Now Turning to our Tomorrows: Decolonial Futures in the Study of Islam

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Abstract

The emergence and growth of the decolonial movement in recent years has had a dramatic impact on universities around the world, inspiring new epistemic, political and ontological shifts across a wide range of disciplines. These shifts are broadly described as forming part of 'the decolonial turn' (Maldonado-Torres 2007: 261). As new generations of academics in the Study of Islam prepare to further the project of knowledge production in the context of post-Fallist universities, this paper seeks to address the following questions: What might it mean to decolonise the academic Study of Islam? How might decolonisation be consciously foregrounded as a future trajectory in the Study of Islam? After contextualising the academic study of Islam in South Africa and engaging with some of the major themes and concepts of decolonial scholarship, I review contemporary efforts to affect the decolonial turn in the Study of Islam through the initiation of summer schools and conferences. Applying what Sardar (2010) describes as 'futures studies' methodology, I propose ways to propel the decolonial turn as anticipatory intervention, based on an attempt to forecast the possible futures that await in the next five to ten years and beyond.

Keywords: future studies, decoloniality, Study of Islam, Fallist movements, the decolonial turn

Introduction

We forget that the necessary ingredient to make the past work for the future is our energy in the present, metabolizing one into the other.
Audre Lorde (2017: 39)

From 6 to 8 September 2021, social activists and scholars from the Departments of Religion Studies at UNISA (University of South Africa), UKZN (the University of KwaZulu-Natal), Stellenbosch University, UCT (the University of Cape Town), UJ (the University of Johannesburg) and UWC (the University of the Western Cape) participated in a conference titled Studying Islam and Muslims: Trajectories and Futures of South African Scholarship. In addition to providing a historical overview of the Study of Islam at their respective universities, participants drew attention to the themes of their scholarship and questioned the direction(s) in which the discipline would be heading in the foreseeable future. When asked to offer some advice to the next generation of aspiring academics in the field, Prof. Muhammad Haron[1] remarked that a concerted effort was needed to think about the knowledge that we hope to produce in the next five to ten years and to consider how we might go about strategically producing such knowledge. In response to the same question, Prof. Gabeba Baderoon[2] emphasised the importance of 'nourishing stubbornness' in the questions that we ask, 'which will in turn determine the quality of scholarship that is produced' (UNISA, 2021).

Against this backdrop, questions have arisen about the potential role of decolonial scholarship in influencing trajectories in the Study of Islam. These questions include: How might we describe (or at the very least anticipate) the futures towards which we might be moving in the next five to ten years and beyond? What forms of knowledge could we work towards developing in anticipation of such futures? and if the 'coloniality of knowledge, power and being' (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015: 289) continue to be a defining feature of the futures that we anticipate, how might the process of foregrounding decoloniality in the Study of Islam in the present function as a historical intervention aimed at averting or preparing for such futures?

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1 Prof. Haron is a lecturer in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Botswana.

2 Prof. Baderoon is an associate professor in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and African Studies at Penn State University.

Before addressing these questions, in view of supporting the argument that decoloniality should be consciously foregrounded as a significant focus of future scholarship in the Study of Islam, it is necessary to contextualise the terms and concepts that frame this position. By situating the Study of Islam in the context of post-Fallist universities, that is, universities in South Africa that witnessed the emergence and growth of the student-led #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall movements, which primarily called for 'free, decolonized education' (Langa 2017: 6) and arguably propelled decolonisation into popular discourse, I evaluate the strengths and limitations of focusing on *academic institutions* as sites of decolonial struggle. Thereafter, I discuss 'the decolonial turn' (Maldonado-Torres 2007: 261) in terms of conceptual frameworks that have emerged from it, or have been adapted to southern African contexts. I review the initiation of decolonial summer schools and conferences to draw attention to ways in which the decolonial turn has been affected across disciplines generally, and specifically in the Study of Islam. Finally, I draw on what Ziauddin Sardar (2010) describes as futures studies methodology to propose ways of foregrounding decoloniality in the future Study of Islam.

