny the humanity of’, in their conceptualisation of (c) as a manifestation of (E). This usage, does not immediately relate to the root sense of (c) in a strictly denotative sense such as ‘death’ or ‘killing’, but appears to apply analogical reasoning in the theoretical conceptualisation of (c), where ‘death’ is applied connotatively as in Patterson’s notion of ‘social death’, Fricker’s ‘epistemic injustice’ thesis, Santos’s ‘cognitive justice’ theory or even, as in African philosophy, Mudimbe’s ‘epistemological ethnocentrism’. These ethically laden theoretical terms, with arguably significant political implications, broadly capture the sense of (c), which explains how particular social processes are considered morally reprehensible in that they occasion erasure or loss of (e) or the agency of the groups which produce and sustain them.

At this level, (c), although conceptualised by proponents as leading to eventual erasure or absence of certain knowledge systems, is articulated in terms which suggest that this state of affairs is somewhat reversible by political, social or economic change, which is a prerogative strongly argued by Santos (2005; 2007; 2014). This is also evident from Lebakeng et al., (2006) and their thesis in (U5) of ‘reversing’ (E), through the reinstatement of local paradigms of (e) which is elsewhere argued for in the literature on epistemicide by Masaka (2018).

In spite of the fact that these theoretically-laden usages appear closer to the empirical midpoint in our spectrum of (c) and does indeed overlap with the substance of (c) expressed at that level, the understanding of the reversible nature of the death of knowledge is evident. At this end of the spectrum (c) generally refers to the SE heuristics of ‘death’ relative to (e) and focuses on particular ‘social’ processes of SE in a theory-laden way. Thus, even if we know who disqualified an (e) leading to (E) and can therefore secure intentionality, it is not directly clear how disqualification leads to absolute erasure. However, if for instance we understand Patterson’s concept of ‘social death’ – whereby agents are excluded from participating in society and lose their social and cultural identities – the assertion becomes clearer; since social death would explain (E) and the loss of (e) through (c) in disqualification, for instance. Here, disqualification could be plausibly remedied with ‘requalification’ or ‘reaccreditation’ of the formerly disqualified kinds of (e) and is therefore reversible in a way that ‘death’ is not usually connotatively or denotatively conceptualised.

In closing then, proponents of (E) appear to understand (c) as that which defines a nuanced set of processes, events and phenomena which lead to a graded concept of ‘death’ or more precisely, erasures of knowledge in the social world, including its near-erasure. There does not seem to be a consensus in the literature on this matter because while intentionality remains consistently attributed by proponents, the degree of destruction and reversible nature of (E) in general is sometimes selectively analysed or broadly entailed in a somewhat unclear manner. The spectral approach regarding (c) thus allows easy discernment of how proponents understand (c) in the literature, foreshadowing the necessity for an ameliorative thesis of (E).

Conclusions of the Concept Analysis

In the final segment of this analysis, we summarise our findings of (E) gathered thus far. We have now ascertained that the concept (E) in its constituent part (e) refers to an epistemology or theory of knowledge which is fundamentally pluralistic accounting for the ‘alternative’, ‘non-scientific’, indigenous’, ‘endogenous’ or ‘dominated’ knowledge frameworks while also entailing the antithetical canonical or formal epistemic tradition defined as ‘dominant’, ‘scientific’, ‘paradigm of the conqueror’ and ‘Western’, by proponents. The latter category of generally putative epistemologies, which undergo the processes of (c) or ‘-cide’, refer to a nuanced set of processes, events and phenomena of erasure, killing or death, plausibly accounted for by various theories in SE. These processes are fundamentally theorised to be performed by intentional actors who serve as principals, accomplices or accessories to the outcomes of (E).

From the findings above, we can then proffer a preliminary definition for the concept in uniting the various discrepancies and continuities in the application of the term (E). Thus, (E) can be generally defined as: *‘the processes of deliberate erasure of the knowledge systems of particular non-hegemonic groups and their agents, by direct or indirect means, often leading to the irretrievable loss of those knowledge systems’.*

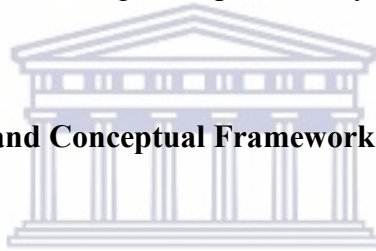
In conclusion, the assessment of (E) has provided data that could not be gleaned from an intuitive sense of the concept from its applications in the literature. Furthermore, we find that some applications of the concept are not easily reconcilable on certain meanings within the discourse on (E) such as that of (c). While on the other hand there is a general agreement among proponents’ usages on the questions of the pluralistic nature of (e) as well as the aspect of intentionality in (c). Therefore, as we have undertaken a concept analysis of (E), we have

subsequently provided the conceptual grounds to establish a thesis of the concept in the following chapter.



CHAPTER 3: THE “EPISTEMICIDE” THESIS

This chapter will collate significant analytic and social epistemological resources to develop an “Epistemicide” Thesis’, to provide an outline of the conceptual parameters to be demarcated for reasonable uses of “Epistemicide”, which avoids vagueness and ambiguity. Given the seriousness of the claim crystallised in the concept, it is imperative to ground epistemicide firmly within philosophical and epistemological discourse as a meaningful theoretical device. This thesis proceeds from the findings of a prior conceptual analysis toward the end of applying the concept on the question of African epistemology and wider epistemic concerns of the ‘Global South’. This chapter forms part of the final stage of the concept analysis of epistemicide, through constructive analysis, and seeks to broaden the conceptual framework and explicate possible epistemological and theoretical commitments which undergirds the concept and, as a consequence, the ensuing conceptual theory.



An Outline of the Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks of an “Epistemicide” Thesis

As the concept epistemicide entails the destruction of knowledge, the epistemicide thesis should be epistemological in character as it directly relates to ‘theories of knowledge’. In a broad sense the concept should assume a notion of epistemology that is accessible and relevant to any domain, whether it places theoretical emphasis on the ‘social’ or ‘formal’ unit of analysis in its epistemic commitments. This thesis should also address various sets of epistemic questions in order to resolve *prima facie* concerns with wider-applicability and general philosophical truth of the concept epistemicide such as: (a) what is meant by *knowledge* or *epistemology* in the use of epistemicide; (b) what number of things, persons or objects must be destroyed for epistemicide to occur; (c) addressing the potential charge of whether ‘knowledge’ or ‘epistemology’ in applications of epistemicide reduce to relativism and render arbitrary epistemic and philosophic practice; and (d) the lack of a clear criteria of what counts and would not count as epistemicide.

