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LEGACY OF THE PAST

#FeesMustFall and the Politics of Language in Student Activism at Stellenbosch University

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‘In 1994 my parents were sold a dream. I am here for my refund!’

(Protest Slogan #*FeesMustFall*, South Africa, 2015 & 2016*)*

Abstract

Over the course of 2015 and 2016, student movements at different South African universities under the large label #*FeesMustFall* challenged the political order of university management as well as South Africa as a whole. Though largely focused on avoiding more increases of tuition fees, the movements at different universities also focused on 'decolonizing the campus' tying in with campaigns like #*RhodesMustFall* that led to the removal of a statue of the controversial colonizer from the UCT campus. This research will consider these protests at South African Universities in the larger societal context by focusing on the language debate at Stellenbosch University through the Open Stellenbosch Collective as well as the larger decolonization project. It will do so to shed light on how this movement ties in with the structural underlying problems South Africa is facing today – including its socioeconomic reality, discrepancies between intention and performance, and corruption – and the importance and challenge of such contentious politics. Based on existing literature as well as an empirical exploratory participant observation, this thesis aims to answer the question of how the protest and contention of the Open Stellenbosch Collective – focused on the exclusionary nature of language – and the contentious politics of the larger #*FeesMustFall* protests are rooted in the wide-reaching debate on decolonization. The protests strongly reflect an important trend in the discussion on the decolonization, namely the need to find a suitable balance between nationalism and universalism. They make visible how South African universities and their students are subjected to global power structures and the challenges these structures create, as well as the growing desire of many at these institutions to increase their local relevance and Africanize their realities.

Table of Contents

Introduction 4

Methodology 6

Positionality 9

Chapter Outline 12

Chapter 1. Theoretical Framework 13

1.1 Rule and Resistance 13

1.2 Decolonization 23

1.3 The Politics of Language in South Africa 29

Chapter 2. Engaging with #*FeesMustFall* 36

2.1 The Emergence of #FeesMustFall 36

2.2 The Evolution of #FeesMustFall 37

2.3 Whose Voice Gets Heard? 44

2.4 Scale Shift 49

2.5 Conclusion 51

Chapter 3. The Open Stellenbosch Collective 53

3.1 Stellenbosch University 53

3.2 The Open Stellenbosch Collective 55

3.3 Afrikaans and English 58

Chapter 4. Discussion 64

4.1 Decolonization and #FeesMustFall 64

4.2 The Politics of Language and the Open Stellenbosch Collective ___ *69*

Conclusion ___ **72**

References ___ **74**

Introduction

In 2015 and 2016, the protests at various university campuses under the hashtag #*FeesMustFall* caused significant disruption at most institutions of higher education in South Africa. As the collective hashtag suggests, the protests originally focused on fees; they were triggered by announced tuition fee increases – up to 11.5 per cent – for 2016 (Naicker, 2016, 55; Tandwa, 2015). The increases were the trigger, but the already exorbitantly high costs of higher education were of great significance too – as the tuition fees were and, on many occasions, still are unaffordable[1], especially for a large part of South Africa's black[2] population (Langa, 2017, 6). However, over the course of its existence, the different movements under the #*FeesMustFall* banner increasingly diverted their focus and included a move towards systemic injustices, symbolisms, and other problematic remnants of the eras of colonialism and apartheid. Focussing on financial, linguistic, and cultural access to the university, students used multiple platforms for consciousness-raising and reflecting on how the institutions and its academics were still caught up in the colonial power structures of the past – passing these on through 'a vicious circle of learning and teaching' (Makalela, 2018, 1). With this consciousness-raising and reflection came a strong move toward a decolonization of the campus that showed itself in different forms at different institutions (Petit, 2017). Demands included free education for all, an end to the outsourcing of staff at the universities, the need to address racial and gender inequalities among academic staff and students,

[1] Calitz and Fourie investigate whether obtaining a university degree from a South African university had become unattainably expensive in their 2016 study focused on the University of Stellenbosch (2016). They found that 'university degrees today are significantly more expensive in real terms than over the last half-century [and] such an increase has not been cushioned by concomitant increases in household earnings' (2016, 149). They also conclude that the significant increases in fees is a post-1994 phenomenon; the new government prioritized primary and secondary education over tertiary education (2016, 152). This prioritization however, also had limited effects on the quality of basic education as there are still almost insurmountable discrepancies between schools in South Africa, resonating and created by the apartheid government and policies (Spaull, 2013a, 444). The South African Institute for Race Relations furthermore estimates that only 5 per cent of South Africans can comfortably afford university fees – which does not even include housing, food, and other amenities – for their children (Phungo, 2015).

[2] Post-1994, under the African National Congress (ANC) government, the legal race categories of apartheid (black, coloured and Indian) are generally collectively been referred to as black. Unless specified otherwise therefore, black refers to those that fall under these previously used legal categories. However, Ndletyana's warning that this homogenized 'blackness' is problematic as it may underplay the starkly different experiences of these groups under apartheid (2008, 95) will be kept in mind.

and a move toward a decolonized curriculum (Langa, 2017, 6). What such a curriculum should entail differed per movement. Some included a paradigmatic decolonization of their curriculum, and a strong orientation toward African scholarship amongst other things, whereas others defined it as a way to equalize the differences between the institutions (Langa, 2017, 12).

Like a decolonized curriculum, decolonization does not have a single homogenous definition (Jansen & Osterhammel, 2019, viii). The debate on this term far precedes the recent debates on the campuses as it has been subjected to significant dialogue over the years. First associated with the decolonization of countries that were shedding their colonial administrations (Grosfoguel, 2011, 13), the term evolved to include economic and epistemological dimensions (Mamdani, 2016, 79). Grosfoguel stated that the end of 'global colonialism' was followed by an era of 'global coloniality' in which the lasting legacies of colonialism significantly impact the reality many previously colonized nations today (2011, 13). The idea of global coloniality, and the epistemological dimension of decolonization are of great interest when considering the #*FeesMustFall* protests and the decolonization of the university. This dimension, therefore, as a part of the larger debate, will be considered in more depth in this thesis.

At Stellenbosch University (SU), where the Open Stellenbosch Collective operated during the #*FeesMustFall* protests, the debate in relation to decolonization took a rather pragmatic turn. Here, the students strongly focused on the exclusionary use of language on campus; they mobilized in order to address how the extensive use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction excluded specific groups of students from quality education (Mortlock, 2016). Due to these protests, SU has implemented policy changes which deemphasized Afrikaans and placed a stronger focus on the use of English (Gqirana, 2016). This case is particularly interesting as it unfolds alongside an older ongoing debate on language and its role in decolonization (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986) and education in South Africa – which is generally oriented toward policies of multilingualism – in which the use of African languages is increasingly encouraged (Beukes, 2010; Kaschula, 2016; Makalela, 2018; Ngcobo, 2009).

This thesis will consider and build on the debates surrounding both the decolonization of campus as well as the role of language in education and decolonization. It will do so by addressing the question of how the protest and contention of the Open Stellenbosch Collective – focused on the exclusionary nature of language – and the contentious politics of the larger #*FeesMustFall* protests were rooted in the wide-reaching debate on decolonization. It argues that the decolonization debate – often embedded in a struggle between international influences and national relevance – is strongly reflected in the demands of students in both the #*FeesMustFall* protests as well as in one of its constituent movements, the Open Stellenbosch Collective. This movement – focused on the exclusionary nature of the use of Afrikaans – is of particular interest as it strongly reflects the dilemma or compromise of decolonization and is the subject of the case study.

Methodology

To answer the research question, this thesis will provide a postcolonial – and post-apartheid – analysis of the #*FeesMustFall* protests, with a special focus on the Open Stellenbosch Collective. It will analyse how these protests fit into the larger debates on decolonization (of the university) and the role of language in this process and in South African education. The thesis will largely do so through a literature review, inspired mostly by authors from the global south but will also draw from the participant observation that was conducted during a five-month exchange at SU in 2018, two years after the end of the protests. The personal observations will be considered throughout the narrative of this thesis and will be referred to through the use of first-person narration. It should be asserted that the illustrations from the participant observation are not statistically representative but serve mostly as illustration and enrichment to the thesis.

During my semester at SU I took various classes that improved my understanding of South African society as well as the circumstances under which #*FeesMustFall* and the Open Stellenbosch

Collective arose. Most importantly, I took a political science honours class on Contemporary South African Politics; this class was taught by two experts on political science and South Africa. The classes were organized chronologically; we moved from apartheid South Africa to today – considering questions on the possible deconsolidation of the South African democracy, unemployment, (re)racialization of society, populism, and state capture. This course was highly discussion-oriented, and really deepened my understanding of the (dis)function of the South African state and how its history still heavily influences the reality today – how it created the circumstances under which the #*FeesMustFall* protests arose. Furthermore, it provided me with the opportunity to interact with very knowledgeable South African classmates and professors that came from (racially) different backgrounds. I for example worked together with a student from Gauteng (whose mother tongue was isiZulu) who provided interesting insights from their own life: they went to schools where African languages were represented, and students were sorted into their respective languages for certain classes. Other classes were taught in English and the students with differing mother-tongues would be mixed in with each other. My classmate stated that they spoke and understood about five of the African languages, English, and had also started learning French; this however was becoming too much. Though I have not mastered as many languages as this student – I am only fluent in three languages and one strong dialect and have a basic grasp of two others – her sentiment resonated with me. Another interesting aspect of this class was the fieldtrip[3]: I got the opportunity to visit the South African Parliament that had been stormed by the students in the #*FeesMustFall* protests of 2015 (Naicker, 2016, 55); none of the protests or the severe repression were still palpable there at that point.

A second relevant class that I took was the Political and Cultural Change in Contemporary South Africa class, which was part of the International Program Stellenbosch University (IPSU). Classes that fall

[3] (Fieldnotes, September 5, 2018); I regularly sat down after class to note down my most important observations and spent about an hour (almost) every night documenting the most important events of my day, both related to my general experiences as well as the topic.

under this program are oriented solely towards incoming international students with various academic backgrounds and cannot (officially) be attended by students of South African origin. The class was intended to introduce internationals to South Africa and its history and was focused on various topics intended to foster a better understanding of the society. For example, we had a class about the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment and Social Change[4] in which the professor (one of the few black members of the academic staff) introduced us to the affirmative action policies that were instituted post-1994 for the advancement of marginalized people. This class was particularly interesting since my friend had brought their South African roommate who studied law at the university to sit in on this class – their reaction made it seem that they had not (often) discussed or dealt with this topic. It might be interesting then provide South African (bachelor) students with the opportunity to attend such multi-disciplinary classes that tackle the realities of their country – and might furthermore provide extra depth for international students through personal experiences of the native students.

This class provided great insight into the functioning of the South African state, yet the fact that it only catered to international students significantly undermined the integration of such student who found like-minded friends in these classes, creating small international cliques. This reality was exacerbated by the fact that many internationals stayed at an internationals-residence (which is how the university organized it) meaning that they hardly had to venture outside of these circles. Furthermore, the international setup and lack of South Africans in this class did on occasion fail to facilitate productive discussion; especially in the lecture on race in South Africa. During this lecture, the students were asked to consider their experiences on this topic. One of my classmates, agitated by this reality, asked the professor whether a room filled with mostly white non-South African students and a white South African professor – and almost no representatives of those subject to discrimination – was the right context to discuss race. The professor then responded that any discussion on race is better than not having a

[4] (Fieldnotes, September 25, 2018).

discussion at all. However, especially in a country such as South Africa, it is of high importance and relatively easy to include important perspectives of those suffering these systemic injustices because of the colour of their skin. These classes therefore were not only interesting because of their content, but also because of their format.

Both these classes had extensive readings and suggestions that helped to improve my understanding of the reality on the ground. In the honours class for example, we worked with primary material in the form of newspaper articles, as well as secondary material like articles, books, and documentaries. The IPSU class was more oriented towards the use of secondary literature but the suggestions made by professors in this course definitely laid the basis for a multidisciplinary understanding of the South African reality under which the #*FeesMustFall* protests arose.

Positionality

Coleman and Rosenow state that every individual has a personal set of biases that should be reflected upon, especially when undertaking research (2016, 8). Asking questions such as how someone's personal reality may influence their understanding of situations or the parameters they set, or how this may influence what events or topics are considered to be important is essential as ontological presumptions can have extensive influences on the narrative (2016, 4). In this section therefore, I will reflect on my personal positionality.

Spending time at SU and South Africa in general significantly impacted the formulation of this thesis as my understanding of South African society improved significantly. Living in this reality has opened my eyes to a world different from my own. As a Dutch/Swiss national, the society I grew up in was very different from what I witnessed in South Africa. I was confronted with my privileges on many occasions over the course of my fieldwork, which has led me to reconsider my positionality on many

occasions. One instance that is worth pointing out was a very direct confrontation with a classmate[5] who, after I had asked a question that was interpreted differently from how I intended it, called me out for my privilege in a highly emotive manner – my automatic emotional response was to shut down completely. My reaction, as well as the incident itself, led to two weeks of grappling with why this event had upset me as much as it had – especially since I tried to be and felt that I was to an extent aware of my privilege. I eventually realized that the main reason for my reaction was my inability to change their or my position – solving the dilemma especially on the short term. Furthermore, in *So You Wanna Talk about Race* Olou puts forward that – especially when considering race and racism, but I believe that this can be extended to the interconnected reality of privilege – it is not my intention that matters, but rather how my question is part of the larger structural violence that people are subjected to (2018). I concluded for myself that the best way to deal with my privilege was to be increasingly aware of it and to continue learning about the systemic imbalances in South Africa as well as the world.

This situation once again made me realize that a five-month stay is not sufficient for a full grasp of all the emotional and psychological layers attached to the topic – I am still at a relative distance of the lived realities of those subjected to this complex society on a life-long basis. This distance however does not have to be negative as Szablewska (2016) points out; it may create a different perspective that can lead to new or different insights. Through this perspective, what would be taken for granted or remain unseen can be uncovered (Szablewska, 2016). Furthermore, being able to experience the university life on the South African campus did provide me with the opportunity to interact with various students and professors who did not only further my understanding of South Africa but also aided me in my personal growth.

In a reflection on her own study on gambling women, Li considers the importance of her personal identity traits, especially in the categories of age, gender, and race for her fieldwork (2008).

[5] (Fieldnotes, August 23, 2018).

