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“The power of Whiteness is paying attention to what you do here”

A Qualitative Case Study on the Approach to Decolonize
Unarmed Civilian Protection/Accompaniment

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Abstract

As the practice of Unarmed Civilian Protection/Accompaniment (UCP/A) has been criticized to replicate power structures that are linked to colonialism. The main reference point here is the practice of White people from the global North going to the Global South to protect civilians there. This paper takes a closer look at this linkage. "Colonial inequities of race, class, and nation, which are co-created and intertwined, are part of how accompaniment 'works'" (Koopman 2013). The occurrence of incidents in the field in which the international community was alarmed because a White person was killed reflects racialized power structures. Further, the situation in which local actors ask specifically for a White person to perform accompaniment pictures the dilemma in which UCP/A practitioners often find themselves. The most current project to work on these problems is a sequence of good practice workshops conducted by Nonviolent Peaceforce. In these workshops, the topic of "Decolonizing UCP" emerged and ideas to approach the topic have been discussed. The findings and ideas are evaluated in this thesis and serve as a basis to the approach of decolonizing UCP/A. For this purpose, the case study is conducted by analyzing the report of Peace Direct (2021) "Time to Decolonise Aid: Insights and lessons from a global consultation" that gives a guideline on how to approach decoloniality in the aid sector. Hereby, the connection of UCP/A, humanitarian aid, and development cooperation are lined out by revealing similarities and distinctions in order to learn from work already done in connected fields. By conducting a needs assessment of UCP/A, the findings of Peace Direct's report are transferred to the work of UCP/A.

Zusammenfassung

Da die Praxis des Unarmed Civilian Protection/Accompaniment (UCP/A) kritisiert wird Machtstrukturen zu replizieren, die mit Kolonialismus verbunden sind, ist ein genauerer Blick auf diese Verbindung von Bedeutung. Es geht dabei um die Praxis, dass *Weiß*e Menschen vom globalen Norden in den globalen Süden gehen, um dort Zivilist*innen zu schützen. Koloniale Ungleichheiten in Bezug auf *race*, Klasse und Nationalität, die gemeinsam geschaffen werden und miteinander verwoben sind, sind Teil der Art und Weise, wie UCP/A 'funktioniert' (vgl. Koopman 2013). Das Auftreten von Vorfällen, bei denen die internationale Gemeinschaft alarmiert ist, weil eine *Weiß*e Person getötet wurde, spiegelt vorhandene Machtstrukturen wider. Darüber hinaus zeigt die Situation, in der lokale Akteure gezielt nach einer *Weiß*en Person als Begleitung fragen, das Dilemma, in dem sich UCP/A-Praktiker*innen oft befinden. Das aktuellste Projekt zur Bearbeitung dieser Probleme ist eine Reihe von Good-Practice-Workshops, die von Nonviolent Peaceforce durchgeführt wurden. In diesen Workshops wurde das Thema der Dekolonisierung von UCP/A bearbeitet und diskutiert. Die Ergebnisse werden in dieser Arbeit ausgewertet und dienen als Grundlage für den Ansatz der Dekolonisierung von UCP/A. Zu diesem Zweck wird die Fallstudie durch die Analyse des Berichts von Peace Direct (2021) ergänzt, "Time to Decolonise Aid: Insights and lessons from a global consultation", der einen Leitfaden für den Umgang mit Dekolonisierung im Entwicklungszusammenarbeitssektor liefert. Dabei wird die Verbindung von UCP/A, humanitärer Hilfe und Entwicklungszusammenarbeit durch das Aufzeigen von Gemeinsamkeiten und Unterschieden herausgearbeitet, um von der bereits geleisteten Arbeit in verwandten Bereichen zu lernen. Durch die Durchführung einer Bedarfsanalyse von UCP/A werden die Erkenntnisse von Peace Direct auf die Arbeit der UCP/A übertragen.

Acronyms

| | |
|-------|--|
| CPT | Community Peacemaker Teams |
| IASC | Inter-Agency Standing Committee |
| INGO | International Nongovernmental Organization |
| NGO | Nongovernmental Organization |
| NP | Nonviolent Peaceforce |
| OC | Operazione Colomba |
| OCHA | United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs |
| PBI | Peace Brigades International |
| PD | Peace Direct |
| UCP/A | Unarmed Civilian Protection/Accompaniment |
| UN | United Nations |
| US | United States |

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1. Introduction

The deep-rooted racism that still determines society becomes apparent confronted with a sample of quotes concerning the escape from Ukraine after the Russian invasion in February 2022. The following sentences were stated by newscasters working for agencies such as CNN, CBS, and BBC:

This is not a developing Third World nation, this is Europe. / These are prosperous middle-class people; these are not people trying to get away from areas in North Africa. They look like any European family that you would live next door to. / What could be a difference here from other conflicts, you know, that could seem very far away, you know, African, Middle Eastern, whatever, I mean, these are Europeans that we're seeing being killed. / This isn't a place, with all the respect, you know, like Iraq or Afghanistan, you know, this is relatively civilized, relatively European, I have to choose those words carefully too, a city where you wouldn't expect that or hope that it's going to happen. (WDR 2022)

The racist narratives that have been spread with the beginning of the invasion mirror the structural problems and conflicts that still must be faced. In addition to the narratives described, people are differentiated at the borders due to their appearance. "Ukrainian-looking people" are allowed to cross the border while "foreign-looking people" are not (see Busari et al. 2022).

These racist differentiations occur in almost every conceivable hemisphere – in that way also in fields that aim to fight racism, such as the practice of Unarmed Civilian Protection/Accompaniment (UCP/A). UCP/A is "a generic term that gives recognition to a wide range of activities by unarmed civilians to reduce violence and protect civilians in situations of violent conflict" (Venturi 2015:61). One of the fields UCP/A practitioners work in is the accompaniment of refugees to guide them safely from one place to another. The occurrence of local actors asking specifically for a White¹ person to perform the accompaniment is based on their privileges such as not suffering from structural racism. That pictures the dilemma in which practitioners often find themselves. UCP/A is a concept that is mostly led by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and therefore is considered an international external intervention strategy for reducing and preventing violence. There are nationally led organizations too but not as many as international NGOs (INGOs) (see Julian/Schweitzer 2015:4-5).

As research in this field has increased in recent years, including UCP/A's function, history, and case studies, criticism has come forward as well. The practice is criticized to replicate power structures that are linked to colonialism, as "colonial inequities of race, class, and nation, which are co-created and intertwined, are part of how accompaniment 'works'" (Koopman 2013). The occurrence of incidents in the field in which the international community was alarmed because a White person was killed reflects racialized power structures. This factor of the unequal value of lives of White and Black, Brown, and Indigenous people has been used in UCP/A to accompany people, especially the protective power linked to being White (see *ibid.*). Seeing that the topics of racism and colonialism need to be focused on and recognizing the efforts already made in related fields, this paper contributes to filling the research gap by answering the question of: To what extent can

1 The capitalization of the colloquial racial designations Black, Brown, Indigenous, and White is debated. In this paper, as the designations refer to social categories describing the complexity of groups holding shared histories and experiences, these words are referred to as nouns. Further, it is acknowledged that the capitalization of White is a controversial debate but as "within historically created racial identities that have linked the [...] terms" (Painter 2020), the racial construct should be framed as the opposition to Black, Brown, and Indigenous and therefore be capitalized as well. Nevertheless, in some quotes referred to in this paper, "White" is not capitalized but individually adopted for not altering these.

lessons learned from decolonizing humanitarian aid be useful in decolonizing UCP/A?