I contend that such an endeavour has the potential to affect a radical re-evaluation of the histories that have shaped and conditioned the lived experiences of Muslim communities in South Africa. By positioning the Study of Islam as needing to be decolonised, I argue that coloniality continues to have a direct impact on the knowledge systems that inform conceptions and practices of Islam in South Africa, and prescribe ways of being Muslim in relation to the historical legacies of colonialism and apartheid. I argue that the prevalence of anti-black racism and the internalisation of white supremacist logics is reflective of colonial conditioning, which needs to be disentangled to re-right our racialised and gendered relationships. Given that these ways of being are inextricably connected to global systems of racist dehumanisation, capitalist exploitation, gendered discrimination, etc., the process of decolonial future building is envisioned as having the potential to transcend the borders of the nation-state.

Contextualising the academic Study of Islam

To conceptualise *the academic* in a succinct way is not an easy task. However, it is necessary if we are to arrive at a clearer understanding of what we mean when we talk about the academic Study of Islam as a discipline that has been subject to the same

historical conditions that have shaped the landscape of university education in South Africa. Notwithstanding the varied histories that have characterised how different faculties across the country have approached the study of Islam (Tayob 1995), it is worth taking a moment to consider some of the implications of universities or academic institutions as sites of knowledge production (and by extension, sites of decolonial struggle). By problematising the roles played by those institutions in reinforcing colonial power relations while appreciating the value of academic discourses that have functioned to challenge such hegemonic influences, I intend to evaluate the extent to which academic institutions can be regarded as appropriate sites for the furthering of decoloniality.

Between conceptions of tertiary education institutions as 'instruments of social change' (Haron 2014: 52) or 'pedagogical sites for citizenship education' (Davids & Waghid 2016: 34), and simultaneously as being responsible for entrenching processes of 'neoliberal globalization'[3] (Cini 2019: 946), it would be prudent to describe them as contested terrain. To the extent that there are considerable differences in respect of orientation towards the purposes, functions and objectives of university education, I would argue that any conceptualisation of the university (and by implication of the knowledge that is produced in the university context) that does not account for the significant role that these institutions have played in entrenching settler colonialism, is incomplete. The direct participation of universities, as Wanelisa Xaba (2017: 97) argues, 'in the subjugation of African people during colonialism', the theft of land on which many university campuses are built, the commodification of knowledge and the (re-)production of knowledge that has served the overlapping interests of settler-colonialism, imperialism, capitalism, patriarchy, white supremacy, etc., warrants critical interrogation.

These patterns continue to produce far-reaching effects in terms of deepening inequalities and perpetuating different forms of structural violence, to which the Fallist movements, protests which preceded them and subsequent student-led protests have sought to draw attention (Xaba 2017; Sooliman 2019). At no time have the consequences of these patterns and the realities of inequality been made more apparent than in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, with access to online

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3 Which Cini (2016) characterizes in terms of the gradual divestment of the state from higher education; the positioning of education as being primarily about economic growth; and the global influence of neoliberalism in the conditioning of education policies and practices.

modes of learning being contingent upon a deepening digital divide (Godsell 2020). Moreover, the structuring of such knowledges on the foundations of what Ramon Grosfoguel (2013: 89) has described as 'epistemic racism/sexism, [made possible by] the genocidal/epistemicidal colonial/patriarchal projects of the 16th century' has resulted in 1) the privileging of 'Western man epistemology' (Grosfoguel 2013: 89) as universally applicable and objectively true, and 2) the attempted marginalisation of epistemologies that could undermine the logics of settler-colonialism.