Categories such as these were of great significance for my fieldwork as well. My age gave me a certain relatability, as I was one of the students and often in the same age category. The way I looked also had an impact on how I was perceived – on many occasions I was approached in Afrikaans (this makes sense since the majority language in the Western Cape is Afrikaans and it is therefore likely that a white student such as myself would speak this language). The intersection of my gender and my race furthermore gave me access to almost any space that someone with different characteristics might not have been able to access. This became rather apparent in the night life of Stellenbosch. Here, there were two bars, next door to each other, that catered to significantly different audiences; one was filled with black students, the other with white (mostly Afrikaans speaking) students. My girlfriends and I were let into both places without any trouble – but were the only white students in the 'black' bar. I later had a conversation about this self-segregation with a coloured friend who stated that as an Afrikaans-speaking coloured person they would be welcome in the 'white' bar, as it was more segregated by language than colour. Apart from these categories, and the intersections of these categories, I believe that my nationality, or the fact that I am an international student, provided me with many opportunities. Since I had not been confronted with the power structure and its visual representations in South Africa early in life, I was not as burdened by certain preconceptions that others may have. On campus, for example, interracial friendships are not the norm, and cliques are often still largely organized by race – likely due to the ease of finding connections with those from similar backgrounds. By making an effort – facilitated through nationality – the boundaries could to an extent be transcended. Chikane (2018, 61) asserts that this reality is not limited to SU, as he describes similar situations at the University of Cape Town (UCT).

Lastly, Lake and Parkinson (2017) assert that many young academics are not sufficiently prepared for field research by their programs as the realities on the ground were often more complex than what they have learned in class. As a young academic, I realized that this is indeed a fair assertion

as the situation on the ground was very complex and I felt under-prepared by the limited methodological training I have received over the years. My experiences in South Africa, however, have not only allowed me to grow as an academic and as a person but also as a researcher; even in the short time that I was there. Both the professors at SU as well as my supervisor at Ghent University encouraged and helped me through the process and though I must admit that there is (always) room for improvement, this experience has been an absolute privilege and has helped me grow significantly.

Chapter Outline

In order to answer the research question, Chapter 1 will consider the rule and resistance framework, as well as the larger (international) debates on the decolonization of the university and the role of language, both in decolonization and as a political tool. In Chapter 2, the focus will lie on an in-depth exploration of the *#FeesMustFall* protests that took South Africa by storm in 2015 and 2016. Chapter 3 then will narrow the scale of analysis to SU, where the Open Stellenbosch Collective was the main contentious actor. Here, the protestors were mostly concerned the exclusionary nature of language. Lastly, Chapter 4 will provide a discussion of the results which will lead to a conclusion and an answer to the research question and opportunities for future research.

Chapter 1. Theoretical Framework

This chapter will introduce the theoretical framework that will be applied to the #*FeesMustFall* protests and the Open Stellenbosch Collective and their contentious action. It introduces the rule and resistance framework as well as the larger (global) debates on decolonization – including the use of the term within higher education – and the role of language as an essential part of this debate.

1.1 Rule and Resistance

In a lecture at Ghent University[6] – which I attended – Coleman introduced the framework of rule and resistance in which an analysis of struggle is used as an empiricist and deconstructionist lens to approach and uncover global power relations through the global-local continuum. Within this framework – which she and Rosenow further explained in their article (2016) – struggle is used as an analytic to uncover global and local intersections around class, race, colonialism, and other dimensions of power and exposes the underlying power structures and structural forms of violence (Coleman & Rosenow, 2016, 2). In line with intersectional thinking - which focusses on the dynamics of difference and solidarities of sameness when it comes to antidiscrimination of social movements and exposes how single-axis thinking and isolating individuals into single identity categories undermines social justice and the understanding of the discrimination these individuals face (Crenshaw, 1989; Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013, 787) – Coleman emphasized the importance of these intersections and the frames in which these identities and intersections are considered. She stated that fixed frames – such as sociology, political science, or law – may dismiss or block perspectives that are essential to the understanding of struggle and may help obscure structural systemic violence. Therefore, her approach, which takes struggle as the starting point of analysis, is strongly interdisciplinary and avoids rigid frames –

[6] (Fieldnotes, March 28, 2019).

challenging traditional disciplines and their academic frameworks as rule and resistance grapples with positionalities that may exist at various sites of study.

Coleman, as well as Coleman and Rosenow (2016) then assert that it is essential to avoid rigid definitions of academic mono-disciplinary frameworks as well as rigid definitions of concepts. Yet for the sake of clarity, it is still essential to consider a baseline understanding of what struggle may entail. Tilly and Tarrow (2015), who have written extensively on struggle under the name of contentious politics, asserted that it can be broken down into (almost) universal mechanisms and sequences of such mechanisms that are the drivers of contentious politics and can explain their existence, success, or failure. The definitions of these mechanism and processes, as well as their definition of contentious politics are broad enough to leave significant room for interpretation; their approach is therefore ideal when used alongside with the rule and resistance framework. Tilly and Tarrow approached contentious politics as the intersection of contention, collective action, and politics (2015, 7). Contention involves the making of claims on behalf of another's – also of collective other's – interests. Collective action – in other words, coordinated efforts based on (shared) interests – then grows from such contention. In order for contention to become political, a government should be involved, either as a target, instigator of a claim, or as a third party (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015, 7). The #*FeesMustFall* protests were made up of such collective contentious action and witnessed strong government involvement – as an actor, object, and third party – as well as another authority in the form of the management of the various universities. The government (as well as university managements) for example, were on various occasions the instigators of severe repression against the protesting students (Booysen, 2016).

1.1.1 Violence

When studying such contentious politics – especially in relation to repression – and taking it as the starting point to understand global power dynamics, it is important to consider and classify different forms of violence that are inextricably linked to the existing power structures such resistance may be pitted against. Galtung proposes a division of violence into three categories: (1) direct or personal violence, (2) indirect or structural violence (1969, 171), and (3) cultural or symbolic violence (1990, 291). Direct violence has a clear subject-object relation and is visible as it often concerns an action or various actions; a situation where there is a person inflicting direct harm on another person (Galtung, 1969, 171). Structural violence is violence in which the subject-object relation does not exist. Structural violence – also referred to as social injustice in Galtung's work – has real victims but does not have real perpetrators (Galtung, 1969, 171). In Western legal and ethical systems, it is common to focus on the question of intention in which the guilty parties can be held accountable (Galtung, 1969, 180). This approach focusses on direct violence but is obsolete when considering structural violence as it fails in situations without a clear perpetrator. This is likely to be detrimental to those subjected to such legal and ethical systems as it might allow more pervasive (structural) violence to go unnoticed or unchanged (Galtung, 1969, 172). Other than direct violence, structural violence is considered to be diffuse or systemic injustices and inequalities that are embedded in institutions or social relations that prevent people from meeting basic human needs (Galtung, 1969, 172). Lastly, in his later article, Galtung considers the continuation of direct and structural violence and asserts that in order for such violence to keep existing, it needs to be justified or legitimized (1990, 291). Through culture – which includes many aspects like

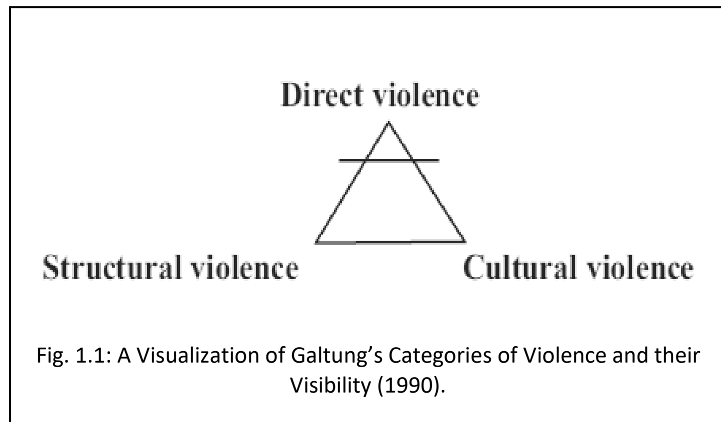

Fig. 1.1: A Visualization of Galtung's Categories of Violence and their Visibility (1990).

religion, ideology, etc. – violence can be legitimized. Cultural violence then are those aspects of culture '[...] that can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence' (Galtung, 1990, 291). Unlike direct violence, which is visible due to its interpersonal nature, both cultural and structural violence may be considered the bottom of the iceberg – they are often not directly visible and no individual is clearly to blame or can be punished, yet generally have long-lasting, systemic, and negative impacts on large groups of people. These inextricably intertwined forms of violence are of great importance not only in the daily realities of people, but also when considering mobilisations. According to Coleman and Rosenow , processes of mobilisation are 'often pitched not only against relations of oppression, exploitation or domination [- direct and structural violence -], but also against the very concepts and categories through which such relations are rendered intelligible, natural or legitimate [- cultural violence -]' (Coleman & Rosenow, 2016, 1).

The violence used during #*FeesMustFall* fits into these categories. First, repression by (campus) police, private security forces, and the South African Police Force (SAPS) – deployed by the state as well as university management (Kamanzi, 2016) – as well as the occasional violence of the students often through destroying property (Ndelu, 2017, 77) fits into the definition of direct and personal violence. For this dimension however it is important to keep in mind that the direct violence of the students is often a response to the (direct, structural, and cultural) violence they are confronted with on a daily basis. Often, their actions were responses to the repression by authorities according to many authors (Booysen, 2016, 14; Maringira & Gukurume, 2017; Meth, 2017; Kujeke, 2017). During and after the #*FeesMustFall* protests it was generally asserted that these 'authorities' resorted to violence with too much ease – shooting protestors with rubber bullets and stun grenades without attempting to engage first (Langa, 2017, 8). Von Holdt *et al* assert that bringing in the police as a representative of the state's symbolic power and repression may exacerbate violence and violent reaction in such protest situations (2011).Violent repression therefore does not necessarily resolve conflict – on many occasions, it may

actually instigate more violence from protestors (deMeritt, 2016). Langa however states that, on occasion, individuals were also responsible for fuelling the violence (2017, 8), as the protestors often could not agree on whether or to what extent violence should be used – opinions on this issue were often rooted in the social, economic, racial, and cultural background of the individual students (Al Jazeera, 2019).

Second, the structural violence, which is less visible, can be discovered in the systemic social injustices that are still rampant not only on campuses but across all of South African society today. Mamdani (2003) states that in order to understand the use of (direct) violence in protest, the genealogy of this violence needs to be considered, rather than just condemning its use. The history of protestors and their lived realities therefore is of great importance to understanding their actions. This lived reality is rooted in the highly unequal South African society (with the highest GINI coefficient (0.63) in the world– higher than it was before the end of apartheid in 1993 (0.593) (World Bank, 2018)), which is still largely organized along racial lines. Unemployment furthermore is at 40 per cent and it is mostly young, undereducated (black) youth that are unable to find work (Lehohla, 2017). Even those that have successfully completed their tertiary education, are much less likely to find work in South Africa today than they were in 1994 as can be discovered in Fig. 1.2.

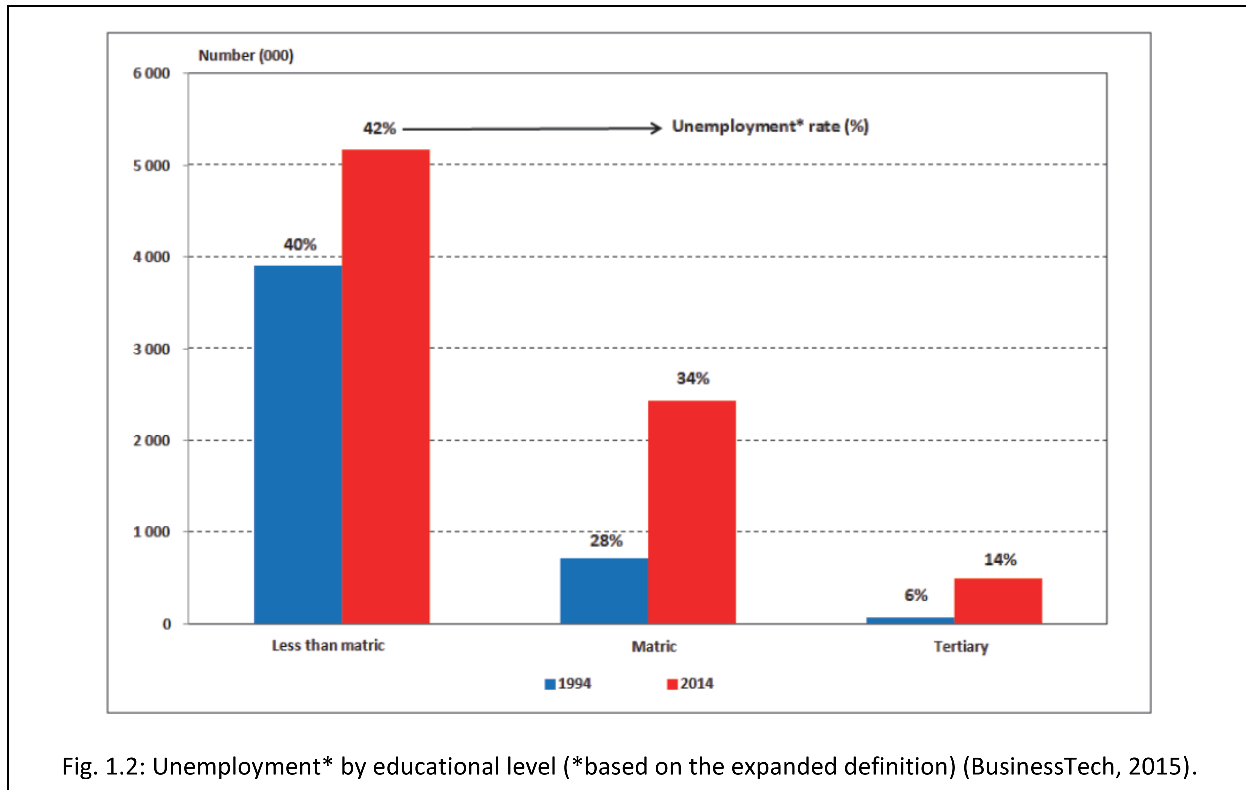

Fig. 1.2: Unemployment* by educational level (*based on the expanded definition) (BusinessTech, 2015).

Apart from the direct and structural violence furthermore, the protestors were also subjected to the cultural violence that is not only apparent on campuses but also in South Africa itself as they are heavily intertwined. Many institutions for example applied for court interdicts that gave them the legal go-ahead to actively counter and repress protests and protestors (Duncan, 2015). Students were often arrested under the mandate of such interdicts which were used as tools to suppress the contentious voices on campuses (Langa, 2017, 9). Furthermore, students had little (financial) means to legally counter these instruments and had to rely on civil society organizations and lawyers doing pro bono work – which significantly polarized the situation (Langa, 2017, 9). Especially during the second wave of protests, the interdicts were used to spotlight individuals that were of tactical importance to the protests and a threat to the status quo; these individuals would then face the threat of a lifetime in prison (Mabasa, 2018). An example can be found at the University Currently Known as Rhodes (UCKAR), which

did not apply for an interdict in the protests of 2015 when the main goal of the protests was the reduction and eventual elimination of fees. In 2016, however, when the protest's scope had widened to include the issue of sexual violence – a reoccurring issue on campus and in the protests – university management repeatedly and actively brought in law enforcement to (violently) repress the protests (Meth, 2017, 101). Meth – who investigated this situation at UCKAR – stated that many student activists felt like the 'courts are now being used to intimidate and instil fear into protesting students' (2017, 104). The interdicts, furthermore, which were part of the legal systems of South Africa, were not only used as a justification for (severe) repression, financially problematic, and facilitating increasing polarization, but were often also very broad – lacking specific limitations (Meth, 2017, 104). This almost made them a carte blanche for violent repression and a tool to target individuals through normalized legal tools – rather than constructively resolving conflict. The interdicts also exposed a strong contradiction between the universities' words and their actions. On the one hand, university management claimed to commit to negotiations, but on the other hand, they applied for such interdicts and used them as a legal justification to bring in the police and install private security to counter the protest (Langa, 2017, 9).