We may commence by outlining the concept’s definition as observed from the output of concept analysis, which is stated in the following terms: ‘*the processes of deliberate erasure of the knowledge systems of particular non-hegemonic groups and their agents, by direct or*

indirect means, often leading to the irretrievable loss of those knowledge systems'. In theoretical, 'neutral' and conditional terms the concept epistemicide can also be defined from the SE framework in which it was applied in order to capture an explicit epistemic thesis. Thus, this definition could be expressed as the following: *'Epistemicide, occurs if and only if there is an act, event, process or historical evidence of the intentional or indirect obliteration of knowledge of a particular social group'*. These two definitions thus allow for our subsequent construction to be formulated on a prior understanding of the concept epistemicide.

Therefore we posit a reconstruction of the central claims and theories in Santos's formulation and application of the concept epistemicide as per the conceptual framework Santos constructs, predicated on his scholarship's search for epistemic 'alternatives' that are 'non-Western' and 'non-scientific'. The epistemological framework that Santos applies the claim of epistemicide in the literature, appears premised on the formative sociological tradition pioneered by Durkheim and his 'sociology of knowledge' thesis which concurrently marked the beginning of the social epistemological tradition exemplified in the sociological discipline.

For Émile Durkheim (1972), the epistemological shift of moving away from epistemic positivism towards a framework positing that there are both individual and 'collective' knowers' expresses the pluralistic character of knowledge on Durkheim's account. This account further claimed that these knowers are in possession of 'truth', that 'truth' is a 'social thing' and that 'knowledge' of this truth is 'diverse', because, as Durkheim analogically maintains, "social life manifests itself in many diverse forms" (255).

Thus, *contra* formalist and positivist epistemology, Durkheim critiques the foundationalist epistemic assumptions of rationalism and pragmatism which Kurzman (1994) identifies as 'epistemic monism' and sets out an account of epistemology which can be defined as fundamentally 'pluralistic'. Thus, a new epistemic paradigm comes to assess a corpus of knowledge outside of the formal epistemic tradition with its emphasis on the knowledge of collectives whose, 'beliefs, 'organisation', 'way of life' and shared 'collective knowledge' of groups were to become new objects of study and would thus yield new theories of knowledge.

Central to this framework for Durkheim was a methodological commitment to empirical and ethical or moral knowledge. Durkheim thus asserted the need for publicly accessible evidence and data to support theories and hypotheses in social theory. Durkheim also asserted – via the sociology of knowledge thesis – that in any analysis or study requires a necessary assessment of the moral ideals and networks of social obligations which relate to normative assumptions

often imposed by collectives as inherent features of the ‘social’. As a consequence, the ‘social’ is constructed on this account, as inherent in knowledge, theory and praxis. This is because any epistemology, ontology or metaphysics are held to be established off the models and resources of the same ‘social’ world and are therefore inextricably bound by the normativity of the world and social context it operates in. In this way, knowledge and epistemology are consequently read by Santos as ‘social things’ from the domain of sociology, SE and jurisprudence and in this way social processes like ‘murder’ or ‘genocide’ and the web of theories supporting those designations are entailed by the concept epistemicide in the ‘social world’ which cannot be simply reduced to absurdity without qualifying evidence on this account.

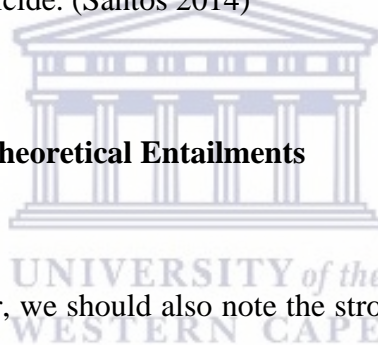
Santos’s theoretical position on these ‘alternatives’ which he also calls ‘knowledges’ is evidently predicated on the epistemic grounds of the sociology of knowledge thesis. It is also these same knowledges which, Santos argues, are designated for erasure or erased in the processes of epistemicide by ‘colonial’, ‘imperial’ or ‘Western scientific’ knowledge as well as the political processes which are party to these epistemes, articulated in ‘disqualification’ or ‘marginalisation’ of groups including economic systems such as ‘capitalism’.

For Santos (2014), theories of knowledge are therefore identified by a wide range of ‘social groups’ from indigenous collectives to ‘knowledge born in struggle’ as well as the, “ways of knowing developed by social groups as part of their resistance against the systematic injustices and oppressions caused by capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy...” (Santos x). For Santos, like Durkheim, this analysis is predicated on a form of historicism or historical constructivism which supports claims of the same processes or phenomena occurring in different spatiotemporal contexts, which Santos evidently theorises into the concept epistemicide. For Santos and other proponents, this state of affairs is potentially reversible if it is identified and mitigated by epistemological diversification and amelioration which entails the objectives of some trends in decolonial studies, broadly construed. Herein the concept epistemicide serves as evidence supporting the decolonial imperative which seeks to address a morally reprehensible and undesirable state of affairs occasioned by colonialism and theorised ‘murder of knowledge’.

In fact, Santos’s account of ‘knowledge’ and ‘epistemology’, which undergo the processes of epistemicide, is concurrently built into the theoretical discourse on the concept epistemicide itself. This becomes increasingly evident in assessment of the theoretical framework Santos constructs around his concept epistemicide. For Santos, the two theses of the ‘ecologies of

knowledge’ and ‘Epistemologies of the South’ alongside other SE theories in ‘abyssal epistemology’ as well as ‘diatopical hermeneutics’; which together form a general framework that substantiates the application of the concept epistemicide on this framework.

Suffice to say, Santos’s ecology of knowledge thesis provides a naturalistic, cognitivist background as well proffering a set of prescriptive epistemic theses which fixes the concept epistemicide within a domain of application in SE. Santos’s ‘Epistemologies of the South’ theses then explicates the pluralistic but non-relativistic accounts of knowledge frameworks that are subjected to epistemicide. The theory of diatopical hermeneutics argues for the incompleteness of all forms of epistemic praxis and canons as a way of understanding the relationship of one canon’s claims to completeness and therefore its tendency to erase or replace an existing epistemic praxis of other alternatives. And finally, Santos’s theory of abyssal epistemology holds that the theoretical limits of knowledge, lack of epistemic warrant or evidence of subjected groups’ knowledge and the existence of ‘absences’ are occasioned by or are the by-product of epistemicide. (Santos 2014)



Conceptual Distinctions and Theoretical Entailments

In our concept network however, we should also note the strong conceptual relation between epistemicide, and other ‘-cide’ concepts specifically genocide and linguicide which can easily be confused and therefore in addressing this issue we can further assist in disambiguating the theoretical entailments of an “Epistemicide thesis”. The concepts epistemicide, genocide and linguicide are alike in that they are all theoretical and heuristic markers which come into existence in the observation of universalisable trends of particular socio-historical events, which were previously observed but not defined or properly conceptualised. All three concepts also came into currency during the 20th century but would theoretically pick out distinct events before and after the era of initial theorisation.

