Environmental Science and Policy 180 (2026) 104400

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Environmental Science and Policy

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/envsci

Recovery from alienation and deficient relationality: Socio-economic foundations and the role of relational pedagogy

Frederik Unseld [a], Michael Miess [b,c,d,e,*]

[a] University of Basel, Petersplatz 1, P. O. Box, Basel 4001, Switzerland
[b] Vienna University of Economics and Business (WU Wien) – Institute for Ecological Economics, Welthandelsplatz 1, Vienna 1020, Austria
[c] King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST), 4700 King Abdullah University of Science and Technology, Thuwal 23955-6900, Saudi Arabia
[d] Environment Agency Austria (Umweltbundesamt), Spittelauer Lände 5, Vienna 1090, Austria
[e] Institute for Advanced Studies (IHS), Josefstädter Straße 39, Vienna 1080, Austria

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
Alienation
Deficient relationality
Attachment disturbances
Decommonization
Psychological costs
Relational pedagogy

ABSTRACT

We articulate and politicize the psychological costs of the dominant socio-cultural paradigm of Eurocentric modernity, which structurally corrodes human relationality and causes alienation, to infer implications for unlearning and undoing this alienation. To conceptualize these psychological costs, we create a dialogue between alienation understood as deficient relationality, clinical attachment theory, and decommonization. The latter is the capitalist process deforming value creation in the life-domain and creating structural alienation through reification, fetishization, and appropriation of the commons. We then develop a micro–meso–macro level framework to unlearn and undo alienation. We use clinical attachment theory as a heuristic to explore ontological ruptures resulting from alienation and decommonization as these impair the human capacity to relate. To trace macro–level capitalist processes and their psychological costs, we explore the history of fracturing place- and attachment-based forms of knowing and being: first through an internal European coloniality, and second through the global dispossessions of the imperial European colonial project. We show how these structural severances are internalized as individual relational ruptures and argue for the need for relational recovery. Finally, drawing on therapeutic modalities for attachment repair, we propose relational pedagogy as an exemplary micro-level practice of recovery from alienation. Relational pedagogy helps to process relational rupture and to build collective agency for cultivating pluriversal and relational ethics, which we see as a normative reference point for just social-ecological transformations. We point to the potential to scale such practices to meso- and macro-levels by expanding relational commons through processes of peer-led recovery.

1. Introduction

Current hegemonic societal structures manifest as a polycrisis characterized by severe ecological disruptions, deep socio-economic-cultural crises, and widespread psychological fragmentation. At the core of this polycrisis lies the Eurocentric project of modernity, which rests on a foundational separation of humans from nature, privileging linearity, abstraction, and control over more relational approaches to existence (Quijano, 2000; Wynter, 2003; Escobar, 2011, 2018). While postmodern critique essentially deconstructed modernity's seeming certainties, its frequent reduction to disembodied academic logic often perpetuated the separation it sought to overcome, failing to provide a viable alternative (Bhaskar, 2002).

European forms of knowing, especially those based on reductionist, mechanistic, and dualistic forms of enlightenment thinking (Merchant, 1990; Lent, 2017), have in turn actively delegitimized 'non-rational' or 'non-modern' ways of knowing, being, and relating (Spivak, 2004; Kimmerer, 2015; Escobar, 2011, 2018; Mignolo and Walsh, 2018). The associated epistemic violence, or epistemicide (Santos, de., 2014), first within Europe as an internal form of coloniality (Bartlett, 1994) and then outside Europe through its imperial colonial project, has structurally fractured or erased place-based, ancestral knowledge systems and undermined relational frameworks crucial for human and ecological well-being (Shiva, 1993; Wynter, 2003; Spivak, 2004; Simpson, 2017). The resulting socio-economic reality propagates the frequent reproduction of disconnection. Its profound psychological costs can be

* Corresponding author at: Vienna University of Economics and Business (WU Wien) – Institute for Ecological Economics, Welthandelsplatz 1, Vienna 1020, Austria.
E-mail addresses: michael.gregor.miess@wu.ac.at, michael.miess@kaust.edu.sa, mmiess@hotmail.com (M. Miess).

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envsci.2026.104400
Received 30 June 2025; Received in revised form 23 April 2026; Accepted 12 May 2026
Available online 20 May 2026
1462-9011/© 2026 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

captured with the concept of alienation (Fanon et al., 1952; Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Jaeggi, 2016).

We propose interventions toward unlearning, undoing, and overcoming alienation. By establishing a cross-disciplinary dialogue between social philosophy, attachment theory, and decommonization as a non-essentialist materialist account of capitalism, we develop a heuristic to explore how alienating macro-level social processes impact individuals' relational capacities. In particular, we show how Rahel Jaeggi's (2016) phenomenological understanding of alienation as deficient relationality can be expanded by insights from clinical attachment theory (Bowlby, 1979; Brown and Elliot, 2016) and the macro-structural materialist framework of decommonization (Hosseini and Gills, 2024). We thus conceptualize modernity and associated longer-term historical processes of imperial violence, alienation, and corrosion of relationality as structural processes of decommonization. These are systemic fractures and enclosures of the life-domain that have naturalized a pathological form of life (Jaeggi, 2018) rooted in extraction rather than relation.

Our socio-economic-psychological framework extends to empirical research: While social philosopher Rahel Jaeggi (2016) explores how collective conditions manifest individually without focusing on recovery, Daniel Brown and David Elliott's (2016) therapeutic framework actively engages clients in experiential processes for recovery and integration. Combined with the framework of decommonization, these approaches inform a relational framework that meets several objectives: (1) It is an empirical investigative method into the subjective experience of alienation in late-stage capitalism. (2) It describes one form of recovery process for individuals and groups. (3) It constitutes a multi-level theory of alienation and recovery, grounded in place- and attachment-based forms of knowing and being. This theory allows us to derive impacts, strategies, and practices to unlearn and undo harmful ontologies and the associated worldviews, assumptions, and myths (Ramcilovic-Suominen, 2025a, 2025b).

As mental health awareness has grown, it is increasingly being acknowledged that nearly a billion people worldwide live with mental disorders (WHO, 2021; Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation, 2022; WHO, 2022). However, the structural conditions underlying mental health challenges - such as war and conflict, polarized societies, precarious labor, ecological degradation, or global heating - continue to fuel a crisis therapy alone cannot resolve. Our approach politicizes psychological functioning from the individual level to a collective understanding and moves beyond Western psychology's traditional individualistic concept of personhood. We hence acknowledge how relational deficiencies mirror and are caused by deeper structural dysfunctions of culturally ingrained belief systems and societal macro-structures (Quijano, 2000; Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Mignolo and Escobar, 2010; Maté and Maté, 2022).

Our theoretical framework derives a link between personal and collective recovery from alienation that could potentially scale up beyond the relational pedagogy we propose to capture macro-level social structures (e.g., institutions and organizations) and to co-enable just social-ecological transformations (Ramcilovic-Suominen, 2025a). Peer-led spaces of healing could move from the micro-level of internal human subjectivity and the meso-level of group-led recovery from alienation (the generation of 'we-spaces' as relational commons) to macro-levels (re-imagining larger societal structures through expanding these relational commons). This could open up pathways for a new form of collective imagination beyond the current crisis modes (Cairns, 2025). We align our relational framework with common factors theory from psychotherapy (Frank et al., 1963/2025; Wampold and Imel, 2015) to underline from a Western academic perspective that the relational ontologies cultivated by animistic traditions and Indigenous knowledge systems are a crucial pathway to systemic social-ecological transformation (Segura et al., 2026).