As FitzGerald and Seale point out, university managements under fire during the protests were 'between a rock and a hard place' (2016, 235). This position, in which they often were sympathetic to the goals of students but also had to consider the interest of the university and its national and international position within a web of structural and cultural violence may explain why university management at different universities acted in the way they did. It however does not provide a justification for the apartheid-like repression and violence used against students or the problems that are related to the interdicts. The students did significantly disrupt life on campus, and the university was concerned with maintaining the status quo. That however also does not imply that the status quo is not embedded with Galtung's structural and cultural violence. The students actively attempted to point out such issues, as

the question of whose rights take the forefront is extremely problematic in South Africa today as its society is still significantly unequal in terms of class and race (Pettersonn, 2019; Lehohla, 2017).

The normalization of contention, repression, and violence furthermore also became apparent at SU, the object of the participant observation related to this thesis. In order to add to the argument, the following paragraphs will highlight personal experiences related to cultural violence in South Africa as described in the participant observation. During my time in Stellenbosch I witnessed a moment of such cultural violence that had triggered contention. I was walking to the library when I heard commotion and saw protestors; I thought little of it until I received a video via the International Students in Stellenbosch WhatsApp group. The video showed a large group of black protestors who emptied trash cans on the lawns of a big Greco-Roman building – the court in Stellenbosch. I heard shots and saw people running for cover in the footage – another international student later told me that there had been about ten gun shots. I am from a small rural village and witnessed little disruption in my life. Even in the bigger cities that I frequent and have been able to call home, contentious action was limited – peaceful marches against Poland's new abortion law plans, marches for equality, or assemblies for equal rights and anti-racism. The disruption, and especially the repression that I saw in that video seemed rather violent and was relatively shocking for me – a sentiment that was echoed in the WhatsApp group as well. Yet when I met up with South African peers later and asked them about the events, they stated – nonchalantly – that the police had most likely used flash grenades and that this was nothing out of the ordinary. They laughed at my shock and stated that 'that doesn't happen in your country I guess'[7].

Though this is not a statistically relevant example, it does to an extent illustrate how direct violence – often in the form of repression by government officials – has become internalized in the minds of citizens in South Africa, and how the violence – both of the actions of the protestors in the form of vandalism, and in the (in my mind) severe repression by the police – has become normalized in the mind

[7] (Fieldnotes, October 29, 2018).

of this individual. What's more, media coverage of this incident was rather limited as I could not really find any information except for word-of-mouth and two very short news articles on News24 (Pitt, 2018), and EyeWitness News (Persens, 2018). These articles were only focused on the arrests made. The repression that had truly shocked me was referred to by the police's spokesperson as 'action [that] was taken to disperse the crowd' (Persens, 2018; Pitt, 2018). Neither article, moreover, referred to the reasons for the protests. My shock is of course also strongly related to my own privilege, yet it does also allude to the normalization of repression and violence in South African society.

Contentious politics – through the use of direct violence such as in this example, as well as non-violent mobilizations – often attempt to address and overcome such structural and cultural violence. Most contentious politics however, no matter how well-intended or even how well-resourced, fail to (entirely) unravel the existing relations of power and knowledge and can come to reflect the system they aim to destroy. These attempts all run the risk of reproducing or even bolstering hierarchies of race, class, or gender (Coleman & Rosenow, 2016, 1-2). A rather symbolic example of this was presented by Maeckelbergh in a lecture at Ghent University[8], which I attended. Maeckelbergh did extensive fieldwork with the movement Occupy Wallstreet, an anti-capitalist, non-hierarchical organization. In her lecture, she reviewed a meeting of December 29th, 2011. She stated that the meeting was perfectly in line with the nature of the movement – anti-capitalism, horizontality in decision-making, equality, and embracing of constructive conflict. At the end of the meeting however, some proposals had to be discussed – most importantly a request for funds from the Oakland branch of Occupy[9]. They had successfully shut down a West Coast port and were proposing future actions to further their cause. Maeckelbergh stated that this proposal was extremely interesting as the first question asked after the introduction of the proposal was 'where are the receipts?'. Through this question, hierarchy – as the accountants asserted a

[8] (Fieldnotes, March 28, 2019).

[9] Occupy Wall Street was the most 'visible' in the media and therefore received and was in charge of most of the larger movement's funding. Within the movement, according to Maeckelbergh (2019), there was a group of accountants that were in charge of handling the funds.

position of (non-horizontal) authority – and money were introduced into the meeting. This, in turn, introduced capitalist assumptions; money became a scarce resource and introduced a certain (personal) precarity into the meeting as some of the money collected by Occupy Wallstreet was used to sustain members that came from far and did not live in the city. The demand for receipts implicitly brought with it questions of which political actors were deemed acceptable, which actions therefore would or would not happen, and who was in and who was out of the movement. Yet, Maeckelbergh stated, none of the members pointed this out.

This incident shows – in a practical, symbolic, and very simple way – how hard it is for movements to overcome the prevailing power structure and existing structural and cultural violence. It is next to impossible for contentious movements like Occupy to distance themselves entirely from the existing power dynamics as to some extent, they will be reproduced. This also goes for #*FeesMustFall*. Though the protests were largely amorphous and mostly partisan, shifting hierarchies amongst (political) actors were ever-present; reinforced by media representation as they often presented clear 'leaders' of the protest (Satgar, 2016). Various groups – mostly youth affiliations of existing political parties – and students struggled for influence and leadership positions. Contestation about such positions was often fierce and included denigrating the character of others and questioning individuals' commitment to the struggle as well as their level of 'blackness' (Chikane, 2018, 137). Satgar writes that '[i]n many ways, #FMF was leaderless while, at the same time, it had a powerful group and populist logic at work' (2016, 217). Furthermore, political parties were involved, though usually off-stage or in the form of affiliated individuals rather than political party participation (Booysen, 2016, 15). Over the course of the protests, and especially during the second wave in 2016, the divisions within the movements at various campuses increased; as tensions increased, splinter groups emerged and speaking with one voice became increasingly difficult (Langa, 2016, 6).

The divisions were often based on disagreements about party politics, ideology, class, the use of violence, and questions of gender and LGBTIQA+ equality (Jagarnath, 2016) – as reflected in the respective backgrounds of the students as well as South African society. At Wits University for example, some protestors found the plight of (black) women and LGBTIQA+ students a distraction that undermined the goals of #*FeesMustFall* – stating that the intersectional discrimination they faced and the goals they intended to achieve should only be considered after the 'revolution' (Jagarnath, 2016). However, others asserted that it was of high importance that these differences were addressed from the beginning (Jagarnath, 2016), in line with Fanon, who was an important inspiration for many of the protestors. Fanon stated that total and immediate transformation of all aspects of (colonial) society were essential for decolonization (1963). The protests then, on many occasions, turned into continuous contention over power that fed into the divisions within the different movements under the #*FeesMustFall* banner (Satgar, 2016, 217). Like Occupy Wallstreet in Maeckelbergh's example, #*FeesMustFall* failed to escape the web of structural and cultural violence. It is however important to consider that the reproduction of existing social structures is almost impossible to avoid; it is therefore essential for social movements (as well as researchers) to be aware of these realities and the inability to completely place oneself outside of them (Cho *et al,* 2013, 793; Maeckelbergh, 2019).

1.2 Decolonization

The #FeesMustFall debates were 'part of an ongoing battle to decide who has the power to shape the twenty-first century South African university, and what the nature of this university should be' (Godsell & Chikane, 2016, 68). This 'battle' is rooted in the South African and international debate on decolonization of the university, which, in turn, is rooted in the debate on the political decolonization of previously colonized nations. The different movements under the #*FeesMustFall* banner however had diverging ideas on what the decolonization of their respective campuses would entail (Langa, 2017, 12), and as pointed out in the previous section, often had trouble speaking with a unified voice – especially

over the course of the protests as rifts emerged, related to the differing interests of the various actors. This section will introduce and engage with the decolonization debate, focusing not only on political and economic dimensions of decolonization, but also on the epistemological dimension that is of high importance in relation to the decolonization of the university and the #*FeesMustFall* protests.

Decolonization is an often-used term and has long been subject of discussion in many contexts; it does not neatly fit into a single defined frame of time or a specific political activity (Betts, 2012, 23). Mamdani (2016) proposes that it consists of various (overlapping) dimensions: political, economic, and epistemological. Initially, it was mostly focused on the political (and increasingly economic) process of previously colonized nations shedding the yoke of the alien rule of the colonial administrations on their road to political and later also economic (and cultural) independence and self-determination (Jansen & Osterhammel, 2019, viii; Bets, 2012, 26). Over the course of the years, as colonized nations increasingly attained their freedom, the political interpretation shifted to transformation of institutions with a focus on those institutions that reproduced the (racial) subjectivities that had been rampant under colonialism (Mamdani, 2016, 79). The economic dimension of decolonization furthermore evolved from obtaining economic control over the territories (Betts, 2012, 29), or local ownership of local resources as Mamdani puts it (2016, 79) to critical consideration and tackling of economic institutions that sustain the colonial-type economic relations (Mamdani, 2016, 79). Though the political process has on many occasions yielded the intended result of independence and autonomy, the legacies of colonialism still lingers – Grosfoguel states that the success of the creation of decolonized nations through the removal of colonial administrations is 'one of the most powerful myths of the twentieth century' (2011, 13). Though the previously colonized states – which were often located on the periphery – gained independence and were no longer officially subject to colonial administrations, they, as well as many non-European people, often still suffer from the (lasting effects of) exploitation and domination of the Euro-American reality on a daily basis.

The power dynamics were put in place over the 450 years of colonialism did not disappear with the political decolonization in which the colonial administrations were removed. Rather, Grosfoguel writes that modern society is still subjected to the same 'colonial power matrix' (2011, 13). The removal of colonial administrations – the end of 'global colonialism' – has given rise to a new reality: 'global coloniality' (2011, 13). The world now is subjected to this reality, in which colonial power structures still resonate and states are ensnared in a 'modern/colonial capitalist world-system' (2011, 13-14). Within this reality, a postcolonial subject emerges, 'both entangled with, yet displaced from those past centres of colonial power which structure this subject's current lifeworld' (Griffiths, 2019, 145).

Global coloniality then plays an essential part in understanding the realities in which the need for decolonization beyond the political (and economic) dimension arises. The scope of decolonization is widened from the political dimension – the removal of colonial administrations – to addressing the (economic, social, and cultural) realities it left behind as well as the dimension of the self – the postcolonial subject. The importance of this postcolonial subject can already be discovered in Fanon (1963), who asserted that decolonization mostly is a psychological process. According to him, the decolonization process would entail the formation of new men; shedding the inferiority complex created by the oppression of colonialism, attaining redemption, and restoring self-respect and agency (1963). Such a formation of new men could only be achieved through the use of violence, which is essential for liberation as it is an outlet of the colonial aggression and can be used for collective catharsis and a response to the dehumanization of (black) individuals through colonialism (1963, 7).

Violence, furthermore, was a weapon of the poor, the marginalized, the *Lumpenproletariat* – the men forced of their land due to the growing population in the countryside as well as colonial expropriation, excluded from their tribe/clan/family – that he saw as the vanguard of the nationalist struggle (1963, 80-81). It was brought into the lives of natives by colonizers and would be the only language such colonizers would consider. However, though Fanon was convinced that the use of violence was essen-

tial, he also realized that violence would eventually result in negative results not only for the colonizer but also for the colonized (1963). Fanon furthermore believed that since the law had been used as a tool of oppression against the colonized it therefore should not be respected in the decolonization process (1963, 228). This ties in with the idea of cultural violence as proposed by Galtung and introduced in Chapter 1 (Galtung, 1990). The law – as a part of the culture of colonization or the remodified forms that still negatively impact the previously colonized native populations of countries in the global south – has been used as a tool in the normalization of the suppression of the colonized subject and therefore perpetuates the structural violence against this subject. It is this post-colonial subject furthermore, that relates to Mamdani's third dimension: epistemological decolonization. This dimension, focused on the production of knowledge, is often also seen as the discursive aspect of decolonization and is centred on who gets to 'make, unmake and remake, and thereby apprehend, the world' (Mamdani, 2016, 79), and is essential – though political and economic decolonization are also of importance – when considering the decolonization of higher education.

1.2.1 Decolonizing the University

Universities are essential sites in the decolonization processes as they often reflect society at large as well as its grievances. They are essential in the epistemological rejection of the remnants of colonialism (Hewlett *et al*, 2016, 155). Within the context of the African university, reformist debates discussing the political, economic, and epistemological decolonization of the university find their roots as early as the 1960s as a response to the (post)colonial institutions of Africa. There were two main sides in this debate, both strongly represented in the traditions and academics of two distinct universities. On the one hand, there was Makerere University in Uganda, 'the paradigm of the European colonial university, with a conservative, universalist tradition' (Mamdani, 2018). This side of the debate focused on excellence and adhering to international standards – this was culminated in the image of the (universal) scholar. The other side of the debate, championed by the University of Dar Es Salaam in Tanzania, was

nationalist, and focused strongly on relevance and the importance of the local dimension (Mamdani, 2018). Here, the public intellectual – 'a committed intellectual rooted in his time and place and deeply engaged with the wider society' (Mamdani, 2016, 72) – took centre stage. The debates between these two sides went on to define the discourse on decolonizing the university. Its main distinction has become increasingly important today; increasing globalization has heightened the pressure to conform yet universities in previously colonized nations are still facing a strong desire 'to reclaim, and also reimagine African identities able to foster and maintain their own particular world views and histories' (Griffiths, 2019, 147). Mamdani (2017) asserts that neither the universal nor the nationalist perspective is the perfect solution; rather, it is important to find a balance between the two.

The current imbalance between globalization and capitalism, and the desire for socio-spatial relevance lays at the root of much of the criticism on South African higher education. A key aspect of this criticism, which also took the forefront under #*FeesMustFall* was the question of access and the need for its democratization (Mbembe, 2016, 30), both demographically and psychologically. Lasting socioeconomic, geographical, and educational inequalities, rooted in colonial and apartheid-times, ensure that the South African university often does not demographically reflect the nation's population. Secondly, universities often fail to foster a sense of belonging for all students. This has become increasingly problematic as more and more black students attend previously all-white institutions (Naicker, 2016, 57). The values and habits of such institutions often clashed with the culture of their increasingly varied student body (Naicker, 2016, 57). Students addressed this issue under #*FeesMustFall* by demanding the renaming buildings, removing statues, and other symbolic changes, as well as an identity renegotiation in which they challenged South African universities to negotiate a sense of belonging for all students (Kaschula, 2016, 205).