The most current research on UCP/A is a sequence of “good practice workshops” conducted by Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP), recognizing that at least 60 organizations in 25 countries exist that practice work comparable to UCP/A (see Schweitzer 2022:10). NP is a global civilian protection organization that coordinated the workshops to discuss among others the topic of “Decolonizing UCP/A”. During the workshops, practitioners, field partners, beneficiaries, and academics were gathered in six regional consultation groups, reviewing their work, analyzing findings, validating good practices, evaluating emerging themes, and identifying challenges raised (NP 2022). Especially the report of the workshop in Paynesville, United States (US), highlights the significant role racism plays in the field. Schweitzer (2020a) outlines the relevance of the topic by stating that the question of privilege and racism is worldwide of actuality, as the work of UCP/A practicing organizations is often based on privileges connected to Whiteness and/or citizenship. The inconsistency between the wish to support people who are asking for it and the “pragmatic solution to use the privilege since it is there” (ibid.:27) on the one side, and the “equally urgent need to dismantle and overcome these privileges, racism, white supremacy, supremacy of certain nations over others etc.” (ibid.) on the other side are described.² Exemplary approaches to solutions, such as NP insisting on sending teams with different backgrounds, and others including issues of racism in the training of their staff and volunteers and their political work, are given (see ibid.).

For this purpose, and recognizing the work already done by NP, after expounding the methodology of the research and its theoretical background (chapter 2), UCP/A, existing colonial continuities in the field, and the contents of the good practice approach of NP are illustrated. These will be reflected in the light of decolonization³ (chapter 3). To learn from work already done in connected fields, parallels between UCP/A and humanitarian aid are lined out, as well as the discourse on decolonizing humanitarian aid (chapter 4). Most notably, this case study evaluates the report of Peace Direct (PD) (2021) “Time to Decolonise Aid: Insights and lessons from a global consultation” as a role model, conducts a needs assessment of UCP/A, and implements the findings of PD to the work of UCP/A (chapter 5). The following reflection of the findings will give indications for further research, leading over to the conclusion (chapter 6).

Having worked on these issues, the research question can be answered by stating that the lessons learned from decolonizing humanitarian aid can be transferred to the process of decolonizing UCP/A to a major extent. Both practices primarily take place in the same sector, wherefore they exhibit parallels, especially in the field of colonial continuities.⁴ Nevertheless, the practices must be distinguished, not all good practices can be adopted by UCP/A. Seeing that the discourse on decolonization is ongoing, the lessons learned from humanitarian aid can shape the further elaboration of strategies for UCP/A.

Recognizing the assumptions that researchers cannot be neutral or independent from the objects which are investigated, I will constantly reflect on my position and values connected to the topic and research. Having in mind that there is no neutral access to reality, but it is socially constructed (see Fluck 2017:25), especially when dealing with the topics of racism and colonialism, it is important to reflect on one’s position. As I am a White person, I

2 White supremacy is, according to Ansley (1997:592), a system in which White persons “overwhelmingly control power and material resources, conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement are widespread, and relations of white dominance and non-white subordination are daily reenacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings”.

3 The formulations postcolonial, anti-colonial, and decolonial have different connotations. By using the concept of decolonization, it is highlighted that the act of decolonizing UCP/A “not only seeks to overthrow colonialism, but also to remove and redress its lasting traces and legacies” (Hiraide 2021).

4 The concept of colonial continuities is further elaborated in chapter 3.2. In brief, it describes the ongoing occurrence of colonial structures in various areas of nowadays society.

cannot write about racism and colonial continuities from an inside perspective. Furthermore, as Stake (1995) highlights, “our readers are often more familiar with the cases than we researchers are. They can add their own part of the story” (ibid.:86). With these words, I would like to highlight my position as a researcher without significant experience in the sector of UCP/A yet. Nonetheless, the academic work on the issue can contribute to the overall discourse.

Coming back to the beginning, the visible racism against Ukrainian refugees and the generally racialized deployment of UCP/A practitioners show clearly that there is a need for change. This paper seeks to contribute to working on this change.

2. Methodology and Theoretical Background

The analysis and findings of the paper are particularly based on a literature review of secondary data, revealing a variety of actors and aspects (see Stake 1995:68). The research focuses on literature in the form of books, journals, and reports, as well as discussions and speeches published in video formats. The plurality of sources can be justified through the introductory words in PD's (2021:10) report, which offer an insight into why literature research should rely not only on literature in the traditional sense. The format of reports [...] is one that is preferred by funders, international practitioners and decision-makers, who are the primary audience for the report's recommendations. The very nature of reports relies on external, 'authoritative' sources being used to corroborate the lived experiences of some of the consultation's participants. We invite the reader to reflect on why a formal written report is perceived as being more legitimate than other methods of dissemination.

Additionally, to include the most recent findings, ideas and approaches, the participation in several workshops and meetings on the topic gave further insight into the discourses on decolonizing UCP/A and humanitarian aid. The generated field notes are considered as valuable as the findings of the literature review, as both rely on the work of researchers and experienced practitioners.

The main method of analysis to find an answer to the research question is a qualitative case study, taking the example of the recommendations to decolonize humanitarian aid and applying it to the case of decolonizing UCP/A. This research strategy encompasses the design, data collection, and data analysis of the study. To focus on the case of UCP/A, an exploring application of the method is used (see Yin 2003:13-15). A case study is an approach facilitating the "exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources" (Baxter/Jack 2010:544). Using different lenses to allow multiple facets of a phenomenon plays an important role when conducting a case study (see *ibid.*).

Therefore, the case study consists of four steps:

- Firstly, outlining the theoretical framework by stating the discourses on UCP/A, humanitarian aid, and their connection to decolonization (chapters 3 and 4).
- Secondly, revealing PD's approach to decolonizing humanitarian aid to reflect on lessons learned in the field (chapter 5.1).
- Thirdly, conducting a needs assessment of decolonizing UCP/A to line out what is required for the process. The identification of occurrences of structural racism serves as the basis of the assessment (chapter 5.2). As Stake (1995) emphasizes, case studies focus on uniqueness, so understanding the case itself before putting it into the context of knowledge on other cases is significant (see *ibid.*:8). Therefore, the needs assessment follows the ideas of the Multi-Sector Initial Rapid Assessment by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC).⁵ As the approach roots in the humanitarian sector to which UCP/A can be connected, the ideas of the approach can be implemented to structure the needs for the decolonization of UCP/A. The method is further elaborated in the corresponding chapter (chapter 5.2).
- Lastly, the approach to decolonize humanitarian aid on UCP/A is implemented by including the formulated needs (chapter 5.3). As this paper is based on the assumption that knowledge is humanly constructed rather than discovered, it follows the path of constructivism. To make the case of UCP/A understandable, new meanings are recognized and corroborated, connecting the case to known occurrences while emphasizing its particularities (see *ibid.*).

The literature review serves as the platform to explore these known occurrences. Literature in various forms, as already described, to understand the case and its connection to the need for decolonization, was mainly available through the "UCP Research

⁵ see <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/>

Database”.⁶ This database enables to find, collect, and share knowledge about nonviolent, civilian-to-civilian protection and self-protection amidst violent conflict. The exchange with several practitioners initiated through an internship at Bund für Soziale Verteidigung⁷ (Federation for Social Defence) in September and October 2021 gave further insights and paths for research. Additionally, the participation at the virtual gathering of UCP/A practitioners and researchers in November 2021,⁸ which concluded the previously taken workshops organized by NP, gave insights into the current discussion on decolonizing UCP/A. The participation at the Humanitarian Symposium Munich in February 2022,⁹ as well as at the meeting of the Anti-Racism Forum in March 2022¹⁰ on the topic of decolonizing humanitarian aid, provided an overview on the current discourse in the area and are summarized in the outline of the paper (chapters 3.3 and 4.2). These participative observations reveal the actuality and necessity to discuss the decolonization of practices in UCP/A and humanitarian aid. The findings of the participative observations were recorded through note taking. As the research in UCP/A is expanding and the question of decolonization is currently being worked on, the available literature is relatively assessable.