In the following, Section 2 lays out our relational theoretical framework by conceptualizing and politicizing alienation (including its psychological costs) as decommonization that creates relational deficiencies, while expanding attachment repair to more-than-human forms of relationality. Section 3 traces the psychological costs of the historical processes of capitalism and colonialism, highlighting ontological ruptures caused by the violence of the European imperial project. Section 4 proposes a relational pedagogy that fosters experiential learning, collective repair, and re-weaving of relationships to self, others, and the more-than-human world through shared affective and somatic presence. Section 5 concludes.

2. Alienation, deficient relationality, and decommonization: a systemic dialogue

2.1. Conceptualizing alienation and its psychological costs as decommonization

For early Critical Theory (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1944; Marcuse, 1990), alienation was a central concept whose content was often taken as self-evident, serving as an unquestioned starting point for social analysis (Jaeggi, 2016). This definition, however, implicitly relied on a potentially unclear concept of human essence, a 'true nature' from which one could become alienated. Building on Rahel Jaeggi's (2016) redefinition, our analysis moves beyond such essentialist notions to understand alienation as a deficient relation. As Jaeggi argues, "alienation does not indicate the absence of a relation but is itself a relation, if a deficient one", which she characterizes as a "relation of relationlessness" (2016, p. 1). For Jaeggi, understanding alienation requires us to diagnose "various ways in which relations of appropriation are disturbed" (2016, p. 1). Thus conceived, alienation is a lived experience with profound psychological costs, preventing individuals from truly appropriating their own actions or relations. The process of appropriation here is understood as a productive and open one that entails both integration and transformation of that which is encountered. Fundamentally, this view shifts our focus to the *qualities of relating* and *being-in-relation* (see Section 2.3).

Such a relational perspective on alienation lends itself to a cross-disciplinary dialogue with clinical attachment theory and its core concept of attachment disturbances (Brown and Elliot, 2016). Attachment disturbances form in the infant/child-caregiver relation due to insufficient caregiving, often stemming from caregiver stressors or their inherited insecure attachment. They form deficient attachment maps, also called 'internal working models' (Bowlby, 1979). Such maps, characterized by defensive exclusion of experience (e.g., avoidant attachment) or hyperfocus/hypervigilance (e.g., anxious attachment), or a mix thereof (e.g., disorganized attachment), result in rigid and impoverished relational capacities. These can cause significant psychological suffering, even when not considered clinically relevant. When the core conditions for secure attachment are incomplete, the self partly organizes around disconnection. Thus, insecure attachment is not merely a private affliction, but a structurally embedded 'relationlessness.' Conventional attachment theory primarily examines human-to-human relationships, yet its foundational principles offer a potent lens for broader systemic analysis.

We then propose to ground this relational conceptualization of alienation in a non-essentialist, materialist framework of capitalism and thus to see it as part of the broader process of decommonization (Hosseini and Gills, 2024). Decommonization operates through: (1) reification, i.e. objectification of commons to be appropriated and transformed into capital; (2) fetishization, i.e., legitimization of capitalist value creation and making it the final cause of value production; and (3) appropriation, i.e., legal and policy procedures to enforce capitalist value creation and regulate ownership. Decommonization deforms relations (conviviality, formal cause of true value as the capacity to 'live well together') as one dimension of the commoning causes of what Hosseini and Gills call the 'true value' that emanates from life, nourishes life, and is sourced from the commons. Decommonization additionally deforms the other commoning causes to true value: its

efficient causes (creativity, i.e., human and more-than-human creative powers), its material causes (liveability, i.e., ecologies providing for material existence), and its final causes (alterity, i.e., ends of human actions for purposeful 'well-living').

The decommonization framework allows us to understand alienation as a structural perversion of these four fundamental commoning causes of true value. These are the substance of our relational existence and thus *all have a relational dimension at their core*: creativity is our relationship to self and agency. Liveability is our kinship with the web of life and 'mother' earth. Conviviality is the fabric of our connection to others (the sphere of life we most easily recognize in terms of relationality). Alterity is our capacity to relate to an open future. We posit that the enclosure of these spheres through decommonization is the macro-structural process that fractures relational bonds and creates the widespread deficient relationality we describe in this text.

Insecure attachment on the subjective level is thus deeply entangled with the socio-historic process of decommonization. Exploring how this macro-structural process is internalized on a micro-level, where it manifests as relationlessness (i.e., numbness, indifference, or hypervigilance), is one of the core objectives of the experiential research program we propose. To be clear, we are not equating a socio-historical condition with a clinical diagnosis. Neither are decommonization and re-commonization issues that the relational pedagogy we outline in Section 4 can solve on its own. What relational pedagogy can realistically achieve, however, is to support the creation of an embodied, relational awareness of the effects of structural decommonization and how these manifest in our subjective and collective experiences as alienation. These are preliminary steps towards a relational recovery that might prefigure broader political strategies for re-commonization.

2.2. Alienation as a politicized psychological phenomenon

The widespread relational deficiencies observed today are not solely individual struggles, but reflect deeper structural dysfunctions stemming from the coloniality of power (Quijano, 2000) and the ontology of separation (Escobar, 2011, 2018). This necessitates bridging the historical split between social critique and psychological insight, a division Michel Foucault (1961) traced to the institutional separation of psychiatry and social sciences under enlightenment rationality. By creating a dialogue between Jaeggi's phenomenological inquiry and clinical frameworks like attachment theory, we offer a heuristic to explore how societal relational disturbances become internalized, shaping subjectivity and sociality.

However, without an explicit normative framework, current forms of relationality are often accepted as a given, where the seeming neutrality of modern ethical pluralism prevents the critique of dysfunctional forms of life (Jaeggi, 2018). Breaking this cycle necessitates a normative baseline. We propose the capacity for reciprocal relationality as this necessary normative yardstick, forming the foundation of both secure attachment at the micro-level and conviviality at the macro-level. This baseline allows us to diagnose the extractive logics inherent in colonial systems that the dominant socio-economic order otherwise normalizes. This is not a fixed Western universal, but a normative reference point inviting pluriversality (Escobar, 2018, 2020) and relational ethics (Metz and Miller, 2016).

Our analysis is deeply informed by the decolonial tradition, particularly by Frantz Fanon. In his seminal *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), Fanon offers a psychologically incisive account of alienation under colonialism, written as an intellectual and existential autobiography. His writing testifies to how colonial violence fosters self-estrangement. Fanon not only exposed the psychic violence inflicted upon the colonized, but also dared to show how everyone within the colonial-capitalist order is profoundly altered by it. Fanon laid the foundation for a revolutionary pedagogy in his therapeutic practice, pushing against the pathologizing clinical detachment of the European model. Healing, beyond medical treatment, hence further became a question of reclaiming one's agency, reentering history, and remaking one's subjectivity within a collective trajectory of liberation (Gordon, 2015). To comprehend alienation today is to recognize it not as an individual pathology but as a pervasive social order; in this, we stand in the lineage of Fanon's work, which reveals the psychological as profoundly political.