Furthermore, South African universities are subjected to the domination of '*large systems of authoritative control, standardization, gradation, accountancy, classification, credits and penalties*'

(Mbembe, 2016, 30). Through these systems, higher education had been turned into a marketable product which undermines the free pursuit of knowledge by academics and students – who now pursue credits instead. Academics have lesser status today and are not only under high pressure to produce, but also see little return on their investments (Mbembe, 2016, 31). This is in line with Zeleza, who writes that the lacking resources as well as the larger political structures demoralize faculty and students and lead to a devaluation of the pursuit of knowledge (2009, 8). The main consumers of the product higher education, moreover, have also been commodified (Godsell & Chikane, 2016, 61; Mbembe, 2016, 31; Satgar, 2016, 222). Students are increasingly turned into ready-made marketable products – they often study to improve their material position, rather than the pursuit of knowledge (Godsell & Chikane, 2016, 61). Higher education then has been turned into an industry with high pressure on output and international value, with little institutional focus on local relevance.

To truly decolonize the institutions, this 'tide of bureaucratization' (Mbembe, 2016, 31), needs to be halted. In order to achieve this, especially for universities in South Africa, it is essential to study, and understand, the complex dynamics of global movements as well as realizing South Africa's situatedness in Africa and the world and making use of the resources of the continent through interaction (Mbembe, 2016, 41-42; Zeleza, 2009). African histories and knowledge need to be (re)centred on the global stage and in the production of knowledge, in order to undermine the Eurocentric framing of African humanity and history 'as less than, mimetic, and becoming Europe: perpetually infantile' (Zeleza, 2019, 18). Through this, the democratization of access, both demographically and psychologically as well as the commodification of actors and the difference between memory and history can be addressed (Mbembe, 2016, 29). By increasingly focusing on the pursuit of interest over bureaucracy, eventually the premise that the root of African consciousness and cultural heritage lies in the West can be rejected, and a decolonization of both knowledge and the institution can be achieved (Mbembe, 2016, 31&35). Moreover, through building new intellectual networks – especially with other nations outside of the Eu-

ro-American zone (Zeleza, 2019) – the benefits of globalization, such as talent mobility and floating resources, can be taken advantage off (Mbembe, 2016, 41) and a better balance can be found between universalism and nationalism.

It is interesting to mention that not only universities in the global south are grappling with the decolonization of their institutions (Bhambra *et al,* 2018, 3). Universities in the Euro-American spheres are also increasingly considering the topic – not only through considering some of the points outlined above, but also very strongly through grappling with their respective roles and 'shared historical trajectories of forms of colonialism' (Bhambra et al, 2018, 3). This is also witnessed in the international actions related to the #*FeesMustFall* protests that will be outlined in Chapter 2.

1.3 The Politics of Language in South Africa

In order to understand the crucial role of language in the decolonization debate – especially in regard to South African universities – it is essential to delve deeper into the history of its use as a political tool. Colonizers on many occasions made use of what Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o called a 'cultural bomb' (1986, 4). This meant that they would impose colonial cultural and linguistic systems in an attempt to annihilate or oppress indigenous cultures (1986, 4). Such a cultural bomb can also be discovered under the apartheid-system, especially its strict systematic policies on language and education. Bantu Education, introduced under apartheid, was used as an ideological tool to 'maintain the status quo of racial discrimination and social inequalities, marginalizing black South Africans' (Ndimande, 2013, 23). This segregated schooling system was designed to instil apartheid ideology, the inferiority of the African, and the superiority of the European into the minds of young black South Africans (Meek & Meek, 2008, 508; Ndimande, 2013, 22). It was used as a means to produce workers for subordinate positions through the often-horrible quality of education, and as a means to continuously enforce the segregation between whites and blacks (Ndimande, 2013, 22).

The schools that were subject to this system promoted the use of African languages; not only to reinforce state ideology, limit the access of blacks to employment, or continue the race-based segregation (Ndimande, 2013, 22; Ngcobo, 2009, 209), but also to create division amongst the different language- and ethnic- communities of the (majority black) population of South Africa (Ngcobo, 2009, 209). Today, 75 per cent of schools in South Africa are located in geographically remote areas; in the previous Bantustans[10], but also in the townships that are often at a relatively big distance from the city and usually house black, poor South Africans (The Daily Vox, 2019). These schools are usually overcrowded, under-resourced, and arguably dysfunctional (The Daily Vox, 2019). Though access to primary and secondary education is granted to each young South African, no guarantees are made for the quality of such education. The educational opportunities of a child are determined by their race, birth province, the respective wealth of their parents, and language (Spaull, 2013a, 7). These factors – as well as the primary and secondary education of the child that is influenced by these factors – influence their higher education opportunities. Politics of education and language in South Africa then are inherently political as its languages are heavily entangled in (old) systems of ethnic and racial division[11] (Beukes, 2010, 36). Ngcobo however does mention that Bantu Education – though it 'entrenched the separate and inferior development of African education and the use of indigenous languages' (Ngcobo, 2009, 209) – may have also been a blessing in disguise as it also 'served as a lever to promote mother-tongue schooling throughout South Africa' (Ngcobo, 2009, 209). According to Ngcobo, this is a 'blessing in disguise' as the books written by African writers during this period helped to standardize the nine indigenous languages that nowadays have official status (2009, 209).

[10] Bantustans or the TBVC countries (the republics of Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda, and Ciskei) were the four homelands for black people as designated by the apartheid state. They were used as a tool for segregation, the restriction of political rights, and continued domination of the African population (Seekings, 2008, 4).

[11] Language was also used as a political tool of the oppressor before apartheid; both in the English oppression of Afrikaners and natives, as well as in the later pragmatic and institutionalized Afrikaner oppression of all people of colour in South Africa (Beukes, 2010; Meek & Meek, 2008, 509).

The standardization of the African languages – even though it has been used as a tool of suppression – is of importance, as language plays a significant role in the formation of identity as well as in how an individual is perceived. It therefore is essential in the renegotiation of identity that is crucial when considering access to universities. Through language, people identify who is the other, as well as who is part of their specific category. Language, like race, is an important indicator for identity and attribution of similarity; a realization that is also apparent in popular culture. Trevor Noah for example asserts that language, more than colour, defined other's perception of him – defined him as either part of a community, or as the other (Noah, 2016, 67). Language can actively aid and actively undermine the sense of belonging and is essential in the decolonization of the mind as its uses are 'central to a people's definition of themselves' (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986, 4). Language in South Africa long has been a political tool of suppression; yet increasingly, through decolonization and addressing global coloniality, it can be a political tool for empowerment.

1.3.1 Multilingualism

Within the university, languages can be used for empowerment of marginalized groups through the establishment of academic (and literary) traditions in these respective languages (Kaschula, 2016; Mamdani, 2016, 2017; Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986). Moreover, through increasing both formal and informal use – rather than continuing to use a language that was installed through the imperial cultural bomb or otherwise – the respective speakers of these languages can assert themselves in the world (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986, 94).

This kind of multilingualism is not only an essential tool in the empowerment of marginalized ethnic groups but is also of the essence when considering questions of academic access. Mother tongue education for example is often considered to be very beneficial to the development of (young) pupils (Benson, 2004) as language is key in understanding information that is transmitted to a student.

Skutnabb-Kangas terms instruction through a language not mastered by the learner as *submersion* as she finds that it is equivalent to holding students under water but failing to teach them how to swim (2000). Students at South African universities are currently mostly subjected to classes in English or Afrikaans, and very rarely have the opportunity to take classes in their mother tongue. Professor Desai and professor Maseko, who presented their findings at a panel discussion at SU[12]– which I attended – both strongly advocated for the use of multiple languages in higher education. Professor Desai stated that though her employer, the University of the Western Cape, had not implemented special policies, she had actively started translating her own class material into isiXhosa in order to provide the students with materials in their mother tongue. She emphasized that most students had been very grateful and that she had emphasized a need for materials like these for all of the curriculum. She however also asserted that full mother tongue education should find its place more in the primary and secondary tiers of education. Professor Maseko on the other hand was much more adamant on the introduction of African languages as well as the introduction of African world views into the university curriculum. She found that the importance of language lies in its ability to convey knowledge that encodes values, norms, ideas, and thoughts of a society that speaks it. Through history, literacy was brutally introduced and used as a tool to construct power around Western languages and knowledge. The universities now then are facing the challenge of unlearning and relearning the African ways of knowing. This is in line with Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's emphasis on the dethroning of English in academics and literature – through African languages, Africa and its knowledge could be placed at the centre and 'the African perspective' (1986, 94) could be established.

Apart from practical access, language – through its strong link with identity – can also foster a sense of belonging for its speakers (Kaschula, 2016, 205). It is important to integrate African languages into South African universities as they can undermine cultural alienation and may aid in the creation of

[12] (Fieldnotes, October 4, 2018).

meaningful interaction and social cohesion between students. Kaschula proposes that multilingual courses, as well as an integration of African languages into the institutional and practical endeavours of South African universities, such as ceremonies and signs (2016, 204). This advice has to an extent been followed by SU, as I saw various signs on campus that included isiXhosa in the naming and branding of sites. Moving beyond the institutional and practical dimension, Makalela states that multilingualism as such can be used as a tool of mass-mobilization and therefore for decolonization of the often-exclusionary monolingual discourse of many universities (2018, 11). Culture and language then are essential parts of the epistemological dimension of decolonization and tie in closely with the psychological decolonization of the self on a large scale.

Though multilingualism can be a tool for empowerment, it is subject to various challenges. It is not only resource-intensive, but also hard to implement. Many policies have been created by government as well as university managements all over South Africa, but little of these have been successfully implemented (Beukes, 2010; Kaschula, 2016). Professor Maseko asserted a similar point during the panel discussion at SU[13] when she stated that South Africans have a tendency of viewing a problem and creating idealistic solutions – and if these solutions fail or are not sufficiently implemented, they come up with new idealistic solutions instead of addressing the implementation. Many policies that could in theory have resolved various issues then, have had little or only symbolic effect in practice – this is related to a lack of strategies to implement policies, a lack of monitoring, and the lack or underestimation of the essential resources (Beukes, 2010, 37; Kaschula, 2016, 202).

This gap between intention and performance is for example reflected in the fact that multilingualism is enshrined in the South African constitution of 1996. Article six stipulates that the eleven official languages[14] should be promoted 'where possible' and 'where practical'. The impetus

[13] (Fieldnotes, October 4, 2018).

[14] Afrikaans, English, Ndebele, Xhosa, Zulu, Sotho sa Leboa, Sotho, Tswana, Swati, Venda, and Tsonga.

behind the legislation is both political and ideological, '[...] aimed at the creation and strengthening of national identity in close association with national political power' (Ngcobo, 2009, 210), and was considered to be 'a means to ensure equity of access and success in higher education, in contrast to past colonial and apartheid education policies that left a legacy of inequality, exclusion, and failure' (Madiba, 2010, 327). It shows a governmental dedication to the advancement of indigenous languages and is a call for the increased use of African languages – not limited to the nation, but also for institutions like universities. Yet the wording used in the constitution provides space for both institutions and the government to avoid a certain responsibility when it comes to the advancement of African languages (Kaschula, 2016, 203).

Like its constitution, much of the language policies of South Africa have been hailed as enlightened (Beukes, 2010, 36). Yet the laissez faire approach and lack of implementation have disillusioned the population. Furthermore, the policy still presents the citizens of South Africa as differing from each other (Ngcobo, 2009, 212). To forge a united society, Ngcobo states that it is essential to address the role language plays in group-identification (2009, 212). Identity, after all, is the crux of language policy making (Ngcobo, 2009, 212). The apparent mismatch of the ideals and the practicality of the implementations of idealistic plans are problematic and hard to address, therefore more likely eclipsed by other issues that may have faster solutions. More importantly however, language policy does also not necessarily reflect what constituents desire (Ngcobo, 2009, 210); it is rooted in the ideology of an elite – in the form of university management or government – which does not always reflect the wants of society (Ngcobo, 2009, 2010). This statement is in line with the observations of Makalela, who does strongly argue for the use of African languages in higher education but does also observe that the students in the #*FeesMustFall* protests did not 'explicitly express the desire to be taught in their own languages' (2018, 10).

Language plays an essential role in the decolonization debate and is of great significance in process of identity formation. The debate in South Africa, which is affected both by its national reality as well as global pressures, is academically and idealistically mostly oriented toward multilingualism and reflects the larger trends of the decolonization debate. However, as with many of South Africa's policies, there currently is a gap between intention and performance as the implementation of multilingualism is not particularly easy.

Chapter 2. Engaging with #*FeesMustFall*

This chapter will consider the #*FeesMustFall* protests that swept across South African university campuses in 2015 and 2016 in more detail.

2.1 The Emergence of #*FeesMustFall*

The #*FeesMustFall* protests truly took off with protests at the Witwatersrand University (Wits) in Johannesburg in October 2015 (Booysen, 2016, 320). Students under the leadership by the president of the Student Representative Council (SRC) organized a sit-in and helped create the lock down of the university (Booysen, 2016, 320). Close to a week of these protest eventually led to limited concessions by the university's management; renegotiation of the increase – which later turned into a suspension of the fee increase – as well as no disciplinary action towards the protesting students and the involved staff members (Booysen, 2016, 320). By the 19th of October – when students at Wits were part of fresh negotiations – similar protests arose at the University of Cape Town (UCT) and the University Currently Known as Rhodes (UCKAR)[15] in Grahamstown and later at most institutions of higher education in South Africa.

The rapid and successful diffusion – defined by Tilly and Tarrow as the expansion of forms of contention, issues, or types of framing between sites (2015, 30) – has largely been attributed to social media. Platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and other social media were essential in the spread of the protests (Rawlins, 2015). Its use unsettled and disrupted – though it did not overthrow – the mainstream media's hegemony through its role in the spread of the protests (Daniels, 2016, 189), as it helped students share narratives that the regular media did not include or missed – for example, personal stories or their own material like pictures, videos, and audio (Godsell *et al*, 2016, 108). Such

[15] Officially UCKAR is named Rhodes University (RU). The protestors at this university however found the use of the name of a former colonizer highly problematic; therefore, many students and academics began referring to this institution as UCKAR. Until now however no official name change has occurred, as the university is arguing that this would not be prudent in relation to financial investment as well as expensive (international) rebranding (Wazar, 2017).

stories helped make visible the experiences of marginalized people (Godsell *et al*, 2016, 109). It led to an increase in the diversity of voices and an increase in the number of listeners – making it one of the most important tools in gathering and sharing information as well as nationalizing the narrative under the trending #*FeesMustFall* and coordinating actions during the protests (Daniels, 2016, 189). For example, on the 21st of October 2015, the students managed to shut down seven of the major universities – with most of the other institutions of higher education following suit in the days thereafter (Naicker, 2016, 55). Other significant contentious collective action included a march on the Union Buildings in Pretoria as well as a simultaneous march on the parliament in Cape Town (Naicker, 2016, 55). Here, thousands of students, workers, academics, parents, and supporters entered the gates and demanded to see Blade Nzimande, the then minister of Higher Education. The actions on the campuses, the protests at large, and marches on essential government buildings – all reminiscent of the 1980s mass democratic movement – eventually led to a capitulation by Zuma, the then president of the Republic of South Africa, in which he promised that the fees for 2016 would undergo a zero per cent increase (Naicker, 2016, 55).