The methods of analysis were based on the evaluation of literature and notes into codes and categories, which enabled to make the sectors of humanitarian aid and UCP/A comparable and show parallels. These parallels were especially important to apply the approaches of decolonization. The chart of PD (2020:33), revealing how structural racism works in the sector of humanitarian aid (figure 1, page 29), includes several attitudes of practitioners in the field that contribute to structural racism. These attitudes serve in the analysis of structural racism and colonial continuities in UCP/A as categories, to order and summarize the findings. The findings are used for structuring the needs assessment, which again is the basis for the implementation of the approach to decolonizing humanitarian aid on UCP/A. Making these areas comparable, the case study contributes to an overall attempt to create a strategy to decolonize UCP/A.

To set the theoretical lens of the paper, used concepts and contexts regarding decolonization, decoloniality, and colonial continuities are briefly demonstrated. The *decolonial turn*, which is according to Maldonado-Torres (2011:1), “opposing what could be called the colonizing turn in Western thought—the paradigm of discovery and newness that also included the gradual propagation of capitalism, racism, the modern/gender system, and the naturalization of the death ethics of war”. Key writings in the decolonial turn include the publications by Mignolo (2011), Wynter (2003; Wynter/McKittrick 2015), Dussel (1985; 2013), and Maldonado-Torres (2007; 2008; 2011), who have turned the attention to the determining force of relations of colonialism and coloniality to basic practices and understandings of knowledge production. Quijano (2000) had coined the notion of *coloniality of power* in international cooperation. This affects the social imaginary of Northern epistemic superiority, in which “international expertise is deemed high-quality and independent whereas local expertise available in recipient organizations or provided by national consultants is considered less profound and potentially biased” (Koch 2021:18). Key to the coloniality of power are Western values such as “development”, “civilization”, and “liberalism”, “that have been imposed on others as universal and globally applicable designs” (Dunford 2017:382). *Decoloniality* is the “unlinking and rethinking, the shifting away from universality and interlocking systems of domination that continue to serve some communities over others and that have produced the crises that we currently face” (Sonn/Stevens 2021:7). For Quijano (2000), decoloniality engages systems of hierarchy, knowledge, and culture that are associated with Western modernity. Mignolo and Walsh

6 see <https://ucpresearch.uk/resourcespace/pages/home.php>

7 see <https://www.soziale-verteidigung.de/>

8 see <https://www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org/good-practices/>

9 see <https://www.cih.lmu.de/events/2022/humanitarian-symposium-munich>

10 see <https://www.chaberlin.org/en/topics/anti-racism-forum-ara/>

(2018) describe decoloniality as the understanding of how coloniality affects the thoughts and feelings of humans, how a sense of reality is made, how relationships with other beings are viewed, and the possibilities perceived around them (see *ibid.*:140). Realizing that changes within a country cannot only be implemented within hierarchical relationships and prevent portraying local communities as invitees in their country (see Jabri 2016), the perspective of decolonization seems to fulfill the needs of the paper. Thereby, the occurrence of *Eurocentrism* especially when talking about development should be recognized (see Ziai 2015). "Eurocentrism is not a geographical issue, but an epistemic and aesthetic one [...], it is necessary to think and act (doing, praxis) decolonially [...] by engaging with projects and organizations that run parallel and in the same direction" (Mignolo/Walsh 2018:125). With giving this background, the basis of the following state of the art is set and referring to the concepts is explicit.

3. Unarmed Civilian Protection/Accompaniment in the Light of Decoloniality

As outlined in the introduction, UCP/A is a debated concept, and even if it is useful to use a definition for the working progress, a universal definition of the term cannot be given. The most recent definition by NP describes UCP/A as a “practice of deploying specially trained unarmed civilians before, during, or after the violent conflict to prevent or reduce violence, provide direct physical protection to civilian populations under threat, and strengthen or build resilient local peace infrastructures” (Schweitzer 2022:3). These international and local civilians are usually present in the conflict zone to prevent violence and support people. Seeing that practicing organizations name the concept differently; their focuses differ as well. Even the term UCP/A is debated. Some organizations name their practice “UCP”, others “accompaniment” or “violence interruption”, and still others do not label it at all. In the workshops of NP, most of the participants were willing to consider their work by using the framework of UCP (see Schweitzer 2020a:76). This paper uses the term UCP/A, as in line with the reflection processes that are going on, the inclusion of “accompaniment” as an alternative denotation is admitted. For these reasons, the following chapter concentrates on the concept of UCP/A and outlines the discussion of its understanding (3.1). Subsequently, the discourse on colonial continuities is expounded. By demonstrating specific examples, the approach to working on the decolonization of UCP/A is specified and set into context (3.2.). Concluding this chapter, already implemented approaches to overcome colonial continuities in the case are presented by the example of the organization NP (3.3).

3.1 Methods, Aims, and Implementing Organizations

As indicated in the introduction, UCP/A is based on the conviction that conflict situations are better resolved nonviolently. The term itself encompasses a wide range of activities to reduce violence and protect civilians. It is adopted by governmental and nongovernmental organizations, including international peacekeeping interventions by the United Nations (UN) composed of unarmed observers and military officers (see Julian/Schweitzer 2015:5-6). UCP/A describes on the one hand a reactive dimension, meaning the physical protection of civilians, and on the other hand a proactive dimension, involving diplomacy and conflict resolution (see Venturi 2015:62). Teams working in the area often have an international component, which contributes essentially to the notion of colonial continuities that can be found in the practice. The persons exerting UCP/A, meaning volunteers and staff, often work and live with the people who asked for support, providing a safe space in which training and meetings can take place. Thereby, UCP/A is meant to create a peaceful environment in which the practice is visible and known to all actors, focusing on communication and relationship-building, and reducing violence in the area (see Julian/Schweitzer 2015:3).

Multiple case studies reveal that there is a knowledge-base on UCP/A which is not yet a fully mature field but shows a path. An overview of the most important methods and aims that are stated in existing literature serves as the base to understand the following depiction of the colonial continuities and possibilities for its decolonization. The study of Furnari (2017) shows that the flexibility of the implementation of the praxis is of major importance, as the contexts are changing continually. Therefore, an ongoing analysis of the context is decisive and should consider whether UCP/A is likely to support the affected civilians and which practices are best suited for the context and needs (see *ibid.*:20). Furthermore, the need for administrative capacity, resources, and the ability to train and recruit staff or volunteers are critical elements, whereby the request of locals to initiate the work of UCP/A is crucial (see *ibid.*:16-20). The study of Julian and Schweitzer (2015) reveals that most of the organizations engaging in the sector are well established. Among them, there is a coherence of core values but rather no collaboration or shared analytical framework, except in the case of Colombia. Here, several organizations work within the

same geographical zones. Further, the connection to the ideas of peacekeeping coined by the UN and military is revealed, underlying that peacekeeping can be an issue for civilians and NGOs, even if the dominant role of the UN and the military cannot be denied (see *ibid.*:5-6). In general, it is notable that the understanding of peacekeeping and its connotations in the UN system have evolved from an initial indication of military operations to the inclusion of multidimensional operations connecting civilians, police, and military (see Rossi 2015:10).

Noticing the trend towards a variety of other approaches besides the use of the military, Francis (2013) argues that nonviolent approaches have a major impact on the achievement of peacebuilding and peaceful change in societies. This makes UCP/A an essential component in the design of responses to violence, having an impact on changing conflict dynamics, creating security, and building sustainable peace. Moreover, it tackles the “lack of capacity and skills for local engagement; and inadequate gender equality and leadership by women” (Julian 2020:100).

UCP/A further provides a framework for analyzing security processes. Renouncing the image of fighting an enemy, Julian (2020) argues that the praxis rather concentrates on the potential of relationships to build on for protection. Besides, challenging the principle of Othering, and differentiating between “us” and “them”, UCP/A uses an approach based on inclusivity to understand the actions of all actors related to them (see *ibid.*:107). The focus on a positive self-image rather than on a negative enemy image is highlighted.