Crucially, the alienation we describe cannot be resolved through intellectual critique alone. Decolonial thinkers, such as Walter Mignolo and Arturo Escobar (Mignolo and Escobar, 2010; Escobar, 2018), emphasize that alienation's persistence is rooted in epistemic control and the historical privileging of disembodied, abstract knowledge that severs cognition from sensation and theory from lived experience. Modernity's claim to epistemic universality, for Mignolo, is a colonial gesture that delegitimizes embodied and relational ways of knowing. Escobar further argues that modern ontology's radical separations, i.e., mind/body, human/nature, self/other, require a profound transformation in how we relate to the world. Therefore, if alienation is a disruption of relation, its repair must occur in and through relation: not only with other human beings, but also with the more-than-human world and mediating systemic structures. This implies a slow reweaving of embeddedness, fostering conditions for contact, responsiveness, and mutual recognition.

The project of modernity systematically undermined relational embeddedness through escalating abstraction and epistemic violence that marginalized subjective experience. Enlightenment rationalism, notably as Descartes interpreted it (Descartes, 1641; Cottingham, 1992; Kim, 2018), elevated detached reason as the highest epistemic ideal, thereby invalidating relational worlds grounded in land, family, love, and kinship (Shiva, 1993; Spivak, 2004; Kimmerer, 2015; Simpson, 2017; Tuhiwai Smith, 2021). The simultaneous fracturing or outright erasure of cosmological frameworks and kin-based belonging was structurally necessary for consolidating colonial and capitalist orders (Quijano, 2000; Wynter, 2003; Moreton-Robinson, 2015; TallBear, 2019). This was an ontological rupture, reconfiguring what kinds of experience could be acknowledged, shared, or even sensed. Decommonization and commodification, within this logic, operated through a deep dispossession: the disavowal of attachment-based forms of knowing. The subjective texture of being-in-relation, feeling safe, seen, and held, was framed as sentimental and relegated to the feminized societal domains of the private and emotional life, thereby rendered irrelevant to public reason and market rationality (Federici, 2004).

Commodification and decommonization hollow out the very conditions for genuine relation (Marx, 1867; Sweezy, 1943; Polanyi, 1944; Harvey, 2002, 2011; Hosseini and Gills, 2024). What was once kin becomes commodity; what was once sacred becomes externalized cost. Alienation and decommonization thus function as both preconditions and consequences of a world where felt relation is severed from systemic recognition. The spiritual and cosmological dimensions of embeddedness – the sense of belonging to a web of more-than-human life, to ancestral time, to sacred landscapes - are especially vulnerable. Some Indigenous languages still reflect the idea of kinship to nature using verbs more than nouns, suggesting agency and ongoing relationship – 'to be a bay' as a verb, or 'being kin' as alive and active (Kimmerer, 2015). Such concepts foster a view of the world as a communion of subjects, which a growing strand of literature sees as necessary for successful and just social-ecological transformations (Artmann, 2023; Beery et al., 2023; Bridle, 2023; Cairns, 2025; Ramcilovic-Suominen, 2025a, 2025b; Segura et al., 2026). The loss of such ideas of deep and extended kinship that honored experiential truths constitutes a profound psychological wound: the fracturing or erasure of the ontologies that make relational life intelligible. What is required, then, is not simply critique but also repair: a reconnection to the worlds we have been taught to treat as inert, irrational, or obsolete.

2.3. Attachment repair and expansion of the relational commons

While Indigenous ontologies have long maintained practices of deep kinship, within the Western psychological paradigm, this process of reconnection is best conceptualized as a matter of attachment repair. Attachment theory, developed by John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth (Bowlby, 1979), and expanded by researchers like Brown and Elliott (2016), demonstrates that the capacity for coherent selfhood, emotional regulation, and relational flourishing arises through relationship, not in isolation. Early infant-caregiver interactions, marked by emotional presence and responsiveness, lay the groundwork for a stable sense of self and world.

Attachment theory offers a robust framework to describe the impact of disturbed relationality and how these formative relational processes shape our internal worlds. Central to this is John Bowlby's concept of internal working models (Bowlby, 1979) that describes how early relational experiences shape emotional development and the architecture of the self. Bowlby defined internal working models as internal representations, formed through early caregiving, that shape expectations about the self (e.g., worthiness of love) and others (e.g., availability, responsiveness, or danger). Rather than mere cognitive maps, internal working models are embodied anticipations of how the world will respond to one's needs. While essential for navigating the relational world, their formation in insecure contexts reveals deep vulnerability. In such contexts, Bowlby observed defensive exclusion, a mechanism pushing contradictory or threatening emotional experiences out of conscious awareness to preserve the attachment bond. A child might suppress expressions of need, fear, or protest if they risk destabilizing the fragile connection with a caregiver. This leads to what Brown and Elliott (2016) describe as fragmented or rigid attachment maps, which may strongly impact the assumptions one has about self and the self in relation to others.

Attachment research (Brown and Elliot, 2016) identifies five core qualities that characterize secure internal working models: (1) a sense of felt safety, promoted by consistent and reliable protection from threat; (2) a sense of being seen and known, through calibrated attunement to one's emotional states; (3) the experience of felt comfort, via timely and soothing responses to distress; (4) a sense of being valued, cultivated through expressions of delight and interest; and (5) support for one's unique becoming, through encouragement for exploration and authenticity. Each of these qualities depends on reliable and consistent presence, forming the substrate for coherent selfhood and relational trust. When these are absent, the self organizes around protective strategies and forms a limited relational capacity.

In our framework (see Fig. 1), we extend attachment theory beyond its Western clinical framing through the decommonization framework and a broader, decolonial understanding of relationality. Here, we understand relationality as "the awareness of the integral relation and interdependence amongst all living organisms (in which humans are only a part) with territory or land and the cosmos. It is a relation and interdependence in search of balance and harmony of life on the planet" (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018, p. 1). This shift allows us to treat the entire web of life, including the extra-human world and ecosystems, as a valid subject of attachment. We posit the five qualities of secure attachment not as a fixed universal, but as provisional, attachment-based foundations for pluriversal and relational ethics and as a starting point to explore these broader bonds. We hence engage in an exploration of attachment that transcends the anthropocentric limits of traditional psychology and could prove to be constructive for a pluriversal dialogue.

While the profound ruptures through alienation and their ontological costs cannot be resolved through individual or pedagogical intervention alone, specific pathways for micro-level repair and relational recovery exist. Brown and Elliott offer methodological protocols for adult attachment repair, typically situated in psychotherapeutic settings and using imaginal work (inner images). In these targeted interventions, patients are guided to activate their imagination, for example, by envisioning ideal parent figures who completely care for the patient-as-child in every imaginable way. This process effectively rewires the brain, providing the psycho-emotional system with reference experiences of secure relating, grounded in the five qualities listed above. This, in turn, leads to further insights, psychological maturation, and an increased capacity to attune to oneself and to others. Through this process, practitioners over time strengthen their sense of self, develop more self-agency, and healthy self-esteem (Brown and Elliot, 2016).