Ironically, in its early stages, the treatment of the Study of Islam as a university discipline was motivated primarily by an intention on the part of Christian theologians 'to inform potential missionaries and priests about Islam's "diabolical nature" as a false religion and the danger it posed to Christian beliefs and practices' (Haron 2014: 53). Thus the formal introduction of the Study of Islam at the University of Durban Westville (UDW) around 1974, drawing on longstanding orientalist orientations (Haron 2014), was attached to a political agenda that sought to marginalise Muslim epistemologies and worldviews. Palombo (2014: 43) provides a useful example to illustrate the functional relationship between knowledge production and structures of power, the effects of which continue to be felt to this day:

> The privatization and secularization of Islam were common tactics of the apartheid state to keep Muslims 'obedient' and out of the liberation struggle. Apartheid scholarship, such as the *Sentrum vir Islamkunde* at Rand Afrikaans University[4], described South African Muslims as intrinsically non-African and non-European. For the apartheid state, it was wholly desirable for Muslims to think about Islam primarily as a private experience largely confined to the mosque.

It is worth noting that the apartheid state was, to a large extent, successful in entrenching such seemingly 'apolitical' discourses of Islam. As Palombo (2014) highlights, the emergence of Islamic liberation theology in the context of the anti-apartheid struggle not only functioned to challenge the hegemony of the state, but also that of religious authorities who propagated theologies that were divorced from the struggle against oppression. Despite these associations, it is also important to recognise that universities have operated as sites for the development of critical

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theoretical frameworks and knowledges that have functioned to critique settler-colonial hegemonies and their associated orientalist positionings. With reference to the Study of Islam, wide-ranging theoretical contributions in the past fifty to seventy years, such as the articulation of Islamic liberation theologies, environmentalist discourses, gender theories, legal sciences, hermeneutics and more are indicative of both the broad scope of the discipline and the possibilities for post-Orientalist decolonial methodologies to be developed and applied within each of these subject areas. This position highlights a wide range of possibilities for the application of such methodologies while accounting for the personal inclinations of scholars towards their respective areas of specialisation.

Questions surrounding the identities of scholars as 'insiders / outsiders' may persist, either with respect to Muslim / non-Muslim participation in the development of knowledge of Islam, or in the position of 'outsider' academic discourses in relation to the 'insider' discourses of traditionalist educational institutions such as Darul 'Ulums (Haron 2014). However, I would argue that a shared focus on the objectives of decolonisation could serve as a means of bridging some of these divisions. Moreover, in the process of recognising the responsibility to decolonise as one that entails the un-learning of anti-black racism, misogyny, xenophobia and other inherited ways of relating to racialised and gendered 'insiders / outsiders', we may work to reconstitute and thus highlight the reality of, and the harm caused by the wholesale erasure of black African Muslim histories and subjectivities from the Study of Islam (Sitoto 2003). Such focus is necessary if decolonial futures in which different knowledge systems, worldviews and lived experiences may be integrated to enrich, challenge and complement efforts to redress the harm caused by coloniality are to be imagined, and if the psychological, emotional and material harm caused by colonial dehumanisation is to be healed and repaired.

Conceptualising decolonisation and 'the decolonial turn'

The widespread proliferation of decolonial scholarship in recent years, across a broad range of disciplines and geographical contexts, appears to have resulted in some ambiguity as to the meanings and applications of decolonisation. From attempts to limit decolonisation to the transformation of university curricula, involving the substitution of Eurocentric perspectives for Afrocentric ones (Mutekwe 2017), to the characterisation of decolonisation as a continuation of broader struggles for 'social

justice, equity and equality' (Albertus 2019: 2), a lack of conceptual clarity or focus may limit our capacity to effectively strategise for decolonial futures. To the extent that no individual can lay claim to the term decolonial, and to the extent that some degree of flexibility in defining decolonisation may in fact be needed to allow for new ways of interpreting and engaging with the concept in different contexts, it may be worth homing in on useful conceptual frameworks that are applicable in the context of this paper.