2.2 The Evolution of #*FeesMustFall*

In mid-2016, a second wave of protests swept South Africa – triggered by the disillusionment of the earlier gains, the lack of urgency in government to address demands, and the announcement of fee increases for 2017 (Booysen, 2016, 1; Maluleke, 2016). After the 2015 protest, government had shifted the responsibility of these increases to the individual universities – capped at eight per cent per year and exempting those from households earning below R600 000 (about 37 000 euro) per year from paying the increment fees (Gasa & Dougan, 2016). The government intended to address the possible resulting shortfall in the university budget through these policies, but the free education, that the students had demanded was not obtained – leading to a critical escalation of the protests with longer shutdowns, failure to complete academic years due to the protests, and violence (Ndlovu, 2017), in the form of

blocking of university entrances, disruptions of lectures, the burning of facilities, and significant clashes with private security companies and law enforcement (Gasa & Dougan, 2016). It was within this reality that the demands of students increasingly moved beyond a focus on fees and became a call for free and decolonized higher education all around South Africa (Ndlovu, 2017; Booysen, 2016, 324).

In order to analyse this call, it is important to consider the (collective) political actors involved – scale may impact this analysis as the protests and groups that took part in them were not homogenous – as pointed out in Chapter 1. On a simplified, national scale, the main actors involved were (1) students, (2) university managements, and (3) the South African government. The students were the claim-making subject, making claims on an object – in this case, university management and the government. These claims, according to Tilly and Tarrow can be divided into three categories: (1) identity claims, (2) standing claims, and (3) program claims (2015, 110-111). First, identity claims consider the declaration of the existence of a particular actor; this is reflected in the protestors that made their pain known and asserted their presence on campus. The call for attention to the question of access, both in the form of demographic and financial access, and access through belonging were essential identity claims. Secondly, the protestors made use of standing claims which concern the position of an actor within a certain established category in a regime – which would make them deserving of certain rights and privileges that come with that category (Tillly & Tarrow, 2015, 110). Building on the identity claims, the students asserted that universities should be open to all – the financial encumberments as well as access through belonging should be improved. Lastly, program claims, which demand certain actions of the object of the claim (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015, 111) were made within the protests, in the form of specific issues they wanted to see changed; not just the systemic violence on campus, but also the symbolisms of oppression, including statues, names, and language.

2.2.1 Coalition Formation

Another important program claim made by the students was the call for the end of outsourcing. Students were namely actively forming coalitions – creating new, visible and direct coordination of claims between two or more previously distinct actors (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015, 216) – during the *#FeesMustFall* protest; for example, with the outsourced workers at the various campuses. These coalitions were formed in a response to the outsourcing policies that were adopted by many of the universities around the turn of the century; starting with UCT in 1999 (Luckett & Mzobe, 2016, 94). In practice, outsourcing entails that university management hires and pays intermediary companies that supply workers for maintenance and other service-related jobs at the institution (for example cleaners) (Ntshingila, 2016, 87). This policy was adopted as a cost-effective strategy, and negatively impacted the lives and livelihoods of workers at various universities (Ntshingila, 2016). As a part of the global trend of neo-liberalism, the outsourcing policies

> reinforced apartheid-like social and economic divisions, as the "skilled" administrators and academics who remained "core" university employees were mostly white and middle class, while the "unskilled" service workers, who were working class and almost all black, were redefined as "non-core", despite the importance of the services they provided to the functioning of the university (Luckett & Mzobe, 2016, 95).

The apartheid-like divisions were visualized by Naadira Munshi, a leading student activist and a member of the Wits Workers' Solidarity Committee. In her photos, she exposed the existence of segregated entrances and toilets, change rooms that were hidden away and unkept, as well as restrictions for workers to make use of public spaces on campus. Such practices were not scrutinized to the extent that the lived realities of the workers would match with the values the universities such as

Wits claimed to uphold (Ntshingila, 2016, 88). Through outsourcing, the responsibility for workers no longer fell on the universities but rather on the intermediary companies (Ntshingila, 2016, 88).

Those who lost their job due to this policy also lost their pensions and other benefits, and those that were absorbed into the outsourcing companies had to deal with significantly worse working conditions – benefits as well as wages decreased significantly as a result of outsourcing (Ntshingila, 2016, 88). The universities could however no longer be held accountable through trade unions for these results as the responsibility was now diverted to the outsourcing companies (Ntshingila, 2016, 88). Not only was there no legal need for interaction between the university and the trade unions, there was also a shift in what trade unions represented the workers. Due to outsourcing, they were no longer represented by one trade union but rather by different sectoral unions which made collective organization difficult (Luckett & Mzobe, 2016, 95). This led to the creation of alternative organizations for worker's solidarity like the UCT Workers Forum and the Wits Workers Solidarity Committee as well as to various discussions and protests (Luckett & Mzobe, 2016, 95). However, whilst some gains against outsourcing were made pre-#*FeesMustFall*, they were limited until the workers banded with the students under the *#FeesMustFall* banner (Luckett & Mzobe, 2016, 95). Until that point, workers had little to no voice on the campus – because outsourcing pushed them into oblivion (Ntshingila, 2016, 88). Outsourcing drew and still draws boundaries of exclusion – less crude than under apartheid but serving the same purpose of reproducing racial and class inequalities (Luckett & Mzobe, 2016, 95).

Under the #*FeesMustFall* banner, the students stood with the workers, and the workers stood with the students on their respective issues – fees, decolonization, and outsourcing amongst others. This was in part facilitated by the attribution of similarity – the identification of another political actor as falling within the same category as their own (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015, 215). On many occasions the protesting students described the similarities they saw between their own parents and the workers – they would not want their own parents to be in the position of the outsourced workers (Luckett &

Mzobe, 2016, 96; Booysen, 2016, 61). Vice versa, the workers saw the students as their (future) children, which made it important to stand by their side and be part of their protests as well. The coalition, therefore, was based on the lived realities of these workers – based on class, race, and gender (Satgar, 2016, 226) – and the students acknowledgement of these lived experiences as well as their possible perception of the workers through attribution of similarity. Though these coalitions of students and workers predate the protests (Nkosi, 2012)., the impetus of #*FeesMustFall* played a significant role in attaining true successes and the end of outsourcing on various campuses.

2.2.2 Heterogeneity

Though the protests were often portrayed as rather homogenous, the involvement of workers (and sympathetic academics) contributed to their heterogeneity that has already been established in the section on decolonization in Chapter 1. Chikane refers to the national scene of the *#FeesMustFall* as '*a chaotic symphony being played by an orchestra without a conductor'* (2018, 161). This is partly due to the interesting new developments in contentious politics that came along with the rise of *#FeesMustFall* in South Africa. The *#FeesMustFall* protests were different from earlier protests in South Africa in three ways. First, social media was an active tool in the mass politics of the students which both aided in the rapid diffusion of their issues, actions, and the consequential repression, and furthermore was a significant tool in the mobilization processes (Rawlins, 2015). Second, the political actors were largely amorphous as pointed out in Chapter 1. Thirdly, *#FeesMustFall* actively made use of mimetic politics – duplicating developments on different sites (Satgar, 2016, 2017), making use of the same repertoires of contention. Mimetic politics are arguably quite similar to the idea of repertoires as well as to the mechanism of emulation (the deliberate repetition of a performance observed at one site at another site (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015, 215)). In practice, the use of mimetic politics meant that protest at a certain campus would be copied and result in similar actions at other sites; if one group occupied a particular space on campus, others would follow suit. This approach was intensified through the use of social

media to rapidly spread the word about (successful) contention. Satgar however mentions that though this copycat approach was relatively effective, the protests would have benefited if the students had democratically elected leaders for their movements early on which would have improved coordination of collective actions – not only on specific campuses or sites, but also as a collective whole (2016, 217).

The protests were heterogenous on a national, university, and individual level and were also strongly subjected to the political realities of South African (youth) politics. For example, the student structures affiliated to the African National Congress (ANC), under the larger Progressive Youth Alliance (PYA)[16], were actively involved and were often on the forefront of many struggles on campuses. Furthermore, there was strong presence of members of Economic Freedom Fighters Student Command structures (EFFCS), especially among the 'leaders' of the protests – though these students often took up these roles in non-partisan fashion (Booysen, 2016, 26). The EFF furthermore was actively involved as a party as well, as they actively took the debate of *#FeesMustFall* to parliament where they protested during a session and were forcibly removed (News24, 2015). Moreover, they made outspoken statements to show their support to the students, and arguably made use of the process of social appropriation – the conversion or incorporation of previously existing non-political groups and networks into political actors (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015, 217) – as they attempted to turn the protests into EFF related protests (Aljazeera, 2019). Another political actor that was involved was the Pan-Africanist Congress's (PAC) Pan Africanist Student Movement of Azania (PASMA). They were active in the mobilization process at many of the involved campuses as a radically pro-poor and a black consciousness movement (Booysen, 2016, 26). The Democratic Alliance Student Organisation (DASO), affiliated to the Democratic Alliance (DA), was virtually absent and on occasion even expelled from the protest – at SU, the leader of the party and premier of the Western Cape Hellen Zille had to be escorted from campus (News24,

[16] The PYA is an organization that is made up of most ANC related youth-organizations: ANC Youth League (ANCYL), Young Communist League (YCL), Congress of South African Students (COSAS), South African Students Congress (SASCO), and the Muslim Students' Association (MSA).

2015). The DA is a more moderate centre party that is supported mostly by white (and to an extent also coloured) South Africans and found less of a place in the mostly black protests (Spaull, 2019). The *#FeesMustFall* protests therefore were, on national, university, and movement level rather heterogeneous.

Though heterogeneity did to an extent undermine the ability of the protestors to speak with a unified voice – especially through the demands for decolonization with various definitions – it is important to acknowledge that a certain amount of heterogeneity can always be discovered within contentious movements (Della Porta & Diani, 2006). Though the portrayed image or the narrative of the movement may be focused on homogeneity and one voice, generally, movements are more fragmented than they seem. This is strongly related to the concept of intersectionality and how the realities linked to actor's individual and collective identities influence themselves and those around them. In relation to social movements, Della Porta and Diani write that '[a]lthough an idea of similarity is surely behind the concept of collective identity, this homogeneity is rarely if ever multidimensional. Actors who are similar in some traits/attitudes/experiences may differ substantially in other dimensions' (2006, 93). They however do assert that differences such as these do not necessarily have to lead to tensions; yet such differences do form the basis for the heterogeneity of movements such as #*FeesMustFall.* Though #*FeesMustFall* was (increasingly) heterogenous and was subjected to different interest and ideas, it is actually quite remarkable that the students managed to unite so many people – especially because of their differences. For significant amounts of time, they managed to unite people from different classes, races, generations, political groupings, and other divisions together under one banner – protesting for mostly common goals, though interpretations of these goals and opinions on how to achieve them varied. This is an impressive achievement, especially as South Africa today remains one of the most radically divided countries in the world (Pettersson, 2019).

2.3 Whose Voice Gets Heard?

Within this heterogeneity, it is important to consider that certain voices may be louder than others – which can be seen in the temporal definition of the protests. The starting point of the #*FeesMustFall* protests is generally placed in October 2015, when the protests at Wits started. However, fee-related protests at university campuses in South Africa far predate these events. According to Chikane, over the years since 1994, there has been 'an ongoing war of attrition taking place in the higher education sector' (2018, 122). This war is rooted in the following:

> Top-slicing, the uneven distribution of NSFAS [(National Student Financial Scheme)] funding across institutions, the increasing demand for NSFAS funding, decreasing government subsidies, increasing tuition fees, low amounts of third-stream income, low throughput rates in conjunction with high dropout rates, administrative inefficiencies in both NSFAS and universities where funding allocations were not made to students at the beginning of the academic year, and the belief that higher education held the key to economic freedom – all these factors created the perfect storm for a break in the system (Chikane, 2018, 130).

Higher education in South Africa gets its funding from (1) students paying fees, (2) the government, and (3) third party investors – for example research income, donations, investments (Chikane, 2018, 126). However, over the course of the past years – as Chikane puts forward in his account of how *#FeesMustFall* arose (2018) – government funding for education in South Africa has decreased[17] and finding third-party investment has become increasingly hard; for example due to the low return rates of

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[17] In 2015/2016, the South African government spent 0.72 per cent of the GDP on higher education (Kamanzi, 2016). Though this is relatively high when compared to other countries in Africa, it is rather low in comparison to their competitors in the higher education sector in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries – which include some of the world's richest nations – where routine spending often exceeds one per cent of GDP (OECD Data, 2016). Though this comparison might be slightly unfair, as South Africa has to deal with many funding challenges – like other developing countries – as well as significant intersectoral competition for resources (Pillay, 2016, 259), it is still a good comparison to make. Even though South Africa rather has to be seen as a developing country due to its significant inequality amongst others, it usually strives for and attempts to compete with standards of the OECD countries.

the investment as many graduates leave South Africa (Mashaba, 2018). This has led to a shift of the financial burden of higher education onto the shoulders of the students (Chikane, 2018, 126). Though the burden increasingly fell on the students, the shift came with the assumption that the state would offer financial aid for students from previously disadvantaged backgrounds. This came to fruition in 1999 under the National Student Financial Scheme (NSFAS), which was and still is intended to ensure 'fully subsidised free higher education and training for poor and working-class South Africans' (NSFAS, 2019). Within this bursary scheme, funds[18] are allocated to universities in relation to the number of students that qualify for this program. Universities therefore become a broker between the government in the form of the NSFAS, and the student. The NSFAS was initially hailed as a fantastic student loan scheme and was intended to become self-sustaining – as more students applied, there was an expected increase in income from debt collection which would in turn finance new loans (Chikane, 2018 128; Cohen, 2019). However, the scheme soon faced a massive shortfall[19] between demand and supply as many more students applied for it – with significant discrepancies between the Historically Black Institutions (HBIs) and the Historically White Institutions (HWIs) (Chikane, 2018, 128).

HBIs had a higher annual growth rate of NSFAS allocations than the HWIs but were unable to fully fund the number of students that were eligible for the scheme and had been accepted into the institutions. This led to the development of top-slicing; a system in which the NSFAS budget was diluted amongst all students rather than using the means test to determine which students should receive what amount of funds. Though the NSFAS was originally intended to cater to the individual needs of students, it was undermined by this top-slicing system (Chikane, 2018, 128). The deviation from the mean test to

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[18] The money these students receive through the brokerage of the university is a loan and has to be paid back. It is calculated by 'determining the full cost of study at an institution less loans or bursaries received by the student and less an expected family contribution to the fee amount' (Chikane, 2018, 127). The amount that has to be paid back depends on the student's individual academic success as some of the loan is converted into a bursary if students do well.