The experiential layer that our relational framework addresses, i.e. embodied, attachment-based, relational knowing, is where structural decommonization disrupts first. Traumatic events, whether personal or collective, overwhelm and force us to shut down parts of our experience, and what is disrupted first is the felt, relational understanding of what is happening (Herman, 1992; Hübl, 2020). In the following, we thus

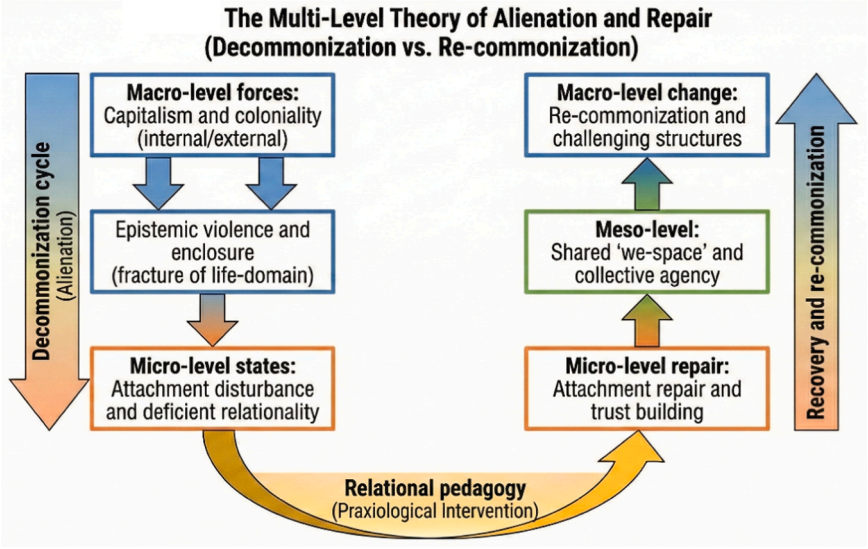


Fig. 1. The micro–meso–macro framework of alienation, decommonization, and recovery from deficient relationality through attachment repair to unlearn and undo alienation. These processes could then scale up to a macro-level expansion of the relational commons for a potential societal re-commonization. Such re-commonization would be co-mediated through the meso-level shared 'we-spaces', which could potentially support political actors to articulate and organize, and thus to inform broader political strategies.

analyze the historical disruptions of these (inter-)subjective and attachment-based forms of being and knowing that are majorly caused by the historical violence of decommonization.

3. Psychological costs of capitalism: history of alienation, violence, and decommonization

Our analysis of the history of alienation and decommonization begins by tracing the lineage of alienation through the concept of internal European coloniality and the 'making of Europe' (Bartlett, 1994). By examining concrete historical examples, particularly from Germany as a region both authors have a personal relation to, this section traces the systemic structures behind relational fragmentation.

The making of Europe was a conquest that enclosed the commons and suppressed Indigenous, place-based epistemologies within Europe itself (Bartlett, 1994). Its internal violence was instrumental in forging a prevailing mechanistic worldview in Europe (Lent, 2017). This profound ontological shift within Europe was captured at its later stages in the 19th century by Friedrich Nietzsche in *The Gay Science* (Nietzsche, 1882). Here, the proclamation that "God is dead… and we have killed him" (section 125) signals the triumph of instrumental reason over the sacred, living fabric of the world. This act can be seen as a primal form of decommonization: The violent stripping away of conviviality (i.e., deep interdependence and communion of humans and the more-than-human world) and alterity (i.e., the imaginative capacity to prefigure alternative ways of living). The resulting dominance of reason over the needs of a living world thus constitutes a major step to reduce the living earth to inert resources that can be used for capitalist processes of accumulation.

In Germany, this trajectory of internal conquest and associated decommonization can be traced back to Roman times and before. One critical juncture was the Christianization of Germanic cultures around 800 AD. Pre-Christian Germanic cultures embraced diverse animist traditions, revering sacred landscapes like groves, rivers, and mountains (Jones, 1997). Sites such as the Irminsul, a sacred pillar or tree, exemplified the perceived connection between realms (Cusack, 2011), and relationships with trees, particularly oaks, signified a deeply meaningful bond with nature. This perspective viewed the world as kin, embodying ecological interdependence grounded in ethical responsibility. However, Christianization of Europe, especially under Charlemagne, systematically repressed these practices through forced conversion, destruction of sacred sites, and criminalization of rituals (Palmer, 2007; Rembold, 2018). While conversion involved negotiation, the overarching trend relocated spiritual authority from nature to the Church, rebranding Indigenous beliefs as superstition or profane. Sacred sites like Yew trees were often integrated into churchyards, co-opting and containing their spiritual significance within Christian doctrine rather than erasing them entirely. This severing from land as kin, the brutal erasure of relationship-based forms of knowing, enforced a spiritual transformation whose devastations are yet to be acknowledged (Bartlett, 1994).

The death of kin, whether through forced conversion or direct dispossession, fundamentally altered the landscape of collective care. When entire cosmologies of interconnection are systematically dismantled, the social structures required for secure attachment are eroded. Caregivers operating within these decommonized systems face structural constraints that may impair their capacity to provide the foundational conditions for secure attachment (such as a consistent and embodied sense of safety). This systemic production of 'relationlessness' is an under-articulated dimension of colonial and capitalist violence, a pattern evident not only in the internal coloniality of Europe, but also in the systematic destruction of Indigenous kin networks globally.

In Germany itself, the spiritual transformation was compounded by profound economic and social restructuring between the 16th and 18th centuries, as early modern capitalism advanced through the enclosure and privatization of German common lands (Allmenden). Justified by notions of 'efficiency' and 'progress' and enforced by laws such as Prussian ordinances and the General Land Law (Padoa-Schioppa and Fitzgerald, 2017; Preschers, 2017), communal lands were converted into private estates for market-oriented production (Abel, 1978; Enders, 2015; Graeber, 2012). This resulted in the eviction of peasants, causing not just loss of livelihood but a deep rupture in their relational and cultural worlds, reducing self-sufficient farmers to precarious laborers and reshaping identities around productivity and profit (T. Scott, 1979a, 1979b, 1991). This process was a result of what Polanyi (1944) termed the 'false commodification' of land and people, treating them as market inputs rather than integral parts of social life. The relationship of reciprocal obligation with land was severed, either transformed by commodification or cut entirely through physical removal (Abram, 1997; Federici, 2004; Lent, 2017; Rembold, 2018; Hickel, 2021).

With these socio-economic structural changes, an epistemic reduction took hold, viewing nature merely as resources (Morgan et al., 2023, p. 10). This is exemplified by the rise of scientific forestry in 18th-century Prussia and Saxony (J. C. Scott, 1999). Enabled by enclosure and privatization, forests were reconceived as 'timber machines', managed via centralized calculation for maximum yield, replacing complex ecosystems with monocultures like the Norway spruce. This led to ecological degradation and transformed the forest from a multilayered and multi-relational space into an economic resource, reflecting the alienating logic of separation and control inherent in modern economic systems (J. C. Scott, 1999; Graeber, 2012; Lent, 2021).

Through processes of colonialism as a form of 'external' European coloniality, the logic of enclosure and commodification within Europe shaped, and was in turn shaped by, global systems of exploitation (Merchant, 1990; Federici, 2004; Césaire, 1950; Graeber, 2012; Ghosh, 2021). Colonial powers enacted violent land seizures and forced assimilation, incorporating the Global South into capitalist economies through systematic alienation of populations from their lands, communities, and labor (Césaire, 1950; Fanon et al., 1952; Fanon et al., 1961; Graeber, 2012; Moreton-Robinson, 2015; Hickel, 2021). This material dispossession was intertwined with epistemic violence, aiming to erase or delegitimize local ways of knowing, driven by a 'civilizing mission' that framed Indigenous epistemologies as inferior (Osterhammel and Jansen, 2017; Rist, 2019). Missionary efforts often facilitated this, imposing Eurocentric worldviews and dismantling relational frameworks like animism to prepare for economic exploitation (Bhambra, 2021; Ghosh, 2021). Through mechanisms such as the Hut Tax and forced migration into mining labor, colonial powers violently transformed the Indigenous social fabric, ripping families apart and coercing populations into wage labor (Rodney, 1972; Cooper, 1996).