To appreciate the necessity of decolonisation and the significance of the decolonial turn, we must first engage with the meanings of the terms colonialism and coloniality on a foundational level. Kessi, Marks and Ramugondo (2020: 272) define colonialism and coloniality as 'the subjugation and subjection of people, societies, and experiences for the purposes of accumulating knowledge, wealth, and power that serve, directly or indirectly, white Western hegemony'. Maldonado-Torres (2007: 243) draws an important distinction between the two terms to develop the argument that by thinking about coloniality as 'the long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism', we may be better equipped to grapple with the ways in which the structures of power created by colonialism continue to daily shape our ways of being and knowing.

Kessi et al. (2020: 271) describe the act of decolonising as having many dimensions, entailing:

> a political and normative ethic and practice of resistance and intentional undoing— unlearning and dismantling unjust practices, assumptions, and institutions—as well as persistent positive action to create and build alternative spaces, networks, and ways of knowing that transcend our epicolonial[5] inheritance.

Inherent in their description of what it means to decolonise are allusions to 1) critiquing existing frameworks that function to reinforce colonial relations of power and 2) taking meaningful action to build better alternatives to such frameworks and knowledge systems. Indeed, the authors strongly emphasise the need for decolonial theory to translate into disruptive action, without which they claim such theory

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5 Kessi et al. (2020: 271) define epicolonial inheritance as 'the features of coloniality that pervade and supersede systems and relations of power'.

cannot be deemed to be decolonial. Kessi et al.'s (2020) position in this regard is not unlike that of Tuck & Yang (2012: 1), who argue that 'the metaphorization of decolonization' without firm commitments to the repatriation of land and indigenous life, does little to unsettle coloniality. Arguably, such calls to action are commensurable with the qur'anic ethic of acting to 'repel that which is evil with that which is better' (Q. 41: 34), in the sense that the action taken to oppose coloniality should result in the establishment of better ways of being.

Decolonial theory has proliferated tremendously over the past two decades, forming part of what Maldonado-Torres (2007: 261) describes as the decolonial turn: 'A shift in knowledge production [which] introduces questions about the effects of colonization in modern subjectivities and modern forms of life as well as contributions of racialized and colonized subjectivities to the production of knowledge and critical thinking.' However, if the process of questioning does not translate into meaningful action that disrupts colonial relations of power, the decolonial turn runs the risk of merely existing in abstraction while leaving the structures of coloniality intact.

Reviewing efforts to affect the decolonial turn in the Study of Islam

Considering the different forms that such action has taken, it should be noted that the initiation of decolonial schools and conferences has played a significant role in catalysing critical shifts in knowledge production, facilitating engagement with decolonial scholarship and exposing participants to 'decolonial language' (Sooliman, 2019: 48) with which to name, explain, analyse and critique coloniality and its manifestations (Sader 2020). Sooliman (2019: 47) highlights the fact that through such scholarship many black students who attended decoloniality schools[6] were exposed to 'an alternative reasoning to Cartesian philosophy […] for the first time'. The fact that this language and these concepts would come to feature in the core demands of the Fallist movements, prompting disruptive debates that have functioned to challenge established norms of academia, is a significant indicator of the decolonial turn as a form of praxis. By focusing specifically on two schools

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6 Sooliman (2019) cites the example of decoloniality schools and symposiums by the University of South Africa (UNISA), the Archie Mafeje Research Institute for Applied Social Policy (AMRI), Institute of Global Dialogue (IGD) and the Thabo Mbeki African Leadership Institute (TMALI) from as early as 2014.

/ conferences—situated in the Global South and the Global North[7] respectively—which sought to relate decolonial language to the study and practice of Islam, I intend to draw on the themes that emerged from these conferences to inform on how decoloniality might be foregrounded in future studies of Islam.