[19] In 2008, the NSFAS was unable to cover the costs of the students applying for the loans. At the HWIs, the NSFAS allocations could only cover 51 per cent of the full cost of study; at the HBIs they only could cover 36 per cent. This disparity was mostly due to the full cost of study at the HWIs compared to the HBIs and how the formula was determined (DHET, 2010; Bhorat & Pillay, 2017).

top-slicing encouraged universities to accept more students than they could feasibly afford. Though it was the intention of the state to attract more students, the HBIs were doing it in a manner that was not sustainable – especially on an individual level[20]. The HBIs assumed that when these students graduated, they would have to pay back a larger debt to the institution itself. However due to the funding policies amongst others, many failed to pass and both the individual institutions as well as the NSFAS scheme that was also based on the idea that it would become self-sustaining as soon as students started paying back their loans, accrued significant debt (Chikane, 2018, 129). Lastly, the NSFAS as it existed before *#FeesMustFall* was problematic because it did not apply to a group of students referred to by Bateman as 'the missing middle' (2016) – those students from families that have an income that exceeds the NSFAS threshold but cannot afford higher education without it.

Though free education for all was the initial goal of *#FeesMustFall* and is likely still on the minds of many South Africans, Jacobs *et al* argue that this goal is not viable (2019). They state that this is the case as the funds needed to make free higher education for all a possibility would have to either be taken from other sectors – that are also in desperate need of these financial resources – or that these financial resources would have to be collected from the already overburdened tax payers (2019, 127). They assert that the most viable alternative is subsidized higher education – in which the NSFAS will be used more effectively (2019, 128). This alternative road is also the road the government appears to be taking as the they have made a commitment to spend an extra 67 billion ZAR (approximately 4.11 billion euro) – with the total GDP spending on education now increased to about one per cent (Cohen, 2019) – on the NSFAS and tertiary education in general over the coming three years (Mokone, 2018). 33 billion ZAR (approximately 2 billion euro) is intended for first-time university students through NSFAS,

[20] '[The] HBIs entrenched a system that meant that rather than the NSFAS allocation covering 80 per cent of a student's full cost of study, with the remaining 20 per cent being the student's expected family contribution, the NSFAS allocation would only over 20 per cent of the full cost of study, with the student's family contribution amounting to 80 per cent. It created a situation where institutions would enroll 5 000 NSFAS eligible students instead of 3 000 students who would have received 100 per cent of their full cost of study covered' (Chikane, 2018, 129).

and 10.3 billion ZAR (approximately 610 million euro) is intended for technical and vocational educations (Mokone, 2018). Furthermore, the government promised to create a specific subsidy to ensure that the 'missing-middle' students will also not be subjected to the increases in tuition (Mosiuoa, 2016).

The protests at Wits in 2015 and the subsequent protests at many other institutions – especially the protests at HWIs – led to increasing media attention for the protests related to fees as well as the struggle for access to and funding for education (Langa, 2017, 6). Chikane emphasizes these media's reports were initially surprised, first portraying the students as naïve hooligans and after, equating and relating the actions of these students to those of young people in 1976 when students rose up in response to Afrikaans – English already was mandatory – becoming a mandatory language in education (2018, 123; SAHistory, 2013). Very few media outlets however focused on how this '*revolutionary war*' significantly predated October 2015. They ignored how fee discussions as such were an essential topic in every Student Representative Council's (SRC) term; in their discussions with the university management, and at the HBIs usually also directly involving the NSFAS (Chikane, 2018, 123). Apart from these discussions, protests regarding the same topic were common practice at HBIs at the start of any academic year, but like those discussions, usually failed to attract significant media attention (Chikane, 2018, 123).

This raises the question over whose voices are heard and valued when it comes to protests and asserting issues. South Africa, termed by Duncan as a 'protest nation' – a country defined by the protests that take place within its borders (2016, 1) – faces this issue not only when it comes to higher education, but also when issues are raised in other sectors of civil society. Duncan addresses the question of whose voices are heard in her book *Protest Nation: The Right to Protest in South Africa* and argues that whether the media covers a certain issue depends on those involved as well as the levels of violence in the contentious action of actors (2016). Furthermore, she states that the main focus often lies on violent protest (2015, 142). This then can create a problematic impression; namely, that all

protest in South Africa is inherently violent which additionally may justify police action against the contentious actors for the protection of property and public safety (Duncan, 2015, 142).

It has furthermore been argued that *#FeesMustFall* was an elitist endeavour (Magolego, 2015; Essop, 2016). The vast majority of poor young people – along racial lines – have no access to universities as their schooling outcomes do not qualify them for the (relatively low) entrance requirements (Mfundza Muller, 2016). Primary and secondary education in South Africa are not held to one nation-wide standard and many are disadvantaged due to the schools they have gone to (The Economist, 2017). Furthermore, resources other than education are also not equally available to pupils. This leads to a reality in which the majority of those with lower than average incomes cannot access university; and becomes an important argument of those opposing *#FeesMustFall* and its demand for free higher education and its rhetoric that typically concerns the exclusion and hardship of the least privileged (Mfundza Muller, 2016). And such criticism has to be taken into account. Yet the many other issues South Africa is facing should not take away from the legitimacy of the students claims. Furthermore, this criticism fails to consider that underprivileged students have gained spots at higher education institutions – though often at the HBIs, which are more vulnerable to the large problems of the NSFAS, which is likely the root of the differences between those students and those at the HWIs – meaning that poor black students are represented at campus. When these (black) students are asked not to be disruptive, to not stand up for free education and other goals that would alleviate the financial burden that rests on them, they are basically forced to terminate their studies as they on many occasions cannot get or afford (Waghid, 2017, 203). The implications of this are significant.

> On the one hand, the instruction to 'black' students to source alternative funding ensures the 'disappearance' of the 'black' students. In turn, the 'disappearance' of 'black' students ensures not only that the university education remains the privilege

> of 'white' students, but that 'blacks' are further stereotyped as being uneducated, and in need of financial resources. On the other hand, the resultant images of 'black' students in protest serve only to remind those in power that these students are "not serious about their education", and "only want to be disruptive" (Waghid, 2017, 204).

What's more, the coalitions formed with workers and the involvement of parents amongst others made '#FMF [...] a black-led struggle for radicalism and [that] brought together the black underclasses in solidarity with the black middle class and a sprinkling of radical white middle class' (Booysen, 2016, 26-27). Like university management then, many of the protestors in the #FeesMustFall movement were stuck between a rock and a hard place. The protests therefore were and are of great significance, not only to those students enrolled then and now, but also for future generations.

2.4 Scale Shift

In relation to the question of whose voice is heard, it is interesting to also consider the internationalization of the protest that garnered significant attention from (international) media. When the then minister of higher education – Blade Nzimande – met with the Vice Chancellors of various universities on the 20th of October 2015 and announced a six percent cap on the fees for 2016, students at most campuses responded to this proposal with sit-ins, refusal to take exams, and lockdowns amongst others (Booysen, 2016, 321). They furthermore stormed the Parliament in Cape Town the following day – where they were met with severe repression by riot police (Booysen, 2016, 321). Videos and other evidence of these clashes were circulated on social media, which triggered responses from NGOs like Amnesty International, whose spokesperson condemned the government response to the events (IOLNews, 2015). The involvement by such international organizations added to the legitimacy of the movements and most likely positively affected its successes.

This certification (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015, 215) is a significant indicator of a scale shift that took place over the course of the protests. Both the number of actors involved as well as the geographical range of coordinated claim-making increased significantly (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015, 217) and was witnessed on various occasions; not just when the protests diffused between the different campuses, but also when they moved from a regional and national level to an increasingly global level. Peterson *et al* assert that the protests can be related to transnational activism in the increasingly globalized world (2016). They argue that through the attempts to censor the movement, #*FeesMustFall* has been propelled onto the international stage and may have consequences on a larger scale as it increasingly established access to higher education as a right (Peterson *et al,* 2016, 20-21). Related protests have spread to different countries in Africa as well as the Euro-American realm (Mpofu-Walsh, 2016, 74). Protests similar to #*RhodesMustFall* and *#FeesMustFall* for example have arisen at the University of Accra in Ghana where a statue of Gandhi was taken down due to his controversial views on Africans in December 2018 (Safi, 2018). An online campaign was launched against the statue soon after it was erected in 2016 by a group that felt that the statue of the controversial figure was a disgrace especially since there was no representation of African leaders or heroes on campus (Forrest, 2018). This outrage over the Gandhi statue was not solely present in Ghana, but also in Johannesburg under #*GandhiMustFall*, a sub movement of the #*RhodesMustFall* campaign that lies at the origin of the #*FeesMustFall* protests (Flanagan, 2018). In Malawi furthermore, people are also protesting future Gandhi statues in the capital Blantyre (Kondowe, 2018). Though it is focused on a statue such campaigns may spark larger debate about decolonizing the university in the future in Ghana, Malawi, and possibly other countries as well.

Furthermore, the movement also spread to Euro-America. In May 2015, Oxford had its own #*RhodesMustFall* movement, Harvard Law School discarded its crest that was dedicated to the Royall family – who had been slave owners – under the Royall Must Fall banner, and both Britain and the US have witnessed significant debates about the legacy of slavery and colonialism (Mpofu-Walsh, 2016, 75).

Furthermore, South Africans living and studying in London along with their supporters on 23 of October 2015 marched to the South African High Commission and demanded to see the Commissioner (Scott, 2015). The Commissioner, who came out of the building after some time was asked to sit with the protestors, rather than speak to them from a higher platform (Scott, 2015). This is an emulation of a tactic used at Wits University a few days earlier, where the Vice Chancellor, Adam Habib, was also asked to sit with the students rather than speak to them from a higher position (Nkosi, 2015). This is the first time since the anti-apartheid struggle that such an event has taken place at the South African High Commission (Mpofu-Walsh, 2016. 74). Though this specific incident may not necessarily constitute the spread of the protests as far as ideology is concerned, it does provide a certain certification and expresses support from non-South African locations.

2.5 Conclusion

All in all, the #*FeesMustFall* protests were not just a collective of social movements at different university campuses aiming to change management's positions on certain issues. Under this banner, actors with different identities and interests were brought together and mobilized not only against university management but also the South African state – creating political identities that are at the core of their contentious politics. During the protests the students did not only demand a decrease of fees but on many occasions stood with the out-sourced workers at the university in solidarity and increasingly had demands that far exceeded the end of increasing fees. Over the course of the protests, the scope widened from a focus on direct visible violence – in form of the fees, arguably a financial form of violence, and symbols of global coloniality like statues – to an attack on larger structural issues faced by universities, ultimately rooted in government decisions and South Africa's tumultuous history. Furthermore, the protest underwent a significant scale shift as its issues were internationalized. The #*FeesMustFall* protests in South Africa were highly complicated, increasing in heterogeneity as they re-emerged – both in goals as well as in ways to achieve such goals. They were faced with significant

repression, but persevered and on many occasions managed to contribute to an improved situation on the campuses; current and new students are already reaping the benefits of the changes that the protests attained (Fihlani, 2019), to different extents at the various universities. The challenges for South African higher education, however, have not been resolved and the struggle for a decolonization of the campus continues.

Chapter 3. The Open Stellenbosch Collective

As stated in previous chapters, the protests and the idea of decolonization of the university took on many different shapes and forms at the various institutions in South Africa over the course of the #*FeesMustFall* protests. At SU – where the debate like at many other universities was also oriented around the questions of access – the main spearhead was the exclusionary nature of language (Mortlock, 2016) which ties in with the politics of language as outlined in Chapter 1.

3.1 Stellenbosch University

Stellenbosch University (or *Universiteit Stellenbosch*), established in 1918, is a (traditionally) Afrikaans-medium HWI. This practically means that the institution catered (mostly) to Afrikaans-speaking, white students under apartheid. This has significant implications; under apartheid, the Afrikaans-medium HWIs namely were '*creature*[s] *of the state*' (Bunting, 2006, 40). These institutions were instrumentalist as their core business was to disseminate and generate knowledge for a purpose defined by the socio-political agenda of the apartheid-state (Bunting, 2006, 40). Through the affiliations with the state, these universities managed to secure extensive government investment as well as investment by businesses – to which these institutions developed close ties (Bunting, 2006, 40). These affiliations, and the international academic boycott faced by South Africa in the years leading up to 1994, led to a lack of critical discourse and narrow approaches within these institutions (Bunting, 2006, 41).

The academics produced by these universities often took up positions in the HBIs and played an important role in the prolongation of apartheid and the suppression of black people. The institutions furthermore were run in strongly authoritarian ways and protests were not supported; if they occurred, were met with fierce repression (Bunting, 2006, 41). Even those entrenched in the central power structures could not truly object to top-down decisions. The authority of university management was remarkably strong, also on the mid-level. With the tight administrative and financial mechanisms and

competent staff that could be employed in such positions, the Afrikaans-medium HWIs were very well regulated (Bunting, 2006:41). At the end of apartheid, these universities 'faced serious internal concerns about their future viability as institutions' (Bunting, 2006, 42). There was a fear that the change in government in 1994 would limit their funding and possibly would lead to a confiscation of their financial reserves as their alliances to the apartheid government had been abundantly clear over the years.

There furthermore is another significant link between SU and the apartheid state specifically as this university and its preceding institutions played an essential role in the formulation of the ideology of apartheid and the education of some of its most prominent proponents and executors – amongst others, HF Verwoerd, who created Bantu Education as Minister of Education, and later became president of apartheid South Africa (SAHistory, 2017). Though black students were on occasion accepted as post-graduate students after 1977, the university long remained a beacon of Afrikaner Nationalism – playing an essential role in the development of the Afrikaans academic tradition – and has taken until the late 2000s to actively diversify the racial demographics of students and staff (SAHistory, 2017). This diversification still remains rather limited; the Open Stellenbosch Collective stated the following in relation to the diversity of the academic staff:

> In 2013, only 3.5% of all professors at [Stellenbosch] University were black, while 86% were white. In fact, there are more professors named 'Johan' than there are black professors at our institution (2015).

After the fall of apartheid, the new Minister of Education – Dr. Sibusiso Bengu – asserted that it was important for SU to diversify its language use as it could not justify remaining an exclusively Afrikaans-medium (SAHistory, 2017). Since then, the university has attempted to adopt policies – both bilingual and multilingual (though this was limited to corpus planning) – in order to become more inclusive but has also held on to the use of Afrikaans (van der Walt, 2008, 217). The policies post-1994 however did

not have the desired effect and though diversity on campus increased, language remained a problem. This is related to a problem that was proposed in Chapter 1, namely the gap between intention and performance.