In this context, racism functioned as a central technology of decommonization: employing colonial languages to systematically degrade Indigenous heritage, it fostered deep self-alienation from language and forebears, coercing subjects to view their pre-colonial past as a 'wasteland of non-achievement' (Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 1994). In the context of Germany's colonialist expansion in Southwest Africa (Namibia), the logic of external coloniality reached a critical ontological threshold. Here, the fracture of the life-domain described by Hosseini and Gills (2024) gives way to Fanon's zone of non-being (Fanon et al., 1952), where the colonized subject is stripped of relational reciprocity and denied recognition as a human peer. Within this zone, the breakdown of relationality is total. The colonial state exercises what Achille Mbembe identifies as the ultimate sovereign power to dictate who may live and who must die (Mbembe, 2019). This logic was realized in the genocide of the Herero and Nama (officially acknowledged by Germany in 2021), where race functioned to cast entire populations outside the web of kinship, reducing them from subjects to biological obstacles to be removed (Adhikari, 2008).

This extreme reification was not an aberration restricted to the colonies. Rather, as Cooper and Stoler (Cooper and Stoler, 1997) demonstrate, colony and metropole constituted a single analytic field. Within this unified system, the logic of decommonization circulated and reinforced itself. The racialized erasure of the colonized subject abroad was

inextricably linked to the disciplining of the working class at home in industrializing Europe: rural populations were uprooted and forced into urban centers, enduring dehumanizing conditions in factories and tenements. Internal coloniality was further reinforced by moralizing discourses that framed poverty as individual failure and a necessary precondition to bring forth the industrious labor needed in the factories of the industrial revolution (Graeber, 2012; Hickel, 2021; Waitzkin, 1981). Thus, the dominant scientific materialist paradigm entrenched alienation globally and locally by reducing value to economic productivity, neglecting the relational needs of the life-domain (Isham et al., 2022; Øversveen, 2022; Ryan and Dziurawiec, 2001).

The historical dismantling of relational systems has produced widespread alienation and is a necessary outcome of commodifying relationships. This condition now fuels the cascading polycrisis and raises the practical question: How can we turn the wheel to implement the necessary socio-ecological transformation? We contend that it is necessary and possible to rekindle kinship and support the processing of what has been lost through the coloniality of being (Maldonado-Torres, 2007). Addressing this requires not only a new pedagogy, but a new ontology: one that places relationality at its center, cultivates relational learning with pluriversal ethics, and ultimately fosters the core qualities of secure attachment.

4. Relational pedagogy and the unlearning and undoing of alienation

Our relational pedagogy takes inspiration from therapeutic methods of attachment repair by cultivating speaking *from* experience rather than *about* it. Such work can help bring the disowned and often painful parts of our subjective and intersubjective experience back into awareness in a way that is both embodied and relational. We understand this work as prefigurative: it does not substitute for the broader political and institutional struggles required for material re-commonization, but it addresses a necessary condition for those struggles to succeed. Re-commonization requires collective subjects capable of sustaining commons, capable of trust, mutual accountability, conflict tolerance, and non-extractive relating. Where alienation and trauma have eroded these capacities, even materially favorable conditions cannot be easily sustained. The pedagogy we propose cultivates these relational foundations without which commoning, as ongoing practice, remains fragile (De Angelis, 2017; Federici, 2004).

Amid widespread alienation, social fragmentation, and multigenerational trauma, we therefore need pedagogical spaces that invite students into the fuller dimensions of their being to not only complement, but also replace parts of existing curricula. This includes spaces where students can begin to unlearn patterns of disconnection and reweave relationships with themselves, others, and the world. This requires a shift towards intersubjective learning: an approach that foregrounds presence, mutual recognition, and shared sense-making. As feminist psychoanalyst Jessica Benjamin writes, intersubjectivity is “a relationship in which each person experiences the other as a ‘like subject,’ another mind who can be ‘felt with,’ yet has a distinct separate center of feeling and perception” (Benjamin, 2004, p. 5). In the classroom, this means cultivating the capacity to perceive the other not merely as an intellectual peer, but as a full human being: someone whose world matters like my own, and whose inner life resonates with, yet differs from, mine.

In this kind of learning space, relating becomes part of the curriculum. Through repeated engagement, a shared ‘we-space’ can emerge - not as an abstraction, but as a palpable relational field marked by what Arturo Escobar (2016) calls sentipensar or feeling-thinking with the earth: a collective, embodied responsiveness to the social and ecological world. This is where alienation can begin to loosen its grip through the lived experience of being felt, seen, and held within a mutual field of recognition. And there is precedent: presencing-based leadership education (Scharmer, 2009); facilitation methods rooted in the civil rights and ecological justice movements (Macy and Brown, 2014; brown, 2017, 2021); or the longstanding pedagogical traditions of decolonial thought and indigenous knowledges (Escobar, 2018; Mignolo and Walsh, 2018). Besides these precedents, we ground our own pedagogical propositions in the work of Judith Herman (1992), whose pioneering research linked the structural violence of political terror to subjective psychological experience.

4.1. Methodology: the lineage of peer-led repair

In *Trauma and Recovery* (Herman, 1992), Herman describes how significant advances in understanding post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) have historically been preceded by self-organized groups of trauma survivors who came together to share and explore their experiences. These groups, rather than relying on institutional interventions, developed methods of inquiry that made the effects of structural trauma visible. A striking example is the ‘rap groups' of Vietnam War veterans, who gathered in intimate settings to recount and process their war trauma. These groups invited sympathetic psychiatrists to offer professional support, blending peer solidarity with therapeutic guidance. By the mid-1970s, hundreds of such groups had emerged, eventually leading to formal psychological treatment programs run by veterans themselves. Similarly, the feminist so-called ‘consciousness-raising' groups of the same era provided a space for women to break the silence surrounding sexual and domestic violence. Women named their oppression, found solidarity, and turned private suffering into public awareness, leading to profound legal and societal reforms in the years thereafter. Both movements - veterans' advocacy and feminist organizing - directly influenced institutional change, from the official recognition of PTSD as a diagnosis to legal reforms redefining rape as an act of violence rather than a private matter.

The efficacy of such non-clinical interventions was robustly supported a few decades later by the contextual model of psychotherapy (Wampold and Imel, 2015), which profoundly challenged mainstream clinical paradigms. This model builds directly on Jerome Frank’s landmark work, *Persuasion and Healing* (Frank et al., 1963/2025), which analyzed shamans, religious rituals, and traditional Indigenous healing to establish the original ‘common factors’ theory. These authors demonstrate that the specific method or approach of a therapy matter far less than the so-called ‘common factors’ present in any effective therapeutic set-up: a cogent rationale that explains the distress, a shared ritual to address it, and a strong therapeutic alliance. Thus, modern Western psychotherapy and our proposed relational pedagogy operate through the same underlying socio-relational mechanisms that have sustained Indigenous healing practices for millennia.

By reframing individual suffering as an effect of structural alienation (a cogent rationale) and by engaging in collective practices like witnessing (a shared ritual), our pedagogy mobilizes these common factors. In collective settings, when the subjective experience of group cohesion is strong, the relational container itself operates as this therapeutic alliance (Burlingame et al., 2018). For participants who may have never experienced such relational fields, the group itself becomes the primary source of safety: a stable environment where fears, anxieties, and vulnerabilities can be safely expressed and contained without judgement. Rather than merely adapting individuals back into a decommonized system, the very structure of this relational container intrinsically affords ontological shifts. It functions as a relational commons: a localized site where the pluriversal practice of sentipensar can be safely enacted. Within these relational commons, the five core qualities of secure relating (Brown and Elliot, 2016) are not forced but allowed to naturally emerge through both conscious practice and unconscious relational resonance. The establishment of this somatic and relational baseline enables the group to embark on a three-phases trajectory of recovery outlined by Judith Herman (1992), which we apply to classroom settings in the following.