Implementing UCP/A is marked by the notion that while the public is watching, actors usually tend to be on their best behavior. Conflict parties do not want to be caught by the public, by UN troops or civilians, so being present and visible is a major part of the praxis (see Wallis 2015:37).

As well as the definitions and understandings of UCP/A, its methods, structures, and aims are diverse. They rely on the specific aims of the practicing organizations but as the overall aim is to contribute to peaceful solutions to conflicts, there can be found similarities as well. Recognizing that at least 60 organizations are practicing UCP/A on a local as well as an international level (see NP 2021), introducing some of the organizations which shape the discourse is advantageous. Especially when focusing on the extent of missions deployed locally or internationally, the aims of the organizations are relevant to observe for the contemplation of decolonizing UCP/A. The most recent report of NP reveals the different approaches to UCP/A and summarizes them (see Schweitzer 2022). These include Shanti Sena, which means “peace army” in Hindi, short-term assignments internationally and locally, as well as long-term international and local presence (see *ibid.*:11). As for the decolonization of UCP/A INGOs are of particular importance, because of the capability to reproduce colonial power dynamics, these are the focus of the following evaluation. During the research, certain organizations were mentioned frequently, wherefore these are considered to have a major impact in the sector.¹¹

Firstly, NP, as the organization is of major importance for the outline of the approach to overcome colonial continuities and was the host of the workshops in which the decolonization of UCP/A was drafted (chapter 3.3). NP has the mission “to protect civilians in violent conflicts through unarmed strategies, build peace side by side with local communities, and advocate for the wider adoption of these approaches to safeguard human lives and dignity” (NP 2021). Their guidelines are led by the principles of nonviolence, the primacy of local actors, non-partisanship, and civilian-to-civilian action. Since its foundation in 1999, NP had several missions in different countries and is, therefore, a primarily internationally acting organization while being based in the US and Switzerland. Their missions were mainly deployed in Asia and Africa, for example in Sudan

¹¹ It is recognized that vocabulary such as “protection” and “empowerment” is used throughout the paper, which should be avoided according to the attempt to decolonize UCP/A. Nevertheless, these words are currently embedded in the practice and, therefore, used to describe the practice while acknowledging the need to change.

and Myanmar. In 2020, NP started their first mission in the US, the first local mission, caused by the killing of George Floyd in May of the same year and global protests for anti-racist action and racial justice (see *ibid.*) The work of NP is dedicated to the area of long-term international presence (see Schweitzer 2022:11).

Secondly, Peace Brigades International (PBI), an organization that provides “protection, support and recognition to local human rights defenders who work in areas of repression and conflict and have requested [their] support” (PBI 2022). PBI is based in Belgium. On their website, PBI highlights that lasting transformation must be established on the desires and capacity of local people. PBI was founded in 1981 and since then it was working in 14 countries, especially in South America. Their principles include nonviolence, nonpartisanship, and noninterference while underlining an international character. Their functions include “protective accompaniment, international observation, advocacy, awareness raising and capacity development” (*ibid.*). PBI works in the area of long-term international presence (see Schweitzer 2022:11).

Thirdly, Community Peacemaker Teams (CPT), until the end of 2021 known as Christian Peacemaker Teams, is an organization that aims to build partnerships to change oppression and violence, acts on invitation, and supports the voices of local actors. Accompaniment, advocacy, human rights observation and reporting, and solidarity networking are included in the work of CPT. Furthermore, CPT advocates for decolonization by “dismantling these systems of oppression and moving towards systems of caregiving, balance, and mutual aid” (CPT 2022). CPT works for example in Iraq, Greece, and Palestine while being based in the US and Canada (see *ibid.*).

Fourthly, Operazione Colomba (OC), which was founded in 1992 and initially operated in the former Yugoslavia, where it supported reuniting families, protecting minorities, and creating spaces for meeting, dialogue, and peaceful coexistence. Their main principles are nonviolence, sharing, equivocality, and popular participation. OC is based in Italy and works locally as well as internationally (see OC 2022). Their work is classified as long-term international presence as well (see Schweitzer 2022:11).

Fifthly, Meta Peace Teams, an organization that aims to create “an alternative to militarism and violence through empowered peacemaking” (Meta Peace Teams 2022). Their goals include the education of the public on nonviolence, the training in active nonviolence, the recruiting and placing of teams domestically and internationally, and the cooperation with local actors. It is based in the US (see *ibid.*) and its work is seen as short-term local assignments (see Schweitzer 2022:11).

Sixthly, Pax Christi, an ecumenical peace movement within the Catholic church, which has 120 member organizations worldwide and its international base in Belgium. Pax Christi is not a UCP/A practicing organization but conducts information events and campaigns, actions, and aid projects that are well-known in the sector. It was founded after World War II and carries out campaigns for peace and justice as a Christian-motivated and politically committed movement. Pax Christi strives for just structures of coexistence and civil ways of conflict resolution (Pax Christi 2022).

Lastly, Peace Direct (PD), which, even if it is not practicing UCP/A, is of major importance for the paper as described in the introduction. PD’s aim is to “develop a network of local peacebuilding partners operating around the world to resolve conflict and create safer communities” (PD 2022). By building a network of organizations, the exchange between these is facilitated. The network includes organizations in 44 countries while supporting partner organizations in conflicts in 12 countries around the world. PD is based in the United Kingdom (see *ibid.*).

Concluding, the organizations practicing UCP/A are engaged internationally as well as locally. It can be noticed that the introduced organizations are mostly based in the US and Europe. Every organization of the six mentioned practices international, while four of them additionally practice on a local level. In the case of NP, there is only one local deployment so far. These findings depict that the best-known organizations practicing UCP/A are based in the Global North and act mostly international. Having a look at the outcomes of the workshops that are subsequently analyzed (see chapter 3.3), observations regarding locally

and internationally acting organizations are made as well, as the workshops were held in different countries merging organizations that practice in the region. The workshop that was conducted in the US was mainly held by organizations acting locally and focused on urban communities. Regarding the staff employed in US organizations, only NP hires international staff as well, wherefore the role of international staff is limited (see Schweitzer 2020a:3-4). It can be noticed that especially in the US local staff is preferred, employing international staff are rather exceptions. At the same time, organizations based in the US and Europe send staff all around the world. In summary, the initial situation of practitioners in the sector exhibits colonial continuities which are further investigated in the following chapter. It must be highlighted again that the focus is on INGOs and thus only investigates a minor number of organizations practicing UCP/A.

3.2 Discourse on Colonial Continuities in UCP/A

In the context of decoloniality, colonial continuities refer to the occurrence that “racial practices of today are a continuation of racial domination in the past” (Azarmandi 2016:161). Azarmandi (2016) further explains that the historical suppression of the affected groups is directly connected to police brutality today. Hence, politics of control and eradication backdated to the 15th century continue. A current example in which colonial continuities can be found is the situation at the Ukrainian border caused by the Russian invasion described at the beginning of this paper.

Colonial continuities cannot only be found in instances that discriminate on purpose but also in other areas which aim to fight discrimination such as UCP/A. Here, a connection to racial and colonial logic such as control and surveillance can be found (see *ibid.*:159).

Referring to the coloniality of power, which is coined by Quijano (2000), social and cultural power relations are emphasized. These are enabled through the continuities of “social hierarchical relationships of exploitation and domination” (*ibid.*:9) between actors from the Global North and Global South that were built during centuries of colonial expansion. Colonial continuities can be found to a high extent in today’s structures, among others in the practice of accompaniment, as Martín-Baró, Aron, and Corne (1994:46) state. They describe the choosing between accompanying or not accompanying oppressed majorities as a question

[...] of whether psychological knowledge will be placed in the service of constructing a society where the welfare of the few is not built on the wretchedness of the many, where the fulfillment of some does not require that others be deprived, where the interests of the minority do not demand the dehumanization of all.