3.2 The Open Stellenbosch Collective

The gap between intention and performance, and the practical reality of language policies on the campus of Stellenbosch led to the rise of the Open Stellenbosch Collective that operated under the *@OpenStellies* account on Twitter. The Open Stellenbosch Collective is 'an intersectional social justice movement' focusing specifically on 'issues of access & exclusion' (OpenStellies, 2016), that was active on the campus of Stellenbosch mainly in 2015-2016 during the country wide university protests under *#FeesMustFall.* In an op-ed written for the Daily Maverick (2015), the Open Stellenbosch Collective puts forward its three main demands – based on their memorandum of demands for university management (2015):

1. No student should be forced to learn or communicate in Afrikaans and all classes must be available in English.

2. The institutional culture at Stellenbosch University needs to change radically and rapidly to reflect diverse cultures and not only White Afrikaans culture.

3. The University publically needs to acknowledge and actively remember the central role that Stellenbosch and its faculty played in the conceptualisation, implementation and maintenance of Apartheid.

These demands are mostly a question of access and belonging – as the institutional culture of the university did not foster belonging for many of its students and the dominant use of Afrikaans excluded those who are not fluent in the language from the information that is conveyed in class. Until and during

the protests in 2015 and 2016, SU had three language options for education: (1) Afrikaans only (default option), (2) English only in modules or special programs, and (3) the T-option (*Tweetalig* – bilingual) (van der Walt, 2008, 217). In the third option, lecturers are supposed to use both Afrikaans and English and provide all essential material in both languages (van der Walt, 2008, 217) and translations of the actual lecture are provided through translation devices and the use of interpreters. In practice however, as many of the students in the documentary *Luister* (Listen) which features stories and sentiments of (black) students and a lecturer at SU and its Agricultural college Elsenburg, made by Contraband Cape Town assert, this policy leads to many challenges for those who do not speak Afrikaans (2015). They stated that the lecturer gets to choose what language he will use on a class-to-class basis and that the translation devices provided by the university are not a suitable solution – the interpreters have to whisper, which makes them hard to understand, especially with the official lecture also being taught; they often do not have the background needed to correctly translate specific jargon; the nuances of language get lost in translation; the devices are often delayed significantly; questions posed in English will receive answers in Afrikaans (Open Stellenbosch Collective Memorandum, 2015). The students in the documentary, in line with the first demand by the Open Stellenbosch Collective, were calling for compromise – in which English would become the main medium of instruction.

Their demands were initially ignored by management but as their protests persisted, both management and other students on campus that felt threatened by their demands.

> The students who joined Open Stellenbosch were frustrated by still having to attend lectures in Afrikaans, a language they neither spoke nor understood thoroughly. In the coming weeks, they would face serious intimidation from white students on campus (Naicker, 2016, 55).

Essop (2015) states that 'more than 30 000 alumni and other stakeholders participated in a referendum on the retention of Afrikaans'. This counter-mobilization clearly shows the various interests and the strength of the Afrikaans-speaking community on campus. Regardless of the counter-mobilization, however, the protests by the Open Stellenbosch Collective led to a reconsideration of the language policy by the university management: English was officially given equal status to Afrikaans (Gqirana, 2016). This new policy was designed to improve access for students who do not speak Afrikaans and included a specific provision – in relation to the institutional culture and counter-mobilization of the Afrikaner community – to safeguard the option of Afrikaans for those who prefer to pursue their studies in this language (Gqirana, 2016). The policy reaffirms the university's dedication to multilingualism as its acknowledgement of isiXhosa as one of the three most spoken languages in the Western Cape province. Though the policy changes are admirable, Kaschula's (2016) observations about the implementation of such policies should ring as a warning, as it is not a given that this new language policy will be realized entirely in the close future.

I realized this also when I arrived at SU. The campus, students, and faculty are still to a large extent oriented toward Afrikaans – students and faculty often addressed me in Afrikaans, usually unaware of my nationality[21], on many official forms Afrikaans still preceded English, and much of the social interaction on campus was in Afrikaans[22]. Yet, within the classes I took, there was no trace of the language. This however might be related to the fact that I only took classes from within the honours program and one class that catered especially toward international students – which were all fully taught in English. Furthermore, to my knowledge, only two of my fellow students in all of my classes were native Afrikaans speakers. This percentage is however much higher in the undergraduate program; this difference is something that I haven't witnessed personally as I did not take undergraduate courses. In the introduc-

[21] Dutch is relatively close to Afrikaans so when they knew where I was from they often tried to see if I would understand them if they spoke it – I often could understand them relatively well.

[22] This however makes sense as 37.8 per cent of the students at SU in 2018 stated that their home language was Afrikaans (Stellenbosch University, 2018).

tion for international students we were told that we could only take English or T Option classes unless we were from the Netherlands or Belgium and accepted beforehand that we might not understand all of the material in class. I found this a quite interesting stipulation, as this gave us agency in deciding whether or not we wanted to take certain classes; if we decided against it, we would most likely have the opportunity to study the specific subject at our home universities in a language that we were fluent in. Students that are enrolled in SU however do not have that opportunity and often have to take T Option classes where they may not understand nuances or specifics that are not (yet) taught in English. Unless this privilege that international students now have is also offered to the local non-Afrikaans natives, it seems to me that giving English an equal status may have been a more symbolic act; the university has to be careful not to fall into the frequented gap between intention and performance.

3.3 Afrikaans and English

The first demand of the Open Stellenbosch Collective is interesting to unpack, as both English and Afrikaans have a contested history within South Africa as languages of the colonizers. Over the course of the years however, the sentiments associated with these languages have developed in rather different ways, which underlies their position within the first demand, as well as, but to a lesser extent, the second and third demand.

3.2.1 Afrikaans

Afrikaans, which is currently the third most spoken language in South Africa (Fig. 3.1) has a contested history as it was the language of the apartheid regime and was actively used within this system for the ethnic and economic empowerment of Afrikaners at the expense of the black population of South Africa (Silva, 1997). Through the apartheid system, Afrikaners, who under British colonial rule were suppressed – largely living in agricultural rural communities and considered to be the underclass of South African society (Giliomee, 2008, 767-768) – managed to assert a strong position in society and

create one of the most close-knit communities of South Africa (Giliomee, 2008) 'at the expense of the black majority' (Silva, 1997). Apartheid, though reproachable, is an arguable success story of the ethnic empowerment of one group; which is not only reflected in the economic position of Afrikaners under apartheid (that still resonates today) but also in the significant academic tradition that has been established in this language. Mamdani states that Afrikaans is the only language that has largely been successfully 'decolonized' as it moved from a folkloric language to one that bears such a significant academic tradition (2017).

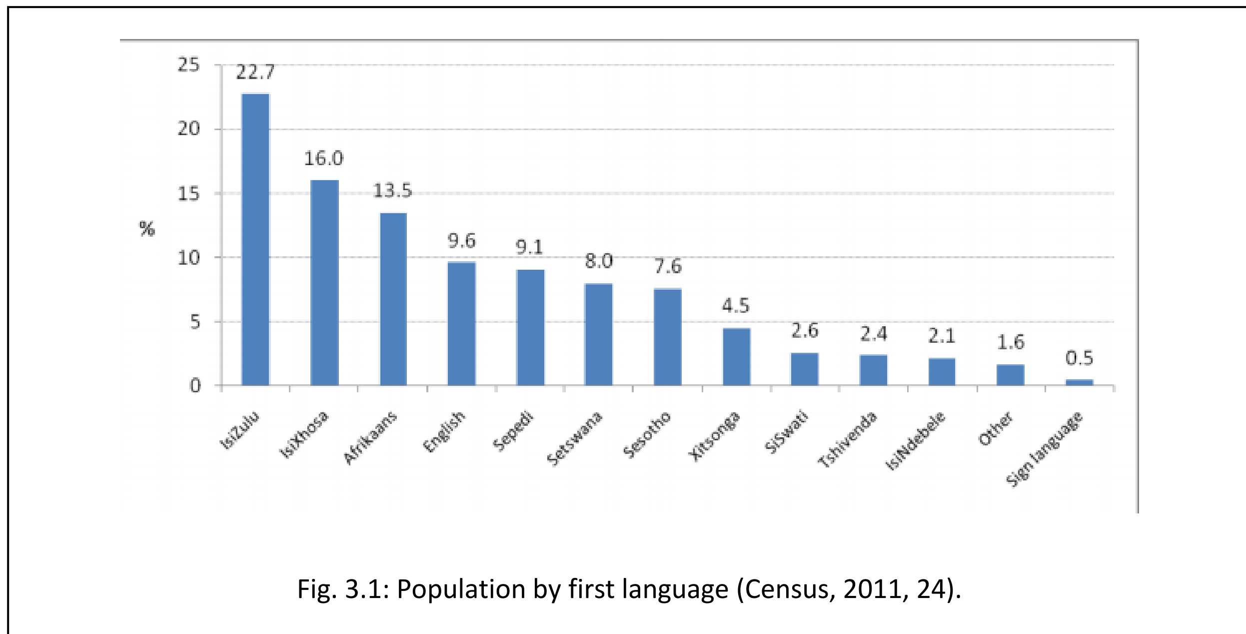

Fig. 3.1: Population by first language (Census, 2011, 24).

The domination and importance of Afrikaans, however, has decreased post-1994 as its role in the apartheid regime was condemned by the new leaders. Its public use – in the media as well as government – has shrunk (Silva, 1997) and as can be seen in the demands of the Open Stellenbosch Collective, its use in higher education, especially as the main mode of instruction, is increasingly being debated. Symbolically, though it was the language of power under apartheid, Afrikaans today has been 'demoted' to being one of a number of community languages (Silva, 1997). This has led to a certain sense of

insecurity amongst many Afrikaans speakers – who increasingly identify the plight of Afrikaans with the plight of African languages in South Africa (Silva, 1997). This ties in with Strauss (2016) who asserts that there is an 'active threat' to Afrikaans – which he calls 'lingual cleansing'. He states that lingual cleansing has become increasingly apparent in the last years – through the increasing pragmatic move toward English as a *lingua franca*. In his article, he makes the case that only seven out of 39 institutions of higher education are currently using Afrikaans as the main medium of instruction – which is justifiable and should remain so given the amount of Afrikaans speakers in the country.

Strauss furthermore puts forward that the black students are lamenting that they are advantaged because they 'have to sacrifice their mother-tongue when studying in English' and further writes that '[t]o rectify this injustice they argue that Afrikaans-speaking students should also sacrifice their mother-tongue' (2016). This is however not the case, especially in the Open Stellenbosch Collective as their demand is more oriented toward the increased use of English rather than decreasing the use of Afrikaans. These students do not demand the end of Afrikaans in higher education, but rather the end of discrimination and exclusion through language. These concerns are not new and not solely related to the recent developments. Rather, van der Walt states that the T option was already seen as controversial as it is 'encroaching on the spirit of the language policy and [it is seen] as a gradual erosion of Afrikaans as a language of learning and teaching' (2008, 218). The counter-mobilization against the Open Stellenbosch protests then was likely motivated by a fear of loss of relevance and mother tongue education.

It is furthermore important to keep in mind that though Afrikaans is often associated with apartheid and white domination, most Afrikaans speakers today are those from the coloured community as can be discovered in Fig. 3.2.

Language (first)	Black African	Coloured	Indian or Asian	White	Other
Afrikaans	602 166	3 442 164	58 700	2 710 461	41 591
English	1 167 913	945 847	1 094 317	1 603 575	80 971
IsiNdebele	1 057 781	8 225	9 815	8 611	5 791
IsiXhosa	8 104 752	25 340	5 342	13 641	5 182
IsiZulu	11 519 234	23 797	16 699	16 458	11 186
Sepedi	4 602 459	5 642	2 943	5 917	1 616
Sesotho	3 798 915	23 230	5 269	17 491	4 657
Setswana	3 996 951	40 351	4 917	18 358	6 671
Sign language	211 134	11 891	3 360	7 604	666
SiSwati	1 288 156	4 056	1 217	2 299	1 320
Tshivenda	1 201 588	2 847	810	2 889	1 254
Xitsonga	2 257 771	2 268	2 506	3 987	10 616
Other	604 587	5 702	65 261	50 118	102 590
Total	**40 413 408**	**4 541 358**	**1 271 158**	**4 461 409**	**274 111**

Fig. 3.2: First language per population group (Census, 2011, 26).

Moreover, within the Western Cape, the province that is host to SU, Afrikaans is the main first language – 49.7 per cent of the people in the Western Cape use Afrikaans as their first language. This is followed by isiXhosa (24.7 per cent), and English (20.2 per cent) (Census 2011, 25). The other eight languages are barely represented in this province with percentages ranging from 0.1 per cent to 2.2 per cent (Census, 2011, 25). This, as well as Strauss' point on the amount of Afrikaans speakers in the country, could be an argument for the continued use of the language at SU.

3.2.2 English

Though also a language of colonialism, the position of English in South Africa and its higher education today is very different from that of Afrikaans. English has become 'the Latin of the 21st century' (Altbach, 2004, 9) and the most widely used (second) language in the world as many countries now make its study obligatory and increasingly use English in many sectors (Manzo & Zehr, 2006). This has strengthened the position of English and facilitated a large academic tradition; most academic journals, for example, are published in English. English furthermore has also arguably become 'the language of the internet' (Altbach, 2004, 10), which not only plays an important role in the modern

approach to academics but is also essential in the spread of knowledge between different institutions and the world. To attract international students, and improve the English of their own students, many universities furthermore – even those that have significant academic traditions of their own in their respective languages – are increasingly offering classes in English. This pragmatic harmonization of the use of English is an economic tool in the preparation of the students for the job market – a tool of social mobility as well as a facilitator of international opportunities. It can be stated that this language has become the main mode of communicating knowledge worldwide.

At SU furthermore, the demands of the students during the #*FeesMustFall* protests were not for multilingualism, but rather for the increased use of English, which they saw as a compromise (Hegewisch *et al*, 2015). This language is not only seen as economically and academically desirable within higher education but is, especially in the South African context, often considered to be the language of aspiration and liberation (Ngcobo, 2009, 210). Afrikaans is often considered to be the language of the oppressor – as it was the language of the apartheid regime – English was the chosen language of the freedom struggle, the language of the African National Congress (ANC) (Silva, 1997). The attempt to introduce Afrikaans into the Bantu Education schools of 1976 for example resulted in significant uprisings in Soweto – to which the #*FeesMustFall* protests are often compared (Silva, 1997). Due to its more favourable position English has increasingly become a *lingua franca* in South African education, as well as in its government and the courts (Beukes, 2010, 45-46). The state institutions of South Africa therefore only strengthen the hegemonic position of the English language, which has led to a lower priority for the varied language policy put forward by the government (Beukes, 2010, 44).