In January 2020, the Department of Religion Studies at the University of Johannesburg hosted its second biennial Critical Muslim Studies Decolonial Struggles and Liberation Theologies Summer School in Cape Town[8]. The organisers described[9] the summer school programme as 'an attempt to situate the conversations on Islam and Decoloniality more firmly in the Global South'. A concerted effort was made to elicit input from scholars who were 'either from and/or [taught] in the Global South'. The school intended to engage 'with forms of praxis among the South African Muslim community, integrating issues of gender, sexuality, race and diversity more centrally within decolonial Muslim discourse'. Despite being held in Cape Town, the school was predominantly attended by participants from the Global North, with limited representation of students from the Global South. One of the organisers, Iskander Abbasi, explained that this disparity arose mainly due to financial barriers that students from the Global South encountered and a lack of institutional support for subsidising the programme.

Among the themes covered by the summer school programme were an Introduction to Decoloniality and Critical Muslim Studies; Islamic Liberation Theology; Islam, Hip-Hop and Popular Culture; and Islamic Feminism and Gender Justice. Prof. Grosfoguel's (2013) elaboration on the role that the 'genocides/ epistemicides of the long 16th century [had played in entrenching] Western man epistemology' was foundational in framing subsequent presentations. Putting decolonial pedagogy into practice, Dr Su'ad Abdul Khabeer (2020) drew attention to 'the disembodiment of knowledge' that stems from Eurocentric epistemology

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7 The concept of the Global North-South divide is integral to the discourse of the geopolitics of knowledge, which draws attention to the disproportionate influence that knowledge produced in the Global North wield in shaping academic discourses around the world (Grosfoguel, 2013).

8 It is worth noting that summer schools exploring the relationship between Critical Muslim Studies and Decoloniality have historically been hosted in Granada, Spain. The decision to host such programs in Cape Town, with the first summer school being hosted in January 2018, was informed by a range of factors including: the prohibitive costs of travel that disproportionately excluded participants from the Global South, and the need to foreground contributions to decolonial scholarship from the South (Esack, 2017).

9 Study of Islam at UJ. 2019. Critical Muslim Studies: Decolonial Struggles and Liberation Theologies. Shared on Facebook at: *https://www.facebook.com/StudyOfIslamAtUj/posts/1327018617449381*

by engaging participants in the process of familiarising themselves with their own embodied knowledge. She also elaborated on the need to counter the hegemonic influence of Western man epistemology by consciously 'citing Black women'. Presentations by Profs Sa'diyya Shaikh (2020) and Fatima Seedat (2020) explored the potential for reframing gendered relationships along lines of justice and mutual compassion as an integral dimension of decoloniality (and, by extension, a necessary requirement for the building of decolonial futures). Space does not permit for a full elaboration on each presentation, but this was intended to make the point that decoloniality is already playing a role in shaping the academic Study of Islam (CMS Summer School, 2020). My argument seeks to explore the question of how this role might be consciously amplified in our respective futures.

While the targeting of the programme 'towards advanced undergraduates, graduate students, early career scholars […] working professionals and activists'[8] may have allowed for in-depth engagement with these themes, I would posit that a concerted effort needs to be made to consider how decolonial pedagogies may be applied to make these concepts and ideas more widely accessible. This process may involve, inter alia, re-imagining the contexts and locations in which knowledge can be developed; undertaking to cater such decolonial programmes to differentiated audiences with the application of appropriate pedagogical strategies; and opening spaces for dialogue in mosques and community centres.

The second conference is the Muslims on Turtle Island series that was hosted virtually by the Centre for Comparative Muslim Studies, a subsidiary of Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, from 1–3 September 2021 (CCMS 2021). As per the conference proposal,[10] the initiation of the series was based on a recognition of decolonisation as 'a major theme within the social sciences [which has] raised important questions about the nature of the university and [has] found its way into everyday life' (Bulbulia 2020: 1). The series sought to examine the relationship 'between Muslim settler communities and the Indigenous peoples and lands they are now on [while raising questions about] the complicity of Muslims in settler-colonial violence'.[11] An important goal of the conference was to focus on building meaningful relationships with Indigenous communities (i.e. First Nations) 'in order

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10 I would like to extend my gratitude to Aslam Bulbulia, one of the organisers of the conference, for sharing the proposal document with me and for granting me permission to refer to it in this paper.