This criticism reflects that human rights and practices based on them, in general, are still coined by established global hierarchies. The dissemination of human rights by Western societies and the idea of development ruled by Western powers are only two examples (see Brönnner 2019:25). Related to this, the concept of security which is interweaved with the concepts of human rights and development, and in this case especially as national security, can be coined by racism and maintain White supremacy (see Booker/Ohlbaum 2021).

Mirroring these arguments and transferring them to the case of UCP/A, it is reasonable to see the problems in the base of its practice. Organizations from the Global North acting primarily in the Global South, establishing their ideas of rights and methods to reach goals that were shaped by them can be criticized. The occurrence of colonial continuities in UCP/A is clearly shown by Koopman (2013), who dealt with the question of whether privilege can be used transparently in the area. The case study depicts the situation in Colombia, where “class and ‘race’ interlock” (*ibid.*). It is described that White companions are often presumed to have class privilege based on their origins. Further, companions who are not White but have, for example, the citizenship of a Western state and dress and act in manners that are associated with class privilege, are perceived as “Whiter”.

Accompaniers, in this case, are understood through the colonial imaginaries and histories

and so, even if they are not using it consciously, race is a part of how the accompaniers are read.

To ignore these racial imaginaries and inequities manifest a belief in a non-involvement in others' subordination. This shape by colonial continuities leads to the circumstance that UCP/A practicing organizations thereby cannot transcend race by not taking it into account. Consequently, Koopman (2013) demands a direct and regular talk, internally and publicly, about how privilege is used by accompaniers. It is further highlighted that accompaniment can challenge ongoing colonial relations through colonial imaginaries by building alternative ties between the people in the affected places. Concluding, Koopman (2013) states that privilege cannot be given up but be used for a common goal.

Another example contributing to the discourse on colonial continuities in UCP/A is the case described by Wood (2019) in Mexico. Outlining the work of international volunteers at the US-Mexican border, the dilemma in which UCP/A can be found is explained. By reference to the example of sending an 80-year-old White woman with a US passport to accompany asylum seeking people at the border, the source of power accompaniers represent is lined out. In this case, the woman represents an emblem of White supremacy, US imperialism, and US exceptionalism while being trained through her organization to recognize and step back from the power of her Whiteness. This is described by Wood (2019) as an impossible balance:

I am using her to say to organized crime, "the power of whiteness is paying attention to what you do here" [...]. We are putting her whiteness — as well as mine, and the power that it all represents — at the service of Mexicans from Guerrero, who U.S. whiteness is working hard to exclude. Accompaniers of color are perceived differently, but still represent the United States by virtue of the passports they hold.

Further explaining the example, violence against US citizens at the US-Mexican border would draw the attention of US border enforcement, as they are deployed to protect "their" citizens. Therefore, US citizens are kept safer than local volunteers. Further research on the safety of international volunteers and its connection to their frequent Whiteness was made by Coy (2011) through participant observation. In the report, a conversation with a volunteer of PBI is quoted who answered the question of what protects him from the violence all around the sector with "my white skin" (ibid.) and introduces hereby the exploitation of privilege and racism by PBI.

As an answer to this and in line with the examination of racism and privilege in the work of UCP/A, PBI announced changes in their work: a diversification of the teams, regularly training including role plays on the topic, and uniforms stating their status as staff, so they do not "have to rely on white skin" (ibid.).

For NP, the lessons learned from PBI helped to implement them directly when establishing the organization. Understanding the necessity to focus on the avoidance of replicating colonial continuities and starting the attempt to decolonize UCP/A, practitioners focused on the need for local empowerment and the reliance on principles such as equity and the primacy of the local. Boothe and Smithey (2007:42) conclude that "practitioners should be able to identify the traditional power dynamics associated with the intervention and work to counter vestiges of racism and classism".

Even if third-party interventions have the aim to shift power to local activists, this relies on the fact that they have access to institutional power. This can be described as a privilege, which is socially structured as well as socially constructed and represents access to knowledge, resources, and institutions with the capabilities for life chances, protection, and efficacy. These privileges can be earned, for example in the case of an advanced degree, or inherited, in the case of being White. In this instance, Boothe and Smithey (2007) suggest direct education to destabilize privilege and relate to local movements. Through this method, participants could discover their capacities, social status, and weaknesses (see ibid.:52).

The visibility of privilege and racism is further identifiable in the case of UCP/A when realizing that in UCP/A White persons are often not attacked because of the reaction that

would be provoked in the international community. Relying on being visibly foreign and most often visibly White can thus be explained (see *ibid.*:47).

Coy (2011) summarizes that the continuing sending of largely uniformed White volunteers from the Global North to the Global South is based on a Western concept of human rights. This activates primary dynamics and symbols which are associated with racism and classism, meaning the replication of colonial continuities. These can also be found in the socialization of the staff and volunteers and the beliefs learned in training. The connotation that they are able to change matters is part of these beliefs, according to Wood (2019). It is further explained that volunteers often trust power dynamics they do not support to achieve their goal of nonviolence. At the same time, the question is raised whether accompaniment is “a way to change the world, or just a band-aid to ensure survival until the world changes?” (*ibid.*). The protection, which is part of accompaniment, can produce disempowerment while actors must rely on others (see Coy 1997:39).

Another important factor when addressing colonial continuities is the sensitivity of language. According to Wood (2019), there is a range of vocabulary that should be avoided in the sectors of UCP/A and humanitarian aid to not uphold colonial continuities, for example, “help”, “protect”, and “secure”. These should be replaced by vocabulary such as “walk alongside”, “serve”, “accompany”, and “be with”. The intention of paying attention to language is part of acknowledging that the power that is brought to a situation is due to the embodiment of certain structures (see *ibid.*).

The colonial continuities in the context of UCP/A, therefore, do not only rely on Whiteness seen as a uniform but rather on the deep-rooted concepts that are still a large part of today’s society. To combat these colonial continuities, it must be considered that “only those who have the conflict are ultimately able to solve it” (Howard/Schweitzer/Stieren 2001:171). Further, PD (2020:18) states that one “cannot dismantle coloniality within the very institutions that uphold it”, meaning the sectors of humanitarian aid, peacebuilding, as well as institutions such as the police and academia. These are described as institutions that influenced the modern, colonial world system that sustain global hierarchies (see *ibid.*). Starting to combat colonial continuities must, thereby, evolve inherently.

3.3 Approaches to Decolonize UCP/A Propounded by the Example of Nonviolent Peace-force

The awareness of the need to decolonize UCP/A has evolved since its appearance, recognizing the rooted colonial continuities. Most of the data on the topic addresses the issue by describing and explaining it (see Boothe/Smithey 2007; Coy 2011; Koopman 2013; Wood 2019). First attempts to create approaches to decolonize UCP/A have been made but there is no general agreement on it. NP has recognized the gap in finding solutions to occurring problems and attempted to improve overall strategies in the area. As NP is a comparable large organization practicing UCP/A, their approach is of relevance, in particular because they gathered practitioners from diverse organizations all around the world in their workshops. Additionally, the workshops and their evaluations are marked by their actuality, which underlines the importance of addressing the issue of decolonizing UCP/A again.

Preliminary to these workshops to improve the practice of UCP/A, case studies took place in which the work of more than 20 international and local organizations were reviewed. Therethrough, 77 good practices were identified and described by researchers (see NP 2022) in the cases of South Sudan, Colombia, the Philippines, and Israel/Palestine (see Schweitzer 2022:3).

The approach of NP to enhance the practice of UCP/A can be divided into four steps: Firstly, the results of the case studies were published in 2016. Secondly, the workshops took place from December 2017 to February 2021. The discussions, issues, and findings which came up in the workshops are summarized in six reports. Following, an international UCP/A good practice conference took place online in November 2021. Practitioners,

policymakers, partners, beneficiaries, and academics came together to discuss the case studies and their findings. Further, the validation of good practices and the improvement of existing practices have been discussed (see NP 2022). Finally, the publishing, dissemination, and evaluation of the findings complete the iteration of the global review of good practices in UCP/A. The aim is to disseminate the good practices to the organizations currently practicing UCP/A for their integration into training materials (see *ibid.*).