English has risen to a hegemonic position, not only internationally, but also within South Africa and at SU. It is arguably the most neutral language within the nation (Silva, 1997) – even though such politics of language can never be entirely neutral. Furthermore, its use is often more pragmatic than ideological, even though it is a remnant of the colonial past, as using English is cheap, practical,

internationally relevant, and in demand. Yet it is important to mention that English in higher education does come with certain risks – what is suitable English, and who defines the criteria (Silva, 1997)? How can equal opportunity – to learn English – be provided if schools in the country are not held to one standard? Not all English is the same, which is rooted in the regional location as well as the quality of the education the student receives. Accents, as well as a general command of the language, often influence perception and renewed forms of exclusion (Silva, 1997). However, it may be the most pragmatic solution; Silva states that 'if it offers itself (and is perceived) as servant and liberator rather than oppressor, English will provide the linguistic 'glue' to bond a diverse and complex society' (1997). This point furthermore alludes to a strong need for the improvement of primary and secondary education, which in the long run may help in addressing the differences between students from different backgrounds and regions.

The dynamics of English and Afrikaans are a great example of the debate on excellence and universalism as well as relevance and nationalism, especially as the reality of Afrikaans is increasingly linked to that of the African languages. The conversation about the use of Afrikaans and English and the protests surrounding it reflect the challenges of finding a balance between the desire for relevance (of the Afrikaans-speaking population, who often see English as a form of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's cultural bomb) as well as the pressures and opportunities of globalization and excellence. Increasing the use of English at SU is a practical compromise.

Chapter 4. Discussion

4.1 Decolonization and #*FeesMustFall*

The #*FeesMustFall* protests came with a strong call for decolonization that was defined differently at various universities. The most apparent difference is often found in the difference of approach between the HWIs and HBIs. Protestors at UCT – an HWI – for example, adopted a relatively broad interpretation of decolonization by defining it as 'the removal of all unjust systems such as patriarchy, racism and capitalism in society and the restructuring of society to reflect African systems' (Booysen, 2016, 35;328). In their main understanding of decolonization then, the UCT protestors moved beyond the political and economic decolonization, into the dimension of epistemological decolonization. Langa states that the epistemological approach to decolonization was also apparent at other HWIs – specifically considering Wits, UCT, Rhodes, and UKZN. Here, the students often asserted that decolonizing meant that 'the curriculum needs to be transformed to reflect the lived experiences of African people, including recognition of their scholarly work which is often on the periphery or taught as modules' (Langa, 2017, 12). Many of the movements at the various HWIs then asserted the need for a strong focus on the Africanization of the curriculum as well as the faculty as those who teach the curriculum are of vital importance to the decolonization of the curriculum (Costandius et al, 2018, 82). However, Letsaolo, quoted in Booysen (2016, 35) stated that though the intent to address the epistemological dimension and Africanize (the production) of knowledge, many often 'ignore[d] the extensive diversity of the economic, circumstantial and educational status of students' (2016, 35) – putting such intersectional issues often were on the back burner. In its intention then, the approach of protestors at HWIs then strongly focused on relevance, and the desire to Africanize as reflected in the debate on the decolonization of the university. For many of the protestors at HBIs on the other hand – Langa specifically considers the University of Limpopo – decolonization would entail that they would

receive the same quality of schooling that those at HWIs already received (Langa, 2017, 12). For students at HBIs the question of economic access as well as quality education were often more important – and had been of importance since 1994 – than the academic (epistemological) decolonization that took the forefront at HWIs.

This difference is most likely rooted in varying socioeconomic realities of these universities and the students that attend them that has already been alluded to in Chapter 2. The HBIs were underfunded under apartheid, and still are today (Ilorah, 2006, 79). Students at these institutions are usually from rural and heavily financially disadvantaged backgrounds and often do not only struggle to pay for their fees but also often lack the financial means to pay for textbooks or even food (Ilorah, 2006, 79). The institutions themselves, furthermore, face a dilemma as the body that coordinates funding and develops policy makes use of a performance-related distributive mechanism (Ilorah, 2006, 79). If students then are exposed for non-payment of fees, they will be forced to leave the institution which would detrimentally impact the performance-review of the university. On the other hand, if these students were to be given the opportunity to study without paying fees – without extra funding from the government or third parties – the HBIs would not be able to meet their financial obligations through the created deficits – they would possibly have to close their doors for good (Ilorah, 2006:79). Since 'the financial assistance is smallest in those institutions enrolling the poorest students and greatest in those universities enrolling the most well to do students' (Ilorah, 2006, 81), the pattern of government investment is still highly problematic. HBIs often also enrol more students than their better-funded counterparts, they become stigmatized as under-performing institutions (Ilorah, 2006, 81), even though their arguable misfortune can largely be attributed to their history as well as the lasting difference still made today. Such differences can also be witnessed in the level of media attention that has been explored in Chapter 2, as fee protests at HBIs far preceded the #*FeesMustFall* protests that were sparked at HWIs but were rarely covered substantially in the (international) media (Chikane, 2018, 122).

To fully understand the call for the decolonization of the university by the different bodies under #*FeesMustFall* then, it is important to recognize how its universities are a part of the structural violence that many poor (black) South Africans are still subjected to today. The current education system is namely rooted in the education systems that were first set up under colonialism – their exclusionary nature was exacerbated under the apartheid rule.

> African countries share a historical experience of colonialism and subsequent periodic responses to it. Although the nature of the colonial experience may account for the differences in performance of higher education systems across the countries, the colonial experience shaped the structure, organization and governance of higher education systems and the production of the nationalist elite that would rule after independence (Hewlett et al, 2016, 149).

The state of education in South Africa today – not just of tertiary, but also of primary and secondary education (Kubow, 2017; Spaull, 2013a, 444) – is still subjected to significant qualitative differences. Global coloniality, the remnant of the early colonial days as well as apartheid – with its segregationist policies that include Bantu Education, which was introduced in Chapter 1 – significantly impacts these educational institutions today. These inequalities were reflected in these protests where

> [t]he young and the impatient, joined by some university workers and academic staff, came to speak truths to power in ways that demanded attention. They trampled on the myth of the miracle of South Africa's 1994 political settlement and overruled the dogma that the former liberation movement turned governing party, the ANC was fulfilling the "rainbow promises" of 1994 (Booysen, 2016, 25).

Wolff (2016, 444) put forward that the approaches to decolonization and transformation in South Africa can in the basis be divided into two different paradigms: (1) the Mandela paradigm, and (2)

the Biko paradigm. These paradigms are not polar opposites and do have certain points of overlap, yet there are also distinct differences between the two. The Mandela paradigm is a conciliatory approach applied in the early 1990s in which a mediated settlement between the white oppressors and the black majority was negotiated. This culminates in the new South African Constitution of 1996, in which principles like reconciliation and non-racialism (the rainbow nation) played a significant role (Griffiths, 2019, 146). It furthermore ties in with the universalist perspective on decolonization, in which the role of international power structures is essential, and the focus lies on survival and excellence along international standards. The second paradigm, based on the writings of Biko, saw the settlement of the nineties only as an intermediary position, a step in the continuous liberation of black people (Wolff, 2016, 444). Biko's writing was less placatory than Mandela's vision; his perspective on the role of whites in South Africa was much more ambivalent. Under the Biko paradigm, based on Biko's views, white persons would not be forced to leave, but their role should be defined by blacks and should be proportional (Biko, 1986, 121). Furthermore, it was clear that 'Azania [another name for South Africa, used in the transformation narrative] still needs to be liberated: politically, culturally, socially and economically' (Wolff, 2016, 444) – which ties in with the dimensions of decolonization as they emerged over the years. In this paradigm, all institutions that operated pre- and post-1994 are suspect – this included the legal system, language, religion, academia and others (Wolff, 2016, 444-445). The constitution, with the principles of non-racialism is not able to tackle how these institutions are structured by 'dissymmetries of racial privilege' (Wolff, 2016, 445). This paradigm then much more ties in with decolonization through a focus on local relevance.

Though the ideological inspiration of the students in #*FeesMustFall* fell more within the Biko paradigm, their achievements – free(er) education – are essentially a part of the Mandela paradigm. The results have been an economic compromise with the government, and more radical (epistemological) decolonization – outside of symbolic and superficial practical realizations – has not truly emerged. In line

with this, Griffiths (2019), argues that though the concessions made by the government on many occasions do address the economic oppression of the postcolonial students, the epistemic oppression was not addressed substantially – 'free education' does not mean that this education is now decolonized. He finds that

> [t]he students resuming their studies is a tacit, and indeed, unconscious endorsement of the power of global coloniality, acceptance of the reality that a university education grants the economic and social recognition that allows an individual to more successfully negotiate global neo-coloniality. Thus necessarily, the postcolonial subject must subjugate themselves to ongoing epistemic violence in order to gain recognition, and the end of their economic marginalization (Griffiths, 2019, 145-146).

He furthermore continuous that many of the students in the protests settled for 'the chance for a better life' which they hoped to achieve through their university education – at the expense of increasingly addressing the epistemic violence of the institutions (2019, 146). It is this desire for a better life then that both played an important role in the mobilization as well as the demobilization of the students.

Griffiths makes an important point when it comes to the decolonization of the South African campuses – the economic gains, and minor gains in decolonization are not a true decolonization of the campus as the epistemological decolonization has not been addressed sufficiently. However, what does impact this situation is the level of analysis. Griffiths (2019) considers the issue on a large normative scale – how it should be. Yet these students, though highly engaged on the larger issues of decolonization also worry about their individual lives and experiences. Especially in this day and age, in which the importance of the individual gets emphasized systemically – through social media etc. – it is increasingly normalized to focus on the self, as individualism today has 'consolidated and has crystalized into an in-

stitutional morality' (Beck, 2012, 1). This increased individuality originated in the Western World (Beck, 2012, 1), but could possibly resonate through modern institutions that are still subjected to the global coloniality in many other nations as well. Furthermore, self-preservation is generally accepted as a natural trait of all living organisms. Furthermore, though Griffiths finds that the students have settled, the outcomes of the protests have significantly affected the proportions of both sides of the decolonization debate – relevance has received significant attention. Therefore, it might be the case that #*FeesMustFall* is just a precursor to future debates and movements that will lead to a reconfiguration of the balance between relevance and excellence, nationalism and universalism, the public intellectual and the scholar. #*FeesMustFall* might have been an essential spark that may light a new fire for South Africa – yet that remains to be seen over future years.

4.2 The Politics of Language and the Open Stellenbosch Collective

The protest of the Open Stellenbosch Collective tie in with this struggle of finding a balance between local relevance and global excellence; SU, as well as the other universities in South Africa, have to compete with international institutions in order to maintain their global status and position, attract international students, and remain actors within the global academic world. Currently, many of the South African universities are rated quite highly in comparison to other universities in Africa – the top four universities on the continent according to the World University Rankings (2019) are all South African universities[23]. SU specifically is the third best university on the continent. The best institutions of South Africa also hold their ground in the global university rankings – where UCT places 156th, and Stellenbosch falls into the 301-350 category (2019).

[23] These rankings are based on criteria for the university as created in the global north, so they may be mostly an indication of how well these universities 'fit the mold' of what the global north sees as a good institution. That being said however, it is rather clear that many of the higher education institutions of South Africa are some of the leading universities on the continent.

Though Griffiths (2019) criticizes the students' arguable settlement for basic access – as discussed in the previous section – and would most likely say the same for the pragmatic compromise of English is arguably currently the most suitable option. English is not neutral, but more neutral than most other languages and is internationally beneficial. Many academics emphasize the need for multilingualism in (higher) education, yet it is important to consider that this is currently not what the students desire, or what is deemed practically feasible even though African languages are essential to understanding the nuances in the day-to-day realities and are of great significance when considering these realities in academics. Multilingualism provides a richness to academics that focusing on English only may obscure. What's more, when considering access, it is essential to keep in mind that those black students favouring English often have already escaped the poor position that many black South Africans today are still subjected to; though the switch to English may improve access for a certain mostly middle class group of black students, it does not necessarily open the university up for other individuals from the marginalized majority. The most significant uses of African languages so far take place at the HBIs (like the University of KwaZulu Natal) which are often under resourced in comparison to the HWIs and this realty therefore is reinforcing the segregation of apartheid – though it has become less visible. African languages, unlike Afrikaans and English, do not yet have a significant and established academic tradition. This does not mean that this should not be changed but does imply that these traditions need to be developed in order to truly decolonize education through multilingualism.

All in all, it is important to realize that no language is ever truly neutral. English is not an ideal solution, but it is pragmatic and becoming increasingly essential through globalization – it therefore plays an important role in finding the balance between the nationalist and universalist side of the debate on decolonization Mamdani (2016) is arguing for. The richness of African languages, as well as their essential role in the decolonization of the university however should not be disregarded – even though

their development complicates the situation significantly. Language is an important tool in the decolonization of the university and the empowerment of individuals.

Conclusion

This thesis has actively engaged with how the protests and contention of the Open Stellenbosch Collective – focused on the exclusionary nature of language – and the contentious politics of the larger #*FeesMustFall* protests are rooted in the wide-reaching debate on decolonization. It can be concluded that the protest and contention of students under the #*FeesMustFall* banner – including the protest at SU – are a modern representation of the long-existing debate on the decolonization of the university. They strongly reflect the challenges of finding a balance between the local and global, based on a debate that was already introduced in the sixties. The significant differences that can be discovered in the definitions of decolonization at the various universities of South Africa make clear that this process is not only subjected to global power structures, but also to the national division of power and privilege. The resonances of apartheid and the earlier forms of colonialism still impact South African society significantly and continue to influence the day-to-day realities of students, institutions of higher education, as well as all other aspects of South African society. Until now, South African universities have not yet found the balance between excellence and relevance as they are torn between international standards, neoliberal policies and realities, and a strong drive towards Africanization and decolonization. They are attempting to assert their position in the world, not only as replicators of knowledge, but also as essential producers of new knowledge. #*FeesMustFall* was ultimately a response to this (as of yet) inability of these South African universities to find the right balance.

It is important to realize that decolonization is a process without a clear definition or end. Advocating for the increased use of English as a compromise for example – as was the case at SU – may be a first step in a journey toward a more decolonized and possibly more multilingual curriculum. Yet, on the other hand, the increasing pressures of globalization may make English the only language of knowledge in the future – as its use and importance is on the rise also beyond the borders of the

Anglophone nations. The advances made by the students in #*FeesMustFall* and the Open Stellenbosch Collective then should be seen as steppingstones for the future as the balance between relevance and international excellence needs to be and most likely will be addressed continuously as time progresses. The complexity of the modern era will make the decolonization endeavour even more of a challenge, but over the course of the years, there is hope for further improvement of the situation. It is important for future research that the ever-shifting balance between universalism and nationalism is taken into account as it can be a suitable starting point for more in-depth analysis of specific movements that were part of the #*FeesMustFall* protests as well as other contentious action in relation to decolonization. Furthermore, it would be desirable to further address the gap between intention and performance that is so often witnessed in South Africa – finding a way to address this issue may eventually be of significant help of any of the institutions that are subjected to the idealistic policies that are lacking in their implementation. Placing this gap within its political context may also provide a better understanding of how South Africa can achieve the standards of developed nations for all its citizens, and not just for a minority and help avoid repetition of problems from their past.

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