11 ibid.

to better inform and enrich decolonial knowledge'.[12] The framing of the conference around themes such as land, Muslim-indigenous relationships and the identities of 'Muslim settlers' is reflective to some extent of the role played by the contexts in which decolonial discourses are developed in that it influences what forms the basis of such discourses. Bearing in mind the similarities and differences between the histories of societies that have experienced settler-colonialism in particular ways, it stands to reason that these particularities would give rise to different interpretations of decoloniality. By comparing these interpretations in the light of our differentiated histories, we may come to realise what Ziauddin Sardar (2005: 13) describes as 'a future where all the vast and varied ways of being human, all the plethora of different cultures, past, present and the future, exist in symbiosis as though the globe was a well-tended garden'.

The CMS Summer School and the Muslims on Turtle Island series have by no means covered all the initiatives that have been undertaken globally with the intention of affecting the decolonial turn in the Study of Islam, nor is the model of the summer school or conference intended to represent the only means by which decoloniality can be related to the discipline. However, by focusing on these specific programmes, I contend that the convergences and divergences of their respective themes represent a wide range of future possibilities for decolonial inquiry into the academic Study of Islam.

Futures studies, the next five to ten years, and beyond

Returning to Prof. Haron's advice, the foregoing discussion was intended to inform our approach to the question of what knowledges we might work towards developing over the next five to ten years and beyond. This approach rests on the assumption that coloniality—as the deeply embedded entanglement of colonial power relations, knowledge systems and ways of being—is likely to continue to play a significant role in shaping our foreseeable futures. In other words, as deterministic as it may seem, it may be reasonable to assume that our futures '[have] already been largely colonized' (Sardar & Sweeney 2016: 5) and will therefore continue to need decolonisation. While not without their inherent limitations, the application of futures studies methodologies—such as Sardar & Sweeney's (2016) Three Tomorrows of Postnormal

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12 ibid.

Times (3T) framework—may be useful when thinking conceptually about the futures into which we may be heading, configuring strategies to decolonise such futures and using future scholarship in the study of Islam to guide such strategies.

To a large extent, the looting and unrest that affected South Africa in July 2021 (Makhaye 2021) embodied what Sardar and Sweeney (2016: 2) refer to as 'postnormal times'. The term is used to describe an epoch that is largely defined by the 3Cs: complexity, contradictions and chaos, and is intended to signify the unpredictability of future outcomes under such circumstances. Against the backdrop of a global pandemic, which has in many ways functioned as a 'postnormal burst'[13] of epic proportions, it may seem disingenuous to even attempt the proposition of decolonial futures. Nevertheless I would contend that it is precisely because of the underlying structural fault lines that these incidents have highlighted that the need to strategise for such futures has become that much more urgent.

The 3T framework serves a useful purpose in terms of attempting to account for the complexities of postnormal times while presenting three possible tomorrows, defined by varying degrees of uncertainty and ignorance: 'the Extended Present; the Familiar Future(s); and the Unthought Future(s)' (Sardar & Sweeney 2016: 5). The most immediate tomorrow, the Extended Present, is described in terms of the continuation of deeply embedded trends, a relatively limited range of future possibilities and the dominance of surface-level ignorance, which can be overcome 'through learning, research, appreciating the viewpoints of others, and asking the right questions'.[14] The Familiar Future(s) (i.e. the futures that we might imagine based on familiar images or associations), is characterised by a wider range of future possibilities and a greater degree of uncertainty and ignorance, particularly in terms of problems or questions that may appear in the distance of our imagination, but cannot be grasped in more detail until such time as those distances are reached. Lastly, the deeply uncertain Unthought Future is described as a tomorrow in which 'anything can happen and nothing is known', and for which 'our worldview and epistemology is totally inadequate'.[15]

Using this framework, I would posit that each tomorrow presents opportunities for imagining and actively constructing decolonial futures through the Study of Islam.