In the reports summarizing the outcomes of the workshops, several topics are highlighted. The role of racism and the topic of decolonization are differently approached according to the countries where they took place. Certainly, the topic emerged and ideas to approach the topic have been discussed. Before analyzing and summarizing the issues and ideas related to decolonizing UCP/A given in the six reports, it is important to highlight that the schedules and topics which were discussed in the workshops differ. The initiators of the workshops planned the topics of the discussions before they took place, as one of them explained in a conversation during my internship at Bund für Soziale Verteidigung. Further, it was clarified on-demand via mail that a focus on decolonization was planned to be central in a group discussion in North America (Paynesville) but not in South America (Bogotá) and Asia (Beirut and Manila) for example. Despite that, the topics of decolonization and local organizations protecting local people were tackled, even if it was not planned.

In other workshops such as in Africa (Nairobi), the topic was not central to the discussion. In every report, the authors summarized suggestions for the further work of organizations practicing UCP/A. In these suggestions, the decolonization of UCP/A is mentioned several times. The outcomes related to the topic can be summarized as follows, ordered according to the countries in which they took place. This order aims to reveal how dealing with the topic was, mirroring the levels of examination and importance that are differing between the countries. Thereby, it becomes explicit that responsibility and decision-making in UCP/A are mainly around the organizations located in the Global North.

Manila: December 7-9, 2017

The report of the workshop in Manila does not implicate a clear focus on the topic of decolonization and racism. There are only a couple of aspects that have been mentioned in line with this topic, such as the discussion on the role of the international community. The discussants reflected that there is a growing rejection of interference by international organizations and other countries, highlighting Western actors. Further, international nonviolent action against racism, nationalism, and police violence is highlighted as a positive step (see Schweitzer 2018a:18-20). An aspect regarding the organization PBI and their exit plans, in which they try to minimize the risk for their staff by avoiding the inclusion of a high number of national staff, reflects the deeply rooted colonial structures in the sector (see *ibid.*:50).

Beirut: June 18-20, 2018

In Beirut, the primacy of local actors was the most important topic in the context of decolonization, while highlighting the interplay between power and gender. The question of how to resist disempowerment by internationals was asked and answered by choosing international donors who do not require strict frames and projects to fund an organization (see Schweitzer 2018b:18). At this point it could be reflected on if it should be the task of the locals to find an answer to the question, especially when relying on the funding, or rather a question for international actors, how not to disempower locals.

Further, it is described that the discussants got the impression that international actors brought the concept of nonviolence to the Middle East (see *ibid.*:15). Additionally, the distinction between local and international groups is portrayed as an oversimplification, seeing that international organizations can have a local component and that local organizations can depend on international volunteers and funding. The aspect of training has been discussed as well. It is highlighted that living and working with local and

international staff is often part of UCP/A, as well as the occurrence of racism. The White savior complex¹² has been mentioned, which is sometimes unseen and only gets visible when someone new joins the team (see *ibid.*:64-65). Concluding, the mapping of conflicts, actors, and capacity-building as essential to forming a group working in UCP/A have been highlighted as good practices (see *ibid.*:37).

Nairobi: November 14-14, 2018

The discussants in Nairobi disputed the origins of conflict and determined, at least partly, their attribution to colonial structures. These are again exploited by actors at local and international levels. A good practice that has been detected in this context is “the promotion of good stereotypes and the identification of connectors between the groups to diffuse violence in the community” (Schweitzer 2019:32). “Positive stereotypes” are explained by associating a group of people with attributes such as being hospitable. At the same time, “negative stereotypes” should be addressed. At this point, it is questionable if it is possible to distinguish between “positive” and “negative” stereotypes. They are in every case projected on a group of humans and generalizing. With the example of Sub-Saharan Africa, the discussion of early colonialism in conflicts is portrayed as an additional challenge. It is explained that the conflict parties should stay focused on current issues (see *ibid.*:46). The necessity to reflect on colonial continuities and the dealing with colonialism is highlighted by its influence on current situations. A suggestion to ensure the exchange of resources and ideas between national and international staff is to recognize their different strengths (see *ibid.*:58). Underlining the importance of diverse teams to build relationships between communities is highlighted to set a model of peaceful collaboration. Therefore, referring to former staff and building relationships based on connections are identified as good practices (see *ibid.*:62). Further good practices concluded in Nairobi are ongoing actor mapping, the arranging of influential allies, and the inclusion of national staff (see *ibid.*:74).

Paynesville: October 21-23, 2019

The workshop in Paynesville, as indicated in the introduction, was marked by a lot of locally engaged organizations. In this workshop, the need to be aware of racism, colonialism, and privilege was highlighted in nearly every discussion and was stressed to be included in the training of volunteers. The question of how these issues are reflected in the work of the organizations remained unclear. The report reveals that many discussants argued in favor of an approach to use the privilege to be White, and/or a citizen of the US or Canada and its protective value when being deployed by an organization. One group claimed it can be strategic to use different identities such as race, gender, age, and sexual orientation (see Schweitzer 2020a:3-4).

On the opposite, the dilemma of UCP/A came up, meaning the awareness of White privilege and its potential to promote change on the one side, and its reinforcement of existent power structures and stereotypes on the other side (see *ibid.*:18). The discussion was multifaceted and covers the topics of paternalistic attitudes, racism in the UCP/A team, the feeling of guilt due to White supremacy, and the need to overcome White supremacy “even if it would be an advantage” (*ibid.*:25).

At this point, it should be reflected again if it is an advantage to rely on colonial structures, especially when having in mind the costs these take. Further, it is claimed that there is a lack of ideas on how to resolve the issues of colonialism, racism, and privilege. Existing approaches of organizations include insisting on sending teams consisting of volunteers with a variety of backgrounds, others include the awareness of racism in their training and their political work. Another approach is the deployment of volunteers and staff at a point

12 White saviorism describes “characters whose innate sense of justice drives these tales of racial cooperation, nonwhite uplift, and White redemption [that reinforce] normal and natural White paternalism” (Hughey 2014:7).

at which they might have the most influence (see *ibid.*:36). This means to work collectively, to let “people play the role they are best suited for” (*ibid.*:53) according to their race, skills, education, and experience. This approach, again, can reproduce stereotypes and make people feel stuck in the social environment they were born in. This approach is further elaborated in the process of the paper (see chapter 5.3).

Moreover, the primacy of local actors is considered important, highlighting that the societal context in which the discussants live and work is marked by colonialism and male domination. Observing the primacy of local actors is in this context seen as a potential aid to transcend the power differentials. Nevertheless, recognizing the role colonialism plays is declared a major importance (see *ibid.*:18-19). Furthermore, the training of volunteers was the focus of several discussions in Paynesville. For this matter, virtual training, as NP for example has conducted, is promoted to reach more volunteers (see *ibid.*:56). In this regard, the question of whether volunteers should work in the country they live in or go abroad was raised. It was mentioned that volunteers often want to “help others”, mirroring the motives of White saviorism and paternalism. This dilemma is further elaborated in the process of the paper (see chapter 5.2). Additionally, the question was raised why not start with “one’s own problems”. One of the discussants explained:

When I work at the border, I feel very confident in negotiating with state officials because this is my country, and I know the rules and legal structures and how not to overstep. But when you are in other countries, do you feel insecure for not knowing these rules of the game? (*ibid.*:56)

This is labeled as the “fear of the unknown”, which is directly opposed by the fact that locals are more likely to be considered partisan in the conflict which leads to less potential to have a protective ability. It was again repeated that having an international team brings different perspectives and that building a local support group around the UCP/A team is useful (see *ibid.*:56-58). This implies to some extent that the deployment of internationals is relevant, while locals are rather in the role of supporters of the persons solving their problems.