4.2. Phases of recovery from alienation and deficient relationality through relational pedagogy

Phase 1 - establishing the container (safety & stability): The prerequisite for exploring alienation is the establishment of felt safety, which is the foundational condition of secure attachment to enable micro-level internal recovery from alienation. In a pedagogical context, we understand safety as the somatic assurance that it is acceptable to feel into one's emotions and physical sensations, at one's own pace and depth. To establish a relational container, we often begin simply: chairs in a circle instead of rows, just sitting together in shared presence. This subtle shift away from a dualist front-of-class setup already invites a different kind of awareness. Talking and healing circles have been central in epistemologies that honor relationality and the recognition that every voice holds a piece of the collective with their specific, partial and subjective viewpoints, i.e., their situated knowledges (Haraway, 1988).

To invite this presence, we utilize two specific interventions. First, a short mindfulness practice opens space to notice: *How does this arrangement feel?* This structural shift, simply facing each other, perhaps facilitated by a moment of silent sensing, can trigger a noticeable shift toward sensing oneself and others as part of the group. Further we invite participants to turn their attention inward. *Can I connect with my breath? Can I feel my body while I speak to others?* Second, participants introduce themselves with a small personal kicker, an object, memory, or moment that speaks to their deeper sense of self. By inviting these slightly more personal details into the room, we gently encourage the quality of feeling seen and known, allowing participants to show up as sensing beings. Depending on the coherence of the group and the subjective felt sense of safety, a few simple mindfulness exercises may be in order.

Phase 2 - spaces of digestion (witnessing & grieving): We discuss one exemplary simple and versatile group structure that allows participants to experience and experiment with relational ontology and to articulate some of the relational ruptures described in Section 3. For this phase, Joanna Macy's *The Work That Reconnects* (Macy and Brown, 2014) offers additional helpful reflections on how participants can move from intellectual critique to somatic acknowledgement. The structure begins with a slow, silent walk through the room, gently noticing how the body feels in space, followed by a quiet inner prompt: *When or where did I last feel out of place?*

This opens room to better access physical and emotional sensations, while exploring the space on one's own terms. This simple structural design quickly disrupts habitual, disembodied classroom patterns, grounding the participant in the immediate reality of the somatic experience. In small circles of three chairs, students share in parallel, one at a time in each group, for a few minutes timed. The listeners get a chance to practice active listening, while keeping an awareness of emotions and physical sensations. Initially, the strict rule is witnessing without attempting to debate or 'fix' the other. This silent, non-judgmental witnessing, often signaled implicitly through nodding and somatic presence, can provide participants with relational experiences of feeling deeply seen and known, which in turn might encourage further exploration.

After every participant is witnessed, spontaneous sharing from participants, still dispersed in the room, brings insights, often on the nature of relationality and communication, back into the larger group. Gradually, a subtle 'we-space', a felt sense of relational intimacy and group coherence emerges as a form of relational commons, taking processes of unlearning and undoing alienation from the personal, internal micro-level to the group meso-level. Emotional transparency, storytelling, embodied presence, and collective reflection enrich academic learning and sustain it by weaving personal experience into the curriculum. They thus gradually build a relational learning environment to generate such 'we-spaces'.

Phase 3 - we-spaces and imagination (reconnection & agency): The final phase moves towards reconnection and appropriation, the active reclaiming of agency. The central question here is: How do we move from articulating subjective experiences of alienation toward imagining futures of collective flourishing? Once grief and experiences of disconnection are effectively held and witnessed, participants often instinctively turn to their projective, imaginative capacity. Often it suffices to let small groups converse naturally once the last person has finished their share. If the dynamic in the room feels 'blocked', another iteration of the structure may be in order, with another wandering through the room, this time prompted by a resource-based inquiry: *What is one specific quality of connection or support I am longing for right now?*

A key insight here is that the relations between people themselves (member-to-member and member-to-group) may become generative and lead into what Arturo Escobar calls autonomous design (Escobar, 2018). Instead of accepting the world as a collection of inert objects, students begin to speak *with* and *from* the group 'we-space'. A practical example of this is found in contemplative exercises described by Wray and Batada (2017). Here, students use visualization to explore their inner representations of the relational entanglements behind everyday objects like smartphones, mapping invisible labor and production chains. In another exercise, they explore their own internalized representations regarding poverty. This internal exploration followed by collective sharing has been shown to catalyze tangible changes in students' real-world choices. By grounding abstract concepts in personal experience, these practices help to re-relationalize social fault lines and move participants from paralyzed guilt to a sense of agency.

5. Conclusion

Our proposals for relational pedagogy resonate with Fanon's vision of dis-alienation (Fanon, 1952), which strives to enable subjects to re-enter history and recapture their capacity to act as creators of new forms of life. By working through relational ruptures collectively, a group develops a pluriverse of truths as part of generative relational commons. Such lived practice creates the psychological preconditions for recovery from alienation to expand the relational commons: a capacity for agency that is grounded in resilient and internalized felt safety and relational attunement.

Thereby, the relational mechanisms of repair can scale outward, extending inclusive relational commons beyond the classroom. This attachment-informed pedagogy nurtures the human capacity to design own post-alienated futures, contributing to collective imagination necessary for post-crisis societies (Cairns, 2025). If such processes of relational recovery became more widespread, macro-level social institutions, such as enterprises or governmental agencies, could transform from gatekeepers of the existing socio-economic order into generative 'we-spaces'. Expanding the relational commons could thereby crucially support establishing the social and psychological foundations linking personal with collective change (Ramcilovic-Suominen, 2025a), foster "deep transformative Unlearning" (Ramcilovic-Suominen, 2025b, p. 3), and co-enable just social-ecological transformations.

Any up-scaling of our relational framework to larger socio-political processes, however, requires organizational and policy strategies beyond the scope of our text. While the relational pedagogy we propose can serve as a preliminary practice to recover from alienation and deficient relationality, it does not directly capture the ambition of re-commonization in a materialist sense. The latter includes active struggles against dominant socio-economic hierarchies and the restoration of the commoning causes of true value in a commonist state of living (Hosseini and Gills, 2024). Such struggles are part of a political process that our relational pedagogy can only help to inform and prefigure within the classroom. The application and expansion of our relational framework to these broader political and organizational strategies, hence, is subject to further research. As supplementary material, we offer an example of a relational pedagogic workshop design as one first practical starting point.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Michael Miess: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Methodology, Investigation, Conceptualization. **Frederik Unseld:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Methodology, Investigation, Funding acquisition, Conceptualization.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process

During the preparation of this work the authors used the generative AI tools ChatGPT (version GPT-4o mini) and Gemini (version 2.5 Pro) to improve the readability and language in parts of the manuscript by enhancing stylistic clarity including language editing and grammatical correctness. After using these tools/services, the authors have reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the published article.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Acknowledgements

This research was funded in whole or in part by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF), Grant no. 217812, through a Postdoc Mobility grant awarded to Frederik Unseld. We warmly thank Colleen Schneider for inspiring and valuable discussions during preparations of this article, as well as for her feedback and input on previous drafts of the manuscript. Frederik Unseld and Michael Miess further and cordially thank the participants of the workshop "Unlocking collective creativity for a sustainable future" at the European Society for Ecological Economics (ESEE)-Degrowth conference in Pontevedra, Spain, in June 2024 for an inspiring workshop together. Frederik warmly thanks the participants of the doctoral students at Ethnodoks 2023 at University of Basel for their valuable contributions and engaging discussion in a prior version of the workshop structure proposed below. Last but not least, Michael thanks the participants of the course "Human–nature relations and the socio-ecological transformation" at the Vienna University of Economics and Business in September 2024 for their openness and valuable feedback on relational classroom practices. At these occasions, we had the chance to enact a relational classroom in a very welcoming and receptive environment, for which we feel deep gratitude.