In the case of the latter two concepts genocide and linguicide are marked in the literature by stringent discipline-specific criterion of what constitutes an instantiation of the concept in question. With genocide, in sociology and law, the concept exclusively relates to verifiable acts of deliberate erasure of particular groups of people, while linguicide refers to the assessment in linguistics of the sudden extinction of languages. The concept epistemicide however stakes

a claim in both concepts by subsuming ‘extreme cases’ of epistemicide such as the genocide of social groups who carry particular knowledge systems, while also necessitating that knowledge is a ‘social thing’ and as a consequence, the resources for knowledge production in ‘language’ for instance are fundamentally social.

Thus, epistemicide, genocide and linguicide are all distinct concepts, although they have a strong relation in any conceptual framework of epistemicide. In a narrow sense, if epistemicide entails linguicide, meaning epistemology entails linguistics, this has significant consequences for the debate on whether language can be considered as ‘knowledge’ and would therefore act as an implicit prerequisite to epistemic praxis, which has been argued for by Hallen and Sodipo (1997) and Mills (2007) for instance, in the epistemological literature.

To the extent that seemingly distinct concepts linguicide and epistemicide express the same general intension, a further epistemological question arises on whether similar ‘-cide’ concepts relative to epistemicide. That is, whether concepts designating other cognitive possessions, or epistemologically relevant material in concepts like ‘tomecide’ (obliteration of books³), ‘mentacide’ (obliteration of social consciousness⁴), ‘ethnocide’ (obliteration of culture⁵), ‘verbicide’ (obliteration of syntax, grammar and diction for specialised discourse in an epistemic culture⁶) or even ‘petracide’ (obliteration of ancient monuments of an epistemic culture⁷) are all subsumed by epistemicide. We can thus affirm, in the review of the concepts above, that all concepts are in some way reducible to epistemology, and that the infamous ‘ethno’ term designating ‘culture’ is also affirmed as a form of knowledge on this account. We will return to this point on culture and its relationship to epistemology and social groups according to SE.

From assessment of the various literature on epistemicides it is also evident that the ideal definition of the concept need not be fully expressed for the concept to be theorised as occurring. This is clear in the non-genocide conditions for epistemicide and linguicide, but also in the concepts epistemicide and genocide which theoretically designate the actual process of erasure or extinction when conditions for an ideal fulfilment are seldom fully satisfied in the real world, i.e. complete extinction of a social group. For Santos and other proponents, ideal fulfilment of the concept epistemicide are marked by ‘extreme cases’ which in turn become

³ See Havet (1880) and Chroust (1962).

⁴ See Meerloo (1956) and Shujaa (2015).

⁵ See Shaw (2015).

⁶ See Orr (1999).

⁷ ‘Gratuitous Insults; Petracide’ (1985).

precedents that exemplify the concept and can be erroneously held as capturing the entirety of the truth claim of the concept. For example, with genocide, this conceptual vagueness stemming from non-ideal instantiations of the concept are captured in expressions like ‘genocide survivor’ or ‘genocidal intent’.

These terms which are generally taken as evidence of a genocide event are also antithetical to the ideal definition of the concept where there should not be survivors of deliberate extinction of a particular group. This means we should fall back to a criteria based-account to affirm the existence of epistemicide in our constructed thesis, based on our concept analysis and concept frameworks. As a consequence, the UN’s 1948 ‘Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide’ is a pertinent touchstone and rubric, as it posits a working and legally ratified criteria for (G) which becomes a pertinent cross-referential heuristic in the construction of our thesis of epistemicide without reduction to conflation or conceptual confusion.

Social Groups as ‘Epistemic Cultures’

From here, we should note that ‘group’ as in ‘social group’ should be explicated epistemologically for the purposes of our thesis. Therefore, these ‘groups’ from the literature would relate to groups of human beings, rational agents, persons, experts and so forth, who are not isolated entities, but who produce, apply or reproduce knowledge within a larger social context.

In the literature on epistemicide, Knijnik (1997) provides an extensive account of the various kinds of ‘social groups’ proponents of epistemicide refer to usually characterised as ‘non-hegemonic’, ‘dominated’ ‘subordinate’ social groups. Other scholars focusing on indigenous knowledge systems such as Masaka (2017), Sockbeson (2017) and Ramose (2020) characterise social groups as ‘indigenous’, ‘endogenous’, ‘traditional’ and in terms of cultural grouping or belonging. Bennett (2007), from the literature on epistemicide, characterises the relationship between ‘social groups’, ‘culture’ and ‘epistemology’ in the following terms:

For the way that a particular culture formulates its knowledge is intricately bound up with the very identity of its people, their way of making sense of the world and the value system that holds that worldview in place. Epistemicide, as

the systematic destruction of rival forms of knowledge, is at its worst nothing less than symbolic genocide. (Bennett 2007: 154)

Thus from these proponents, it is clear that they are assessing something like the knowledge systems, customs, beliefs, arts, ways of life and social organisation of groups who are concerned with the production of knowledge. We can therefore compare this account of ‘social groups’ to what Karin Cetina (1999) calls ‘epistemic cultures’, or societies which function around knowledge production mediated by experts or peers in particular fields. We can then infer that these social groups are more precisely entailed by epistemic cultures which, on this account, possesses knowledge that could be targeted for destruction, or indirectly erased under particular conditions.

However for these cultures to be truly ‘epistemic’, which Cetina constructs on the warrant and reliability of formalistic and science-based epistemological praxis, there needs to be a neutral account of ‘epistemic culture’ that can be retained as a criterion of assessment. Therefore, epistemic cultures can cohere if and only if we hold that these cultures possess and critically apply cognitive tools to produce ‘knowledge’. In the history of ideas and epistemology, especially formalistic praxis, non-veristic accounts of truth and knowledge are highly controversial and therefore claims to knowledge or knowing often entail theoretical commitments which may negate the possibility of the very ‘alternative’ accounts or theories that this thesis may seek to prove.

Thus, Santos’s ecology of knowledge thesis may support epistemicide in holding an egalitarian account of knowledge which subsumes both formal and pluralistic epistemologies, but this does not diffuse concerns of the actual existence of the possibility of propositional knowledge in these accounts. Santos does affirm the latter in stating that the, “ecology of knowledges aims to provide epistemological consistency for pluralistic, propositional thinking and acting” (Santos 193). However Santos’s framework for ‘pluralistic’ knowledge constructs a much broader scope of entailments of knowledge than propositional thinking and acting, although he deems it as necessary for ‘intercultural translation’ which is thus epitomised in his account of ‘knowledge democracy’ and cognitive justice.