Moreover, the challenges were outlined that in the US help from “outside” is not welcomed, which became apparent when confronting the UCP/A practicing organizations and revealing their focus on a local or international level (see chapter 3.1). The assumption that people from the Global South rely on the “help” of organizations based in the Global North while denying the intervention of organizations or staff not originated in their country should be reflected in the light of colonial continuities and decolonization.

Bogotá: January 13-15, 2020

Most of the organizations working in South America do not use the term UCP/A but “protective accompaniment” to describe their work (see Schweitzer 2020b:14) which contributed to the discourse on the label of UCP/A. The principles of non-interference in internal decision-making processes of local actors, only working on invitation by local actors, and not speaking for local actors in meetings with third parties are some of the good practices which have been defined at the beginning of the paper. Further, the issue of the use of a common language is identified. While, on the one hand, speaking a common language, in this case Spanish, forms a network of solidarity, it can lead, on the other hand, to difficulties in not using indigenous languages and, thus, excluding local people from the dialogue (see *ibid.*:24-26).

Further challenges are the realization that the voices of international actors often are considered to have more value and that there are issues regarding respecting decisions made by local actors. Instruments for leverage, such as being international and being seen as coming from the US or Europe because of being White (see *ibid.*:30-32), contribute to these challenges as well. The occurrence of racism in various countries in South America is described, with emphasis on the state as an actor. For example, it is reported that the behavior of judges changes when international actors are included. Additionally, it is described that it was the case in Colombia that soldiers were instructed to protect White foreigners but not members of the communities. This is also shown in the case of the US-

Mexican border, at which criminal cartels threaten organizations protecting migrants but not those consisting of White North Americans (see *ibid.*:51-52). To ally with groups that work on the same issues and attempt to send mixed teams by international organizations should therefore contribute to more equality.

One organization reported that they have been requested to send only White volunteers, which describes the dilemma in which UCP/A finds itself again (see *ibid.*:44) and shows the dangers of the reinforcement of racism through accompaniment again. An endeavor to counter these structures is to use distinctive symbols such as logos, shirts, or caps to be identifiable, and develop policies and practices to reflect and respond to racism and sexism. Conclusively, the dual need to eliminate racism in both the organizational and the societal side are highlighted (see *ibid.*:45).

Virtual Europe: February 19-21, 2021

The report summarizing the outcomes of the workshop in Europe is divided into projects which took place in Europe, such as the Human Rights Observers in Calais and Grande-Synthe, who support refugees. Another example is a training developed by Bund für Soziale Verteidigung, who adapted NP's community security training for refugees, to sensitizing participants for dangerous situations and developing possible nonviolent actions (see Schweitzer/Dubernet 2021:47-51). Many approaches by UCP/A practitioners based in Europe include training on empowerment for local actors, as well as in some cases with the police. An important observation that has been made is that White privilege and "post-colonial international structures that give internationals a special status and role which allows them to protect local activists are mostly absent in Europe" (*ibid.*:80). The suggestions concluded in the report on Europe are mainly about continuing to reflect on privilege and racism (see *ibid.*:53) and learning from the Global South (see *ibid.*:63).

Virtual World: November 12-14 and 19-21, 2021

Subsequently to the regional workshops, an online conference took place, in which the topic of decolonizing UCP/A has been discussed in a panel, concentrating on possible ways to improve the situation regarding colonial continuities in UCP/A. 186 registered practitioners, experts, and researchers from more than 160 organizations participated in the virtual gathering on UCP/A. There were 15 topics discussed separately that have been identified in the regional workshops (see Schweitzer 2022:3). The meeting on decolonizing UCP/A was based on the following questions:

- a. Are UCP/A strategies dependent on global inequalities? If so, does UCP/A reproduce the very structures that cause structural and physical violence in the first place?
- b. How do colonizing practices and structures intersect with other inequalities?
- c. What can be done to decolonize (and de-paternalize) the practice of UCP/A?

These questions can further be deployed by discussing what is needed to decolonize UCP/A (chapter 5.2). The online session aimed to be the starting point of an ongoing conversation, to give insights, and to raise awareness. It was highlighted that every workshop of the virtual gathering at some point raised the question of power structures, which shows the importance to discuss the topic. The discussion was introduced by the facilitator with the words: "White privilege may be advantageous, but at the same time the power structures create much suffering" (Schweitzer 2022:31) and closed with a reflection on the questions mentioned above.

The first speech was given by Shannon Paige who is working for PD. Paige works on decolonizing humanitarian aid and is one of the authors of the report analyzed in this paper (see chapter 5.1). By underlining that the citizenship and background of a person acting in the area are significant, Paige highlighted that protection is about power. Further, the continuity of inequalities based on colonialism and the fact that the abilities of accompanied communities are often ignored are pointed out.

The second speech was given by Rexall Kaalim, who is working for NP in the Philippines. The main point in his presentation is that accompaniment is not the only work done by UCP/A organizations but there is a range of other functions.

Moses John, who is part of several teams practicing nonviolent methods in South Sudan, emphasized that practitioners usually want to be part of the solution but do not want to see themselves as part of the problem. Therefore, the reflection of the work is of utmost importance to make sure to be on the right path. John further explained how sharing the story of a conflict-shaped region to enable another conflict-affected community to learn from the proceedings can be useful. Protection should not be the goal of UCP/A but sharing knowledge to allow protecting oneself. Thereby, working with, instead of working for, local communities is important, as well as respecting that the local community is the driving force. Further, acknowledging that practitioners should learn because they are usually strangers in the area of deployment was stressed. John underlined that communication is key and should be increased with all actors, including organizations, communities, and governments, to make the goals understandable. Lastly, working with the youth was pointed out, as they are going to work in the areas in the future.

The fourth speech was given by Tejan Lamboi, who is working for Bund für Soziale Verteidigung. Citing Nigerian writer Ngozi Chimamanda Adichie, Lamboi stressed that power is not only the ability to tell the story of another person but to make this story a definitive one. Lamboi explained that the feeling of wanting to help someone implies that the person or the community needs help. This again justifies colonialism and its continuity and reinforces unequal power structures between the “helpers” and the “helped”.

Therefore, Lamboi expounded one should start by decolonizing oneself and recognizing one’s social position in the global environment of unequal power structures. Emphasizing this, especially White people should be aware of their privileges and that these privileges imply the need to act. Lamboi talked about the concept of power-sharing which means primarily listening to people and not speaking for others. Understanding and allowing people to have their own spaces one does not have to gain access to is another aspect mentioned, as well as having the willingness to give up power.

The last speech was given by Alison Wood, who is currently working at the US-Mexican border with Presbyterian Peace Fellowship.¹³ Wood made clear her privileges at the beginning of the speech to ensure to acknowledge her identity is rooted in coloniality. The decolonizing practice is, according to Wood, to take a step back and to speak less as a White person. The problem of the dependence of the Global South on the Global North, in terms of institutional and military power, is one of the main problems. Further, it is highlighted that the foundation of ideologies should be questioned and to think about harm-reducing strategies to work against colonial tendencies. The power of language was mentioned as well, and that it is everyone’s own responsibility to educate oneself instead of educating others. Lastly, Wood mentioned the necessary of internal work in organizations on colonialization.

The final discussion on the questions asked in the beginning revealed that the goal to “make peace” is connotated to privilege. Besides, the discussion was about money as a source of power and how it is provided as funding for peacebuilding. It implies paternalism that funding is mostly linked to rules defining how to use it. Instead, the power of funding should be rather shared between donors and local communities. To start to decolonize UCP/A personally and afterward organizationally was highlighted in the end. The conversation is aimed to continue at the in-person conference that is planned to take place in 2023.