Appendix A. Supporting information

Supplementary data associated with this article can be found in the online version at doi:10.1016/j.envsci.2026.104400.

References

Abel, W., 1978. Geschichte der deutschen Landwirtschaft vom frühen Mittelalter bis zum 19. Jahrhundert.
Abram, D. (1997). The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World (20th ed). Vintage.
Adhikari, M., 2008. Streams of blood and streams of money": New perspectives on the annihilation of the Herero and Nama peoples of Namibia, 1904-1908. Kronos 34 (1), 303–320.
Artmann, M., 2023. Human-nature resonance in times of social-ecological crisis – a relational account for sustainability transformation. Ecosyst. People 19 (1), 2168760. https://doi.org/10.1080/26395916.2023.2168760.
Bartlett, R., 1994. The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization and Cultural Change 950-1350. Princeton University Press.
Beery, T., Stahl Olafsson, A., Gentin, S., Maurer, M., Stålhammar, S., Albert, C., Bieling, C., Buijs, A., Fagerholm, N., Garcia-Martin, M., Plieninger, T., M. Raymond, C., 2023. Disconnection from nature: expanding our understanding of human–nature relations. People Nat. 5 (2), 470–488. https://doi.org/10.1002/pan3.10451.
Benjamin, J., 2004. Beyond doer and done to: an intersubjective view of thirdness. Psychoanal. Q. 73 (1), 5–46. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2167-4086.2004.tb00151.x.
Bhambra, G.K., 2021. Colonial global economy: towards a theoretical reorientation of political economy. Rev. Int. Political Econ. 28 (2), 307–322. https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2020.1830831.
Bhaskar, R., 2002. Reflections on Meta-Reality: Transcendence, Enlightenment, and Everyday Life. SAGE Publications Inc.
Bowlby, J., 1979. The Bowlby-Ainsworth attachment theory. Behav. Brain Sci. 2 (4), 637–638. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X00064955.
Bridle, J. (2023). *Ways of Being*. ⟨https://www.penguin.co.uk/books/317823/ways-of-being-by-bridle-james/9780141994260⟩.
brown, adrienne maree, 2017. Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds. AK Press.
brown, adrienne maree, 2021. Holding Change: The Way of Emergent Strategy Facilitation and Mediation. AK Press.
Brown, D.P., Elliot, D.S., 2016. Attachment Disturbances in Adults: Treatment for Comprehensive Repair. W. W. Norton & Company.
Burlingame, G.M., McClendon, D.T., Yang, C., 2018. Cohesion in group therapy: a meta-analysis. Psychotherapy 55 (4), 384–398. https://doi.org/10.1037/pst0000173.
Cairns, R., 2025. Cultivating collective imagination beyond crisis. Environ. Sci.& Policy 169, 104074. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envsci.2025.104074.
Césaire, A., 1950. Discourse on Colonialism. Postcolonlsm. Routledge.
Cooper, F., 1996. *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa* (1st edition. Cambridge University Press.
Cooper, F., Stoler, A.L., 1997. Tensions of Empire. University of California Press.
Cottingham, J., 1992. Cartesian dualism: Theology, metaphysics, and science. In: Cottingham, J. (Ed.), The Cambridge Companion to Descartes. Cambridge University Press, pp. 236–257. https://doi.org/10.1017/CCOL0521366232.009.
Cusack, C.M., 2011. The Sacred Tree: Ancient and Medieval Manifestations. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
De Angelis, M. (2017). *Omnia Sunt Communia: On the Commons and the Transformation to Postcapitalism*.
Descartes, R., 1641. In: Cress, D.A., Trans (Eds.), Meditations on First Philosophy, 3rd edition. Hackett Publishing Company.
Enders, L., 2015. Das bäuerliche Besitzrecht in der Mark Brandenburg, untersucht am Beispiel der Prignitz vom 13. Bis 18. Jahrhundert. In: Peters, In.J. (Ed.), Gutsherrschaftsgesellschaften im europäischen Vergleich. Akademie Verlag, pp. 399–428. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783050074054.399.
Escobar, A., 2011. Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World. Princeton University Press.
Escobar, A., 2016. Thinking-feeling with the Earth: territorial struggles and the ontological dimension of the epistemologies of the South. Rev. De. Antropol. ía Iberoam. 11 (1), 11–32. https://doi.org/10.11156/aibr.110102e.
Escobar, A., 2018. Designs for the Pluriverse: Radical Interdependence, Autonomy, and the Making of Worlds. Duke University Press.
Escobar, A., 2020. Pluriversal Politics: The Real and the Possible. Duke University Press.
Fanon, F. (1952). *Black Skin, White Masks* (R. Philcox, Trans.; Revised edition). Grove Press.
Fanon, F., Sartre, J.-P., West, C., & Bhabha, H.K. (1961). *The Wretched of the Earth* (R. Philcox, Trans.; Anniversary edition). Grove Press.
Federici, S., 2004. Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation. Penguin Classics.
Foucault, M., 1961. Folie et déraison: Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique. Plon.
Frank, J.D., Frank, J.B., Wampold, B.E., Insel, T.R., 2025. Persuasion and Healing: A Comparative Study of Psychotherapy. Johns Hopkins University Press. (Original work published 1963.
Ghosh, A. (2021). *The nutmeg's curse: Parables for a planet in crisis*. John Murray.
Gordon, L.R., 2015. What Fanon Said: A Philosophical Introduction to His Life and Thought. Fordham University Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt13x08sb.
Graeber, D. (2012). *Debt: The First 5,000 Years* (First Melville House pbk). MELVILLE HOUSE.
Haraway, D., 1988. Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective. Fem. Stud. 14 (3), 575–599. https://doi.org/10.2307/3178066.
Harvey, D., 2002. The Art of Rent: Globalisation, Monopoly and the Commodification of Culture. Social. Regist. 38. ⟨https://socialistregister.com/index.php/srv/article/view/5778⟩.
Harvey, D., 2011. The Future of the Commons. Radic. Hist. Rev. (109), 101–107. https://doi.org/10.1215/01636545-2010-017.
Herman, J. (1992). *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence–from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*. Basic Books.
Hickel, J., 2021. Less is More: How Degrowth Will Save the World, 1st ed. Windmill Books.
Horkheimer, M., Adorno, T.W., 1944. In: Hindrichs, G. (Ed.), Dialektik der Aufklärung, 1st edition). De Gruyter.
Hosseini, S.A.H., Gills, B.K., 2024. Capital Redefined. Routledge.
Hübl, T., 2020. Healing Collective Trauma: A Process for Integrating Our Intergenerational and Cultural Wounds. SOUNDS TRUE INC.
Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation. (2022). *Global Health Data Exchange (GHDx)* [Dataset]. ⟨https://vizhub.healthdata.org/gbd-results⟩.
Isham, A., Verfuerth, C., Armstrong, A., Elf, P., Gatersleben, B., Jackson, T., 2022. The Problematic Role of Materialistic Values in the Pursuit of Sustainable Well-Being. Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health 19 (6), 3673. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19063673.
Jaeggi, R. (2016). *Alienation* (F. Neuhouser, Ed.; A. Smith, Trans.; Reprint edition). Columbia University Press.