At a prior stage, a further proviso on the ‘knowledge’ or ‘epistemology’ in the ecology of knowledge thesis appears to rely on an epistemologically ‘naturalised’ account of knowledge to support the notion of pluralism within the idea of culture. A philosophical account of this position is most cogently outlined in the SE literature by Maffie (2005) who submits

ethnoepistemology as an epistemic framework predicated on analysis of cultures. Maffie thus argues for a ‘socialised’ account of ‘knowledge’ equivalent to Santos’s ameliorative aims of ‘knowledge democracy’.⁸ The more epistemologically grounded claim of the latter theorists appears to be synonymous but epistemologically explicated by Maffie is the distinctively epistemic claim that any human culture which possesses and applies complex reasoning faculties, language, semiotics and ‘cultural knowledge’ which functions for the ‘transfer of complex knowledge’ and can be said to be engaged in epistemological praxis.⁹

In our sufficiently socialised definition of epistemicide however, notions of socially motivated ‘processes’ and ‘epistemic cultures’, relate to variables that are not necessarily rendered as analytically significant since they are generally variable and not fixed properties. For instance social groups or ‘epistemic cultures’ would designate other additional properties as emergent from ‘knowledge’ itself or ‘states of knowing’, which are theorised to be necessitated by the supervening context of the ‘social domain’. These variables would therefore include cultures, sub-cultures, identities, individual subjectivities and so forth. For Santos, these groups or cultures entail not only collectives with shared identities but those exhibited in, “social movements, grassroots communities, rallies, self-government initiatives, land and building occupations, popular economic organizations, petitions, popular assemblies” (Santos 34), for example. Thus, we can see that the political, hegemonic and non-value-free nature of knowledge and knowledge production as inherent in an SE framework of epistemic cultures.

However, we need not bind this thesis to any explicit commitments about whether the nature of ‘knowledge’ or ‘culture’ is fundamentally external or internal, individual or collective. Nor should this thesis fall to charges of relativism or overly-determined anthropological or psychologised commitments to ‘knowledge’, since theorists in SE like Santos and Maffie do posit cognitive-to-epistemic accounts of knowledge ascription consistent with formalistic account of epistemology.

⁸ These positions are not inconsistent since Maffie posits a social to naturalistic epistemology while formal epistemologists would replace social with formal as a representative of naturalistic epistemology. It is only FE and SE then that diverge on key epistemic questions relating to social or formal ontology, while supposedly both being entailed by naturalistic epistemology according to Maffie (1999).

⁹ Works by J. Maffie (1993; 1995; 1999; 2001; 2003; 2005) are not cited by Santos or in the literature, but provide a significant epistemological grounding to the more sociological account of ‘knowledge ecology’ present in Santos’s (2014) significant work on (E). Maffie outlines the implicit commitments to non-verisitic truth, non-relativistic accounts of local knowledge, ecological or naturalistic epistemic commitments and the empirically evidenced philosophical accounts of ‘indigenous knowledge’ which constitutes a form of Santos’s ‘epistemologies of the South’, suggesting a strong epistemological congruence between Santos and Maffie’s accounts respectively.

The account presented thus far relies on the assumed conceptual correlation between ‘knowledge’, ‘epistemology’ and ‘culture’ which also expresses a foundational theoretical assumption in the SE thesis and applications of epistemicide. Therefore, in the convergence of distinct methodologies, framework and domains subsumed under the SE approach which analyses different objects, phenomena or collectives by their constitutive properties and conditions of existence of knowledge in the ‘social’, suggests that the concept and consequent thesis hold import across domains. Thus culture, knowledge and epistemology are predicated upon language, which itself can be classed as a form of knowledge, all of which are established on the basis of a primary epistemic assumption of the functioning of the ‘social world’. What defines an epistemic culture affected by epistemicide then, is the status of a particular episteme which constitutes it as a specialised form of collective within in a culture, functioning specifically towards the ends of knowledge production and application, identified by a form of group-membership. Furthermore, these claims can be taken a step further in characterising the locality and the universality of an epistemic cultures.

For example we can note from the philosophical literature that different cultures and languages can and do express and formulate particular belief claims which place different levels of emphasis on different philosophical questions as argued by Wiredu (1996), or have different ‘epistemological goals’ as argued by Maffie (2005). Therefore what can be described as ‘epistemic cultures’ would consequently observe, categorise and philosophise on prescient spatial or temporal information or objects in a radically divergent or antithetical manner, for example. Thus, through an assessment of the epistemic cultures we see that it accounts for the exchanging of data and information between frameworks and ‘experts’ as well as the ‘knowledge production’ of experts premised on diversity as a pertinent epistemic property which modern scholarship in African and indigenous philosophical projects attest to.¹⁰ Thus the “Epistemicide” thesis has particular epistemic, metaphysic, theoretical and even methodological commitments to cohere in its formulation.

¹⁰ For African indigenous or traditional ‘experts’ in philosophical studies see Oruka (1983) and in analytical language analysis of indigenous ‘experts’ see Hallen and Sodipo (1997). For cognitive, experimental and empirical studies in coding, intuition formation and reliability of knowledge across different cultures see Machery (2017), see Gu, Y.-Y and Zhang, Z.-J (2012) on temporality, Levinson (1998) on spatiality, Eglash (1999) on African fractal mathematics and finally for environmental effects on cognition in the metaphoric structuring for apprehension of time see Boroditsky (2000).

Potential Criticisms

Santos general account defined in epistemicide seeks an ameliorative end, which calls for pluralistic accounts of knowledge which are ‘democratically’ or ‘fairly’ assessed, providing spaces for independent development of marginalised epistemic accounts, within the context of reciprocal or mutually-interdependent networks with other knowledge systems. We can compare this ameliorative thesis to the pluralistic conclusions of Kaphagawani and Malherbe (2003) and Hendricks (2008). The latter account provides an outline of an African epistemology that is inclusive of putative systems otherwise considered as ‘non-philosophical’, ‘ethnophilosophy’ (Hountondji 1983), ‘folk philosophy’, ‘culture philosophy’ (Oruka 1975) or even ‘first philosophy’ (Bachir-Diagne 2016) by the gamut of professional African philosophers. These thinkers also forward, defend or assent to formal epistemic criteria of knowledge and epistemology, oftentimes at the expense of these putative systems which Hendrick holds would be more beneficial in being brought together.

The formal reasons for this epistemic exclusion of other theories of knowledge expresses a criterion of knowledge that is frequently discussed in the literature on inter-cultural epistemic enquiries, which is exemplified in what Maffie, for example, describes as a “thick” account of ‘epistemological vertism’. This epistemological theory holds that a single correspondence ‘theory of truth’ applies to all thinkers in all contexts, is recognisable in all formal languages and is therefore fundamental to epistemology and epistemic practice, as presented by its chief proponent Alvin Goldman (Maffie 2005). Such theories of knowledge can be extended to other prominent formal accounts like positivism, physicalism, utilitarianism and other canonical theories which generally assert, in absolute and normative terms, the *right* method, account or answer to a particular philosophical issue *contra* a rival theory or theories.