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13 Referring to a moment or period in which 'the system goes totally postnormal and there is no place to hide' (Sardar & Sweeney 2016: 2)

14 ibid.: 8

15 ibid.: 7

While the Extended Present—which roughly covers the next five to ten years[16]—may continue to be dominated by worrying trends in, for example environmental degradation, deepening wealth and income inequality, and gender-based violence, the fact that we can consciously anticipate these developments implies that we have the capacity to start initiating interventions that could at least broaden the range of future possibilities that may appear in five to ten years' time. Based on Kessi et al.'s (2020) definition of decolonisation as both critique and the active building of better alternatives, it stands to reason that such interventions should be framed in terms of decolonial thought, which seeks to historicise and disentangle the root causes of these trends.

One example of a particularly worrying trend that may be examined through the lens of the Extended Present is that of the inherently violent criminalisation of people who are homeless by the City of Cape Town, which is governed by the Democratic Alliance (Mesquita 2021). Seeking to enforce a by-law that was designed to prevent the (somewhat ironic) 'unlawful occupation of land' (BusinessTech 2021), the municipality's actions beg a number of pertinent questions, such as: Where, if at all, do people who are homeless feature in the Extended Present futures that are envisioned by the City of Cape Town. How has the drafting and enforcement of these by-laws accounted for the structural legacies of colonialism and apartheid that have rendered people homeless. And how might the reasoning upon which these measures are based be challenged on the basis of decolonial commitments in the Study of Islam?

Likewise, if Familiar Future(s) are to be imagined in terms of images or associations that may be projected from the present, we may consider applying the decolonial principle of drawing on different sources of knowledge to broaden the scope of the images and associations that we project. The *solarpunk* art movement, for example, uses different art forms to explore imaginative questions around the kind of worlds that will emerge in the wake of a complete transition to the use of renewable energies (Hamilton 2017), or – from a decolonial, theological perspective – in "the re-traditioning of the Land [through] Indigenous theological traditions" (Garcia-Johnson, 2020:60). Likewise, Muslim futurist movements such as the *ALHAMDU* collective (2021), which calls for the realization of a 'joyous Muslim future [in which] our dignity, flourishing, and imaginations as Muslims are actualized', may act as

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16 ibid.

bases from which new images and associations are projected. To some extent, these movements serve as examples of collaborative creativity and ethical imagination in action, which Sardar & Sweeney (2016:6) describe as 'the only tools for constructing scenarios [in the Unthought Future]'.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the process of foregrounding decoloniality in future studies of Islam is one that requires us to pay attention to the context in which such studies are being undertaken. Given the contradiction of academic knowledge as functioning to both entrench and challenge settler colonialism and coloniality, with the site of the academy continuing to bear witness to hard- fought student-led struggles against the real effects of colonial domination, it is imperative that the decolonial struggle extend beyond the academy. By framing decolonisation as critique coupled with disruptive action, we are re-affirming our commitment to the dismantling of colonial structures of power and the tangible redress of harm caused by coloniality. The introduction of summer schools represents a clear example of action that has been taken to deepen and broaden knowledge of decoloniality and to propel the decolonial turn. On this basis, drawing on Sardar and Sweeney's (2016) 3T model, we may be better equipped to prepare ourselves for the realisation of wide-ranging decolonial futures.

If the Study of Islam is to provide alternative theoretical frameworks and practicable solutions that are relevant, responsive and deeply rooted in a shared commitment to the liberation of our societies from dehumanising discourses and ways of being, there is a disciplinary responsibility to work towards the realisation of decolonial futures. Beyond abstraction, such a responsibility must result in firm commitments to improving the material conditions of people who have borne the brunt of settler-colonial dehumanisation. When this happens, there will be the potential to engender hope, develop new competencies and nurture self-belief that extends into healing intergenerational trauma and realising a more just world for current and future generations.

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