Jaeggi, R., 2018. Critique of Forms of Life. Belknap Press.
Jones, P., 1997. A History of Pagan Europe, 1st edition). Routledge.
Kim, J., 2018. Against Cartesian Dualism. The Blackwell Companion to Substance Dualism. John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, pp. 152–167. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119468004.ch10.
Kimmerer, R.W., 2015. Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants. Milkweed Editions.
Lent, J., 2017. The Patterning Instinct: A History of Humanity's Search for Meaning. Prometh. Books. ⟨https://www.jeremylent.com/the-patterning-instinct.html⟩.
Lent, J., 2021. The Web of Meaning: Integrating Science and Traditional Wisdom to Find Our Place In the Universe. Profile Books Ltd. ⟨https://www.jeremylent.com/the-web-of-meaning.html⟩.
Macy, J., Brown, M.Y., 2014. *Coming Back to Life: The Updated Guide to the Work That Reconnects* (Revised ed. edition). New Society Publishers.
Maldonado-Torres, N., 2007. On the coloniality of being. Cult. Stud. 21 (2–3), 240–270. https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380601162548.
Marcuse, H., 1990. Philosophy and Critical Theory. Critical Theory and Society. Routledge.
Marx, K., 1867. Das Kapital: Kritik der politischen ökonomie. Verlag Otto Meissner.
Maté, G., Maté, D., 2022. The Myth of Normal: Trauma, Illness & Healing in a Toxic Culture. Penguin Random House.
Mbembe, A., 2019. Necropolitics. Duke University Press. https://doi.org/10.1515/9781478007227.
Merchant, C., 1990. *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (Reprint edition). HarperOne.
Metz, T., Miller, S.C., 2016. Relational Ethics. International Encyclopedia of Ethics. John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, pp. 1–10. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444367072.wbiee826.
Mignolo, W.D., Escobar, A. (Eds.), 2010. Globalization and the Decolonial Option. Routledge.
Mignolo, W.D., Walsh, C.E., 2018. Praxis. On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics. Duke University Press Books.
Moreton-Robinson, A., 2015. The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty. University of Minnesota Press.
Morgan, C.B., Brevik, K., Barbieri, L., Ament, J., 2023. Humans in/of/are nature: Re-embedding reality in sustainability sciences. Elem. Sci. Anth 11 (1), 00083. https://doi.org/10.1525/elementa.2021.00083.
Ngugi wa Thiong'o. (1994). *Decolonising the mind: The politics of language in African literature* (5. repr.). London u. a.: Currey.
Nietzsche, F. (1882). *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs* (W. Kaufmann, Trans.). Vintage.
Osterhammel, J., & Jansen, J.C. (2017). *Kolonialismus: Geschichte, Formen, Folgen* (8., aktualisierte Auflage). C.H. Beck.
Øversveen, E., 2022. Capitalism and alienation: Towards a Marxist theory of alienation for the 21st century. Eur. J. Soc. Theory 25 (3), 440–457. https://doi.org/10.1177/13684310211021579.
Padoa-Schioppa, A., Fitzgerald, C., 2017. The Early Modern Period (Sixteenth–Eighteenth Centuries) (Eds). A History of Law in Europe: From the Early Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century. Cambridge University Press, pp. 229–402. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316848227.020 (Eds).
Palmer, J., 2007. Defining paganism in the Carolingian world. Early Mediev. Eur. 15 (4), 402–425. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0254.2007.00214.x.
Polanyi, K., 1944. The great transformation. Farrar & Rinehart.
Preschers, H., 2017. Allgemeines Landrecht für die preussischen Staaten: Dritter Band (Nachdruck der Ausgabe von, Edition, 1794. hansebooks.
Quijano, A., 2000. Coloniality of Power and Eurocentrism in Latin America. Int. Sociol. 15 (2), 215–232. https://doi.org/10.1177/0268580900015002005.
Ramcilovic-Suominen, S., 2025b. Unlearning as resistance and justice: Toward healing and transforming. Environ. Sci. & Policy 174, 104251. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envsci.2025.104251.
Ramcilovic-Suominen, S., 2025a. Socioecological Transformations: Linking Ontologies with Structures, Personal with Collective Change (Ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003466109.
Rembold, I., 2018. Conquest and Christianization: Saxony and the Carolingian World. Cambridge University Press, pp. *772–888*.
Rist, G., 2019. The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith, 5th edition. Zed Books (Camiller, Trans).
Rodney, W. (1972). *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*.
Ryan, L., Dziurawiec, S., 2001. Materialism and Its Relationship to Life Satisfaction. Soc. Indic. Res. 55 (2), 185–197.
Santos, B. de S. (2014). *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against epistemicide*. Boulder u. a.: Paradigm.
Scott, J.C., 1999. Seeing like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed, 0 edition). Yale University Press.
Scharmer, O., 2009. Leading from the future as it emerges: The social technology of presencing. Theory U. Berrett-Koehler.
Scott, T., 1979b. The Peasants' War: A Historiographical Review: Part II. Hist. J. 22 (4), 953–974. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X00017210.
Scott, T., 1979a. The Peasants' War: A Historiographical Review: Part I. Hist. J. 22 (3), 693–720.
Scott, T., 1991. *The German Peasants' War: A History in Documents* (New edition). Prometheus Books.
Segura, J., Gerber, J.-F., Sekulova, F., 2026. Unlearning through spirituality: Mongolian and Western animistic traditions as pathways to enhance sustainability. Environ. Sci. & Policy 175, 104296. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envsci.2025.104296.
Shiva, V., 1993. Monocultures of the Mind: Perspectives on Biodiversity and Biotechnology. Palgrave Macmillan.
Simpson, L.B. (2017). *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance*. U of Minnesota Press.
Spivak, G.C., 2004. Can the Subaltern Speak? In *Imperialism*. Routledge.
Sweezy, P.M. (1943). *The Theory of Capitalist Development. Principles of Marxian Political Economy*.
TallBear, K., 2019. Caretaking Relations, Not American Dreaming. Kalfou 6 (1), 24–41.
Tuhiwai Smith, L., 2021. Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples. Zed Books. https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350225282.
Waitzkin, H., 1981. The social origins of illness: a neglected history. Int. J. Health Serv. 11 (1), 77–103. https://doi.org/10.2190/5CDV-P4FE-Y6HN-JACD.
Wampold, B.E., Imel, Z.E., 2015. The Great Psychotherapy Debate. Routledge.
WHO, 2021. Mental Health ATLAS 2020. World Health Organisation (WHO). ⟨https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240036703⟩.
WHO. (2022). Mental disorders. *World Health Organization (WHO) Factsheets*. ⟨https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-disorders⟩.
Wray, A., Batada, A., 2017. Contemplative pedagogy: equipping students for everyday social activism. *The Arrow: A Journal of Wakeful Society*. Cult. Polit. 4 (2). ⟨https://arrow-journal.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Contemplative-Empowerment-Social-Change-Vol.-4.2.pdf⟩.
Wynter, S., 2003. Unsettling the coloniality of being/power/truth/freedom: towards the human, after man, its overrepresentation—an argument. CR N. Centen. Rev. 3 (3), 257–337.