Thinkers with strong formal theoretical commitments are therefore suspicious of the epistemic and philosophical grounds which warrant such pluralistic accounts of knowledge. This suspicion is visible in the paradigmatic criticisms presented by eminent FE critics of ‘oral’, ‘traditional’, ‘alternative’ or ‘indigenous knowledge frameworks’ in the domains of African philosophy and ‘indigenous knowledges’, as in the critical works of philosophers like Horton (1965), Hountondji (1983), Bello (2004) and Horsmtheke (2021).

For others like Ramose, Santos, Maffie and other non-vertists however, the claims to ‘universality’, epistemological ‘utility’, moral and scientific progress which are built-in

epistemic virtues of dominant epistemic frameworks are either empirically unverified, non-universal or even ‘a posteriori false’. This is because analysis of historical conditions of violence and erasure as well as the existence of different epistemic cultures provide confounds to a standardised history of philosophy in line with scientific and moral progress (More 2002); (Outlaw 1987, 2004); (Dotson 2011). Therefore, thinkers like Santos claims are asserted on the warrant of evidence usually proffered in empirical studies as well as the lack of attention paid to the critical ‘social’ unit of analysis in formal epistemological accounts.

The Social Epistemic and Cognitivist Foundations of “Epistemicide” Thesis

Santos in applying epistemicide also articulates a framework in which the epistemic value of practices should not be based on the epistemic value or utility of scientific praxis alone, but one in which non-scientific alternatives are assessed fairly alongside dominant theories. Santos’s thesis therefore rests on a framework that would be termed by Maffie (2005) as a naturalistic epistemic framework which holds strong social epistemic commitments to knowledge that would epistemologically ground epistemicide. For Maffie this can be done without taking the ‘strong sociology of knowledge’ approach, which argues that purely analytical or formalistic epistemic praxis is outmoded, which is captured in some tangents of Santos’s framework of ‘ecologies of knowledge’.

The epistemic commitment of this view however is that philosophical or epistemic activity is not considered *sui generis*, transcendent or supervening over naturalistic investigations by any empirical social science, which seeks to explain social phenomena which occur in the social vector of the natural world (Maffie 2005). Thus, the upshot of this view, as held by ethnoepistemologists, is that knowledge production is, “one species of natural activity alongside cooking, childrearing, and counting” (Maffie 2005). We therefore define experts in a given epistemic culture based on their expertise and their epistemic output, whatever this may mean. Therefore, it is conceivable that objects, methodologies and theories of knowledge can differ in content and formality and that all human groups participate in this natural activity in varying degrees of expertise in particular fields, with various rates and methodologies for the outputs of their knowledge production.

The general epistemological framework constructed thus far also rests on a prior cognitive claim about the nature of capacity for knowledge as well as the conditions of knowledge ascription. Indeed the thesis of ‘ecologies of knowledge’ strongly coheres to the empirical strength of the uncontroversial claim that all cognitively endowed human beings have universal accessibility to ‘knowledge’ under expressed conditions which are fundamentally social. Expertise is thus defined by training and quality of epistemic output, whereby in both a formal and pluralistic epistemic setting, expertise is judged by a group of peers, experts or the public within an epistemic culture, which again substantiates the account of the ‘social’ operating within the epistemological.

A cognitive account of this view is articulated by foundational cognitive specialists like Lev Vygotsky’s (1978) seminal sociocultural theory of ‘sociogenesis’ which neatly fits into a SE framework. This theory suggests that the production of knowledge is cognitively accessible to all humans based on shared processes of social acculturation. Thus cognition develops and functions within a social context where foundational knowledge or information is learnt or taught through linguistic, cultural and social systems. Such a social theory of cognition, sociality and knowledge also form the core part of thesis advance by Santos’s text, *Cognitive Justice in a Global World* (2007), which further buttresses the application of epistemicide in its fundamentally social dimension in the concept matrix as seen in Santos’s later correlations (2005; 2014) between a thesis of social cognition and the application of epistemicide.

The “Epistemicide” Thesis Account:

We may now proceed to define epistemicide in light of the findings above and begin to construct a model of application which requires an explication of a definition in line with SE commitments as well as the enumeration of the epistemic, metaphysical and theoretical commitments necessary for cogent application of epistemicide.

Thesis Definition:

Definition: Epistemicide refers to the processes of the intentional or unintentional as well as explicit or implicit obliteration of knowledge possessed by epistemic cultures, which may or may not be reversible.

Epistemological commitments:

- A. Knowledge and knowledge production are both social and natural phenomena which are cognitively secured by processes of socialisation and epistemic acculturation which entails all human groupings who define themselves by their shared epistemic possessions (knowledge systems and philosophical theories, artefacts and symbols, norms and values, methodologies and modal assumptions about reality).
- B. That by ‘epistemology’ in epistemicide, we mean, ‘all epistemological activities practiced by “diviners, shamans, priests, magicians, [epistemologists] and scientists” — ranging from the less reflective and less critical activities of ordinary folk to the more self-conscious, abstract, and reflective activities of epistemologists’ (Maffie 2005). The producers of knowledge are then defined formally as ‘experts’ in particular epistemic culture which operates in particular paradigms or life-worlds.
- C. That epistemic cultures are emergent in an ‘ecology of knowledge’ and defined by, “the habits and customs, the religions, languages, belief systems, values, interests, preferred occupations, divisions of labour, in a particular culture [as well as] [...] the rational practices, values, institutions, etc., of a culture”. (Kaphagawani and Malherbe 264)

Metaphysical commitments:

- D. That the nature of knowledge is characterised by a ‘social’ ontology of knowledge. This ontology holds that ‘knowledge’ entails the gamut of various genealogical histories of ideas on ‘knowledge’ up until the present moment. This account of knowledge thus descriptively holds competing accounts of knowledge to be simultaneously entailed (such as monist and pluralist epistemology, internalist and externalist epistemology, indigenous and imperial epistemology as well as scientific and non-scientific epistemologies respectively).
- E. To the extent that processes of gradual or immediate erasure of cognitive possessions can be applied to epistemology or knowledge designated by the concept epistemicide, the concept relates to cognitive possessions as a ‘social thing’ which function in the casual nexus of the ‘social world’.
- F. Metaphysical properties such as cognitive possessions, knowledge and epistemology can be analogically said to ‘live’ or ‘die’ and therefore exist as long as members of epistemic cultures continue to sustain, practice and produce said knowledge. These

properties are thus said to have existence and termination conditions. As these metaphysical properties are fundamentally ‘social’ within a broader naturalistic framework, these properties are therefore also subject to ‘social’ processes that impact their meaning, function, existence and utility and therefore cannot be value-free.

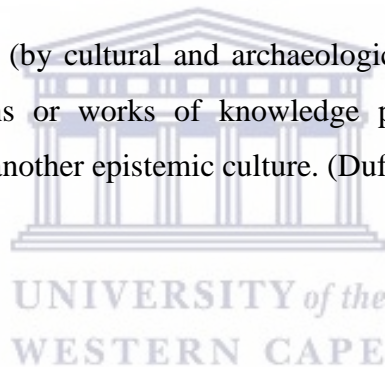
Theoretical commitments:

- G. That epistemicide entails all ‘-cide’ concepts which designate various instantiations of cognitive or epistemic possessions that could be ascribed to a given epistemic culture, otherwise described as knowledge or knowledge systems within the ecologies of knowledge framework. These concepts include for example: ‘linguicide’, ‘tomicide’, ‘ethnocide’ (obliteration of culture), ‘petracide’ and ‘menticide’ (obliteration of a lifeworld or the ethical and doxiastic framework of an epistemic culture), among others.
- H. That cases of epistemicide are determined a posteriori, in which empirical and theoretical evidence provides the strongest epistemic warrant for event x to be defined as epistemicide. As a conceptual construct, epistemicide picks out a historical and present-day phenomenon which often has no physical referent. As a principle, it defines conditions which occasion the erasure of knowledge and thus holds predictive power to assess future cases of possible erasure of knowledge and epistemic systems. The concept epistemicide is intrinsically speculative and therefore the plausibility of its application is dependent on the truth-value provided by evidence of each case as being an instance of epistemicide.
- I. That epistemicide designates in quantity and conceptual scope, the same number of things that are erased or intended to be erased as with other theoretical concept such as genocide or linguicide, which can necessarily account for non-ideal scenarios as instantiating the concept.

Criteria for the Occurrence of Epistemicide:

The, “Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide” drafted by the United Nations in 1948 proffers the most rigorous criteria which is adapted below for explanatory power and to give a general criteria-based account of the occurrence of epistemicide consistent with the concept’s definition and the content of this thesis expressed thus far.

- J. The meaning of epistemicide can thus be generally defined as, “any of the following acts committed with intent [or non-intent] to destroy, in whole or in part [the cognitive or epistemic possessions of an epistemic culture], as such:
- (a) Completely obliterating the cognitive and epistemic possessions and/or the members of an epistemic culture;
 - (b) Causing extensive intentional (and unintentional) damage to an epistemic corpus or mental harm to members of an epistemic culture;
 - (c) Deliberately inflicting upon an epistemic culture conditions which are calculated to bring about the total erasure of its cognitive or epistemic possessions in whole or in part (such as intentional omission or denial of epistemic warrant, perpetuation of epistemic violence and cognitive injustice).
 - (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent independent knowledge production or application of cognitive possessions by historically disadvantaged or marginalised epistemic cultures.
 - (e) Forcibly transferring (by cultural and archaeological looting and plagiarism) the cognitive possessions or works of knowledge production by experts of one epistemic culture to another epistemic culture. (Duffet 1968; United Nations 1948)



Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, this chapter has proffered an epistemologically enumerated account of epistemicide as drawn from concept analysis and applications of the concept within the epistemicide literature. In doing so, various philosophical and epistemological questions were raised, addressed and subsequently synthesised by the construction of an “Epistemicide” thesis. This thesis provides an epistemic framework which is interchangeable with other domains to the ends of a constructive analysis which, “enables one to introduce new terms or concepts which were lacking in the initial concept theory”. (Kosterec 2016).

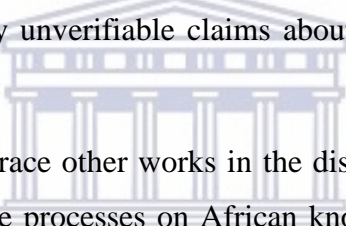
CHAPTER 4: AFRICAN EPISTEMOLOGY AS A SITE OF “EPISTEMICIDE”

The final and concluding chapter of this study will briefly contend that the debate surrounding the question of the character of African epistemology is an exemplification of the consequences of “Epistemicide”. This will be claimed by assessing the historical and contemporary debates, evidence and scholarship contextualised in the African philosophic literature. This is to corroborate the position of this concluding section that the phenomenon conceptualised in the concept epistemicide has been present at the heart of the discourse of African philosophy prior to its coinage by Santos and persists as a present-day reality. The following chapter then, drawing on the findings of the prior criteria-based account of the occurrence of epistemicide, ultimately seeks to draw attention to the central hypothesis of this study. That is, whether or not the contentions around the absence of texts written by Africans which are explicitly described as philosophical (Hountondji 1983), the ‘under-developed’ status of African epistemology (Taiwo 1991), and the contestation around the ‘construction’ or ‘reconstruction’ of an African episteme in the discourse (Chimakonam 2017) should be properly attributed to the historical and on-going processes of epistemicide.

The question of African epistemology – which has already been addressed in the wider literature by Kaphagawani and Malherbe (2003) – outlines a range of distinct epistemic approaches explicating the character of a distinctively ‘African’ kind of epistemic praxis. For Santos (1995; 1998; 2005; 2007; 2014; 2019), and other proponents of the concept, this epistemological picture is in line with a ‘pluralistic’ account of knowledge ascription.

In the literature around the concept epistemicide, there are good grounds to hold that theorists in the wider discourse and scholarly debate in African philosophy were well aware of the processes of mass erasure and its correlation to the loss of knowledge prior to Santos’s application of the term. We should now turn to the general African philosophical discourse, positioned as a formerly colonised, ‘Third World’ and ‘Global South’ site of knowledge production, where a question of epistemicide was indeed evident for theorists prior to its conceptualisation. For African philosophers like Masaka (2018) writing in the literature on epistemicide, Santos’s concept, had always been functioning, albeit implicitly, in the debate on the ramifications of colonialism on African philosophy. For Masaka, African thinkers’ observations of these destructive processes on knowledge in fact, “precedes de Sousa Santos’s (2005) naming of this practice as such” (287).

Of significance in Masaka's position on the status of epistemicide in the discourse, is the evidence Masaka cites for this argument. Here he forwards the works of two key African philosophers, namely Taiwo's, 'Colonialism and Its Aftermath: The Crisis of Knowledge Production' (1993) and Hountondji's (1990), 'Scientific Dependence in Africa Today' (1990), which both predate Santos's initial theorisation of the concept in the literature in his 1995 article and later works. What these two articles do, from different epistemic positions of the formal and pluralist divide is recognise and cogently outline the processes of the concept epistemicide. In fact Paulin Hountondji's earlier work (1983) that references the necessity for existence of philosophical texts in Africa, written by Africans as explicitly philosophical for there to be such a thing called 'African philosophy', and epistemology as a consequence, paradoxically proves if epistemic activities are accessible to all epistemic cultures then epistemicide has indeed occurred. Since evidence to the contrary cannot be justified by the evident absence of resources we can nevertheless retrospectively account for this state of affairs with reference to the 'Criteria for the Occurrence of Epistemicide' outlined previously, without committing oneself to empirically unverifiable claims about cognition, culture, history and writing in Africa.

Following Masaka then, we can trace other works in the discourse which were premised on similar accounts of the destructive processes on African knowledge or its production in the history of ideas of African philosophy. Thus, works by Masolo (1981), Mohmoh (1985) and the UNESCO collaborative chapter entitled, 'Trends in philosophy and science in Africa', by Mazrui, Ajayi, Boahe and Tshibangu (1991) would also come to underline the destructive effects of colonialism and its 'disruption' of knowledge production on the African continent, which for these theorists, ultimately affected the character of the discourse of later African philosophy. This was exemplified in the question and debate crystallised in the title of Campbell Mohmoh's article, 'African philosophy...Does it Exist?'.

These works, especially the latter from a pluralistic position, generally accounted for the destruction, disqualifying and discrediting of precolonial African knowledge. Importantly the UNESCO chapter would set this debate within the context of post-1935 epoch of African history which would herald the establishment of the first university institutions and departments of philosophy, on the continent, as primary sites of knowledge production with indigenous locales subsequently being marginalised or occupying the periphery. This meant that the discourse around the nature of 'African' philosophy and its object namely the knowledge it analysed and concurrently produced as well as its general 'character' would be

framed from the site of the university. The UNESCO chapter thus outlined from the perspective of knowledge as philosophy and science, the consequent epistemicide that would occur in the colonial period in the following terms:

Recognition and some appreciation are only just beginning to be accorded the body of knowledge and expertise that sustained pre-colonial societies in agriculture, health, crafts and industries. In the colonial period such knowledge and expertise were not dignified with the name of science, but were damned as superstitious and pre-scientific. (Ajayi et al. 1999: 636)

In other words sites of knowledge production was thus subject to, but not determined by, the overarching historical political system which established various tiers of exclusion and prejudice against local African knowledge systems in institutions or the societies in which those institutions operated (More 2004).

Indeed, the 'character' of African philosophy and its activity on the continent would come to be described in developmental terms in the works of philosophers like Hountondji (1990) and Godwin Sogolo (1988) for instance, as well as those cited above, whose arguments also accounted for the 'under-developed' status of philosophy on the continent. However, while most theorists acknowledged the negative effects of colonialism on philosophical activity in Africa, with fewer detailing those processes as with the UNESCO chapter, none of these works addressed any concepts that explicitly designated the direct epistemological ramifications of such processes, in spite of the implicit entailment of the concept in these works.

However, the works cited above would only account for one line of discourse in African philosophy that is based on the same observation retained by the concept epistemicide, crystallised around broader philosophical themes of methodology, scope, authenticity, character, canon and content of African philosophy. These issues were generally framed within epistemological issues of 'trends' in Oruka's influential work (2003) but were primarily formalistic in methods and ends. Oruka's attempt to construct an indigenous Sage philosophy showing the prevalence of individual thinkers on the continent, is therefore another example in the literature, which seeks to address the effects of epistemicide in which Sub-Saharan Africa was held to be absent of critical, rigorous individual, and indigenous thinkers.

The increasing debate between the more formally inclined 'Professional Philosophy' school and the proponents of more pluralistic schools despairingly designated as 'Ethnophilosophy' or the 'traditionalist approach', served as a clear example of an epistemic divide on how to

approach ‘knowledge’ after the historical effects of epistemicide, by thinkers. Others in the Hermeneutic or Linguistic Philosophy schools would straddle between the two positions, ultimately defined by whether they viewed ‘Ethnophilosophy’ as a valid philosophical repository or as philosophically empty, outmoded and thus expendable.

From the concept’s first application by Santos (1995), African thinkers concerned with decolonial scholarship and its theories as well ‘epistemology’ equivalent to ‘indigenous knowledge systems’, would begin to actively apply the concept. These scholars who theorised from the domains of education, philosophy and other social sciences would enter into the wider discourse around epistemicide as part of an imperative for decolonisation.

Around the turn of the 21st century, African philosophers, outside of the literature on epistemicide, had already begun critically assessing the history of philosophy and articulating accounts of colonial exclusion of knowledge systems in the formation of the discipline on the continent (More 2004). In the field of Africana philosophy thinkers like Lucius Outlaw (2004) as well as those African philosophers within the literature on epistemicide like Ramose (2003), presented texts which accounted for the ‘silencing’ of indigenous and alternative epistemic discourses, which was a line of argument sustained by Santos in his later, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against Epistemicide*’ (2014), text. For thinkers like Outlaw, the problem of discrediting or disqualifying putative systems in African philosophy was predicated on a dominant epistemic account that applied a criterion which effectively disqualified those systems which were unlike itself and could therefore be charged as ethnocentric. For Ramose however, the central issue of epistemicide was in its impact on pedagogical practice in the African continent and its institutions of higher learning.

Thus, scholars like the prominent sociologist and higher education theorist Lebakeng (2003; 2006; 2014) from the literature on epistemicide, took up the concept as a significant theoretical device in articulating the effects of colonisation on indigenous knowledge and the necessity of decolonisation in the academy. The concern amongst African social scientists and educators, especially in Lebakeng *et al.* (2006; 2014), was the call for the ‘Africanisation’ and later ‘indigenisation’ of the university curriculum. For Lebakeng and others, this petition was made in response to a scenario where specifically South African and more broadly African universities were being built and sustained on the foundations of epistemicide. In the work of Mabogo More (2004) and his assessment of racialist and exclusionary practices in sites of knowledge production, as well as Santos’s (2005; 2014) identification of Africa as peripheral,

and South Africa as ‘semi-peripheral’ sites of knowledge production, it becomes evident through a history of ideas that there was significant and sustained discourse around epistemicide in spite of its limited philosophical and epistemological character in the debate.

However, if we assess these trends within the context of the sustained philosophical and epistemic debate and inquiry on Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) (Masolo 2003; 2013) and Traditional Knowledge (Wiredu 1997) in Africa, one can positively hold that the epistemic concerns present in the general application of epistemicide have been central to the African epistemic discourse. Thus, issues of epistemic character, sufficient conditions for the acquisition of knowledge, and other problems of epistemology relating to erasure and absence, within the literature, suggest that the phenomenon defined by epistemicide was always a philosophical issue that thinkers on the continent sought to address.

One could also infer from Santos scholarship (2014), that he references a range of key thinkers from African philosophy, many of whom are trained as epistemologists but who do not apply the term epistemicide explicitly, such as, ‘Césaire (1955), Fanon (1961), Hountondji (1983), Thiong’o (1986), Mudimbe (1988), Oruka (1990), Wiredu (1990), Serequeberhan. (1991), Eze (1997), Appiah (1998), Diagne, S. B. (2001), Mbembe (2001), Masolo (2003) and Diagne, M. (2005)’. Generally absent from Santos’s initial theorisations (1995) but increasingly evident in later theorisations of the concept (1998, 2005, 2014, 2019), it appears that Santos identified the African historical context, and the longstanding philosophical debate in African philosophy as illustrative of the thesis of epistemicide which he sought to forward.

Thus, especially in the debate around the aftermath of colonisation on knowledge production, there has been a set of meta-philosophic and meta-epistemic issues concerned with the ‘conceptual take-off conditions’ for putative knowledge systems. In fact one may trace this line of reasoning back to Franz Crahay’s (1965) essay on the, ‘Conceptual Take-off Conditions for a Bantu philosophy’ which set out a philosophical criterion for Placide Tempels (1959) colonial anthropological account of a ‘Bantu philosophy’ to be philosophical. For formalists like Hountondji, Tempels work barring its extraversion to African audiences, properly explicated the shortfalls of ‘collective philosophy’ otherwise rendered in recent discourse as TK or IKS. The fact that Africans could not produce their own accounts owing to the colonial context, or that the anthropological accounts of the folk philosophy of Africans were later rejected and regarded as unphilosophical are facets of epistemicide, since it denied collectives at both stages from independently articulating or presenting their bodies or theories of knowledge.

Thus, to properly situate the discourse on the concept epistemicide in regards to the general epistemic debate in African philosophy is to recognise the fundamental absence of the concept epistemicide and its employment, beyond decolonial theory and thinkers, of whom not all are, strictly speaking, African philosophers or epistemologists. In this case, the work of African philosopher Bewaji (2010) and more specifically Masaka (2017; 2018) and Ramose (2003; 2019) presented watershed moments in the conceptual history of epistemicide, as these theorists registered a sustained and explicit account of linking “Epistemicide” to African philosophy, within the decolonial paradigm.

Other thinkers, sociologists and educational theorists such as Nyamjoh (2012), Lephakga (2015), Fataar and Subreenduth (2015) and Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018; 2020) similarly analysed the ‘epistemological’ ramifications of the concept but from outside the domain of philosophy or epistemology. These scholars, in line with what Santos’s social epistemological account would insist on ‘knowledge democracy’, entailed by Santos’s ecosystems of knowledge thesis, which argued for equitable treatment of both putative and formal systems in the academy. However, most of these accounts would follow from the lines of argument originally proposed by Lebakeng (2002) and Ramose (2003), as they contextualised their employment of epistemicide in formal sites of knowledge production, typically the university and other institutions of higher education.

In Ndlovu-Gatsheni’s (2020) work for example, there is a recognisable focus on the history of philosophy, ‘sites’ of knowledge production and the concept epistemicide as a theory accounting for material absences of epistemology or its resources in the claim that, “Africa is one of those epistemic sites that experienced not only colonial genocides but also “theft of history” (see Goody 2006), epistemicides (killing of indigenous people’s knowledges) and linguicides (killing of indigenous people’s languages) (see Ngugi wa Thiong’o 2009a; Ngugi wa Thiong’o 2009b)” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 17).

Indeed, by contrasting on one hand, the pluralistic formulation of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) as theorised by Masolo (2014), accounted for by Masaka (2018) and evident in the literature on epistemicide, alongside formalist accounts of Traditional Knowledge (TK) (Wiredu 1997), we note at the heart of discourse is the question of ‘knowledge’ and as a consequence African epistemology post-epistemicide.

Therefore these studies give a strong indication of the functioning and awareness of epistemicide in the discourse as well as the implied and intentional application of its processes

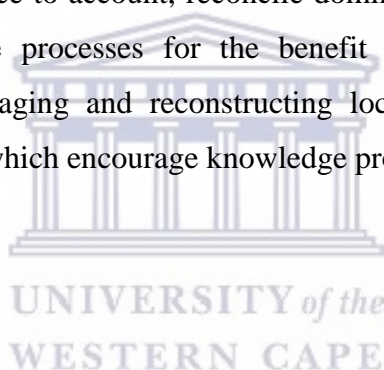
as a form of oppression as instituted in the academic institutions of Apartheid South Africa according to More's study. This not only affirms a connection between decolonial theorists and trained African philosophers on matters of epistemological significance, it further suggests an implicit relationship between the thesis of epistemicide and the contestations within the history of modern African philosophical discourse. Furthermore, it shows that a range of traditional theoretical commitments that usually align with thinkers trained in the context of traditionally different epistemic camps was undone by the particular historical circumstances of the site of African philosophical production – in which the question of epistemic absence was of immediate concern throughout the discourse.

It is therefore argued that it is difficult to conceptualise of a single character of African epistemology without taking into account the effects that epistemicide has wrought on the canon of African philosophy in terms of its material absences and under-development. It is further argued that the debate on the 'trends', 'schools' or 'traditions' of African philosophy which have a significant bearing on doing epistemology as Kaphagawani and Malherbe (2003) argue, are to be understood as thinkers' attempts to best address the quandary of epistemicide, which also gave thinkers, in the history of ideas, the warrant to hold that philosophy proper was absent on the continent, which in itself is a position that perpetuates epistemicide.

In contemporary 21st century history, the matter of epistemicide in Africa is still under studied and remains speculative within particular academic domains in spite of mounting empirical evidence to the contrary. Souleymane Bachir-Diagne's (2013) philosophical text was in fact contextualised as a response to a wave of arson attacks and pillaging of the libraries in Timbuktu by extremist factions around the period of publication of his text. With the advent of the historical and ever hastening loss of various forms of indigenous cultural and epistemic tools caused by globalisation such as the surge in language death, linguicide and domain-loss in present-day Africa, are some examples which account for extreme cases of the severity of the matter at hand. Indeed, there exists a pressing need to account for these contemporary processes which caused 52 languages to undergo language death on the continent in 2019 alone (Uche 2019). These cases invariably mean the unsalvageable loss of African and world heritage, knowledge and tools for development of autonomous epistemologies in the continued loss of such epistemic and philosophical archives.

CONCLUSION

While academicians and formally trained epistemologists may have initially rejected, ignored or seen theories and concepts like epistemicide which refer to putative knowledge systems as merely speculative, this study has sought to underline the urgency of the issue at hand, extending beyond the parameters of disciplinary debate, into the real world. This study has sought to provide and explicate the relevant philosophical and epistemological heuristics by constructing a thesis of epistemicide to clearly understand the nuances of the phenomenon being designated and what proponents have actually meant by the concept, which they apply from various disciplinary backgrounds. In closing, I submit that continued scholarly assessment of the concept and accurate attribution to events in the contemporary and within the historical record is imperative. Ultimately, the concept epistemicide insists that we hold perpetrators of epistemic injustice to account, reconcile dominant and dominated systems of knowledge, reverse destructive processes for the benefit of putative and marginalised knowledge systems while salvaging and reconstructing local epistemic frameworks and engaging them in fecund ways which encourage knowledge production for posterity.



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