The findings of the workshops and the virtual gathering are classified in the following chapter to expose the parallels to humanitarian aid. Revealing these parallels, the approach to decolonize humanitarian aid can be transferred to the approach to decolonizing UCP/A.

13 see <https://www.presbypeacefellowship.org/>

4. Conflating UCP/A, Humanitarian Aid, and Decoloniality

The research in the sectors of humanitarian aid and UCP/A, especially regarding the necessity of decolonization, was highly influenced and reinforced by the Black Lives Matter movement which started in the summer of 2020. This global movement forced people working in sectors such as humanitarian aid to confront that their work is coined by structural racism (see PD 2021:4). The movement has taken up the debate on postcolonialism and structural racism (see Lucht 2021:3), something that has been barely debated or acknowledged in the past. Therefore, the decolonization of humanitarian aid, development, and peacebuilding, “to address and dismantle racist and discriminatory structures and norms that are hidden in plain sight in the aid system” (PD 2021:4) is urgent. The need to transform the system to shift resources and power to local actors is underlined, wherefore structural racism must be addressed by involved people (see *ibid.*). Seeing the necessity to act, PD revealed how structural racism emerges in the sector of humanitarian aid and peacebuilding to start working on its roots to make a change (see figure 1, page 29). These occurrences of structural racism can be found in UCP/A as well, as revealed in the previous chapter. Therefore, a closer look at the categories and the manifestations of structural racism in humanitarian aid supports the access to approach these in UCP/A. The chart shows the reflections of attitudes of international actors in different categories. These categories will serve as the basis for revealing the parallels between humanitarian aid and UCP/A, as, thereby, the needs for the decolonization can be revealed.



4.1 Parallels between Humanitarian Aid and UCP/A

“The roots of humanitarian aid and also of peacebuilding can be found in colonialism as it mirrors colonial powers’ relief efforts by acting without addressing underlying political causes” (PD 2020:20). Therefore, decolonization plays an important role in humanitarian aid as well as in UCP/A, which is closely linked to peacebuilding. The approaches can, thus, be compared to a certain degree. As the research on humanitarian aid is more progressed because of its protracted conducting, lessons learned in this area could be transferred to UCP/A. On that account, it is of advantage to reveal parallels between UCP/A and humanitarian aid first to compare them afterward. Consequently, an overview of relevant features of humanitarian aid is of significance to further investigate the interaction of the two concepts.

According to the European Commission (2022), humanitarian aid is “needs-based humanitarian assistance to the people hit by [...] disasters with particular attention to the most vulnerable victims. Aid is channeled impartially to the affected populations, regardless of their race, ethnic group, religion, gender, age, nationality or political affiliation” (ibid.).

One of the main actors in humanitarian aid is the UN. As stated in its Charter, it has the purpose to solve economic, cultural, social, and humanitarian problems to achieve international cooperation. In this regard, it has several entities with responsibility for delivering humanitarian aid, such as the World Health Organization, which coordinates responses to humanitarian health emergencies, and the UN Development Program, which acts in delivering relief assistance. Major topics in the sector are coordinating at the national level, helping refugees, helping children, feeding the hungry, and healing the sick (see UN 2022). The yearly published Global Humanitarian Overview by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in which global trends, challenges, and plans in the area of humanitarian aid are revealed, stated that the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance is increasing significantly (see OCHA 2021:9), whereby the calculations do not include the recent conflict between Russia and Ukraine. Seeing that accordingly more and more humans need support, it does not have to be forgotten to also pay attention to the equality of each person.

Not only the UN is delivering humanitarian aid but also a range of NGOs and other organizations. Médecins Sans Frontières¹⁴ is one of the most known organizations in the sector, wherefore a short overview of their focus issues is of interest in terms of what humanitarian aid can encompass. At this point, the controversy on accusations of reproducing colonial images is of importance, which is addressed in the following chapter (chapter 4.2). In general, the organization describes itself as a medical relief organization acting worldwide to treat diseases. The German branch, Ärzte ohne Grenzen (2022), focuses on fields such as COVID-19, a sea rescue operation, women’s health, and refugees in the Sahel region. The branch of the US, Doctors Without Borders (2022), has its focus on areas such as COVID-19, the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo, global migration and refugees, the earthquake in Haiti, and search and rescue in the Mediterranean. The organization and its branches work primarily international, regardless of its location, which shows the parallels to international acting UCP/A organizations.

In the virtual gathering of practitioners held by NP, the intersection of UCP/A and humanitarian aid was discussed as well. In this discussion, the speakers agreed on the need to further explore the interconnections between these sectors. It is stressed that UCP/A practicing organizations mostly would not deliver humanitarian aid but connect people to suitable aid agencies. Further, these organizations are engaged in alerting potential conflicts to aid agencies and sometimes maintain presence during the distribution of aid (see Schweitzer 2022:6). Humanitarian aid and UCP/A, thus, must be observed separately but can also interact and support each other’s work. Realizing that both can be conducted

14 see <https://www.msf.org/>

in the same sector and display similarities, especially in the need for decolonization, several parallels can be drawn.

Several practitioners and researchers contributed to the discussion connecting humanitarian aid and UCP/A. Martha Hernandez, who is working for NP, explains that the component of community engagement that can be found in UCP/A is crucial to bring into the humanitarian community. Facilitating the dialogue between persons and aid organizations, maintaining presence when aid is distributed, and negotiating humanitarian spaces are further aspects UCP/A can provide connected to humanitarian aid.

Alberto Capannini shared insight into the work of OC with refugees in Lebanon. Through opening humanitarian corridors by linking people to aid structures and organizations, UCP/A is connected to humanitarian aid. In the following discussion, it is noted that the interconnectedness is increasing and that this needs to be further explored. It is underscored that UCP/A can help to reorient humanitarian work, especially in developing and understanding local situations, seeing that it is built on local capacities (see Schweitzer 2022:56-58).

Nevertheless, parallels between UCP/A and humanitarian aid can be found in a range of areas, especially in the context of decolonization. Both approaches are nonviolent and aim at supporting people in need, either based on conflict or medical needs. The actors in both sectors can be governmental as well as nongovernmental organizations. In humanitarian aid, the UN plays a major role in being an actor in a variety of fields all over the world. While UCP/A focuses on the physical protection of civilians and conflict resolution, humanitarian aid rather coordinates responses to humanitarian health emergencies. Both approaches aim to improve the situation of civilians with different focuses, but spheres such as engaging with refugees can be found in both approaches. UCP/A concentrates rather on peacebuilding and peaceful change in societies; humanitarian aid focuses on health and medical supply. Both aim to create security. What is significant are the parallels that can be found in the area of colonial continuities and the call for the need for decolonization.

As already stated in the introduction of the chapter, the approach of decolonization in humanitarian aid is linked to the occurrence of structural racism in the sector. Hence, and as the analysis of colonial continuities in UCP/A revealed that there are similar categories to collate the occurrences, the parallels are shown by reference to the categories in structural racism elaborated by PD (see figure 1, page 29).

As stated before, peacebuilding, and in this case especially UCP/A, and humanitarian aid mirror colonial powers. The international community, related *relationships*, and *funding* play significant roles in both approaches, as they uphold the global hierarchies privileging actors from the Global North. Hence, *fundraising* is still coined by portraying people of the Global South as being vulnerable and dependent on foreign aid. The reliance on human rights shaped by and for actors in the Global North is an additional difficulty. In the sectors of humanitarian aid and UCP/A it is asked to acknowledge local solutions for local problems and to question the power of the donors and their intentions of giving funds. The *partnership with local actors* in UCP/A framed as the primacy of local actors plays an essential role in both sectors. It is underlined that especially those actors engaged in a conflict can ultimately solve it. Even if it is known that allocations of powerful positions in organizations should be held by people within the context, meaning people with local knowledge, the power often is with the funding actors. In recent years, the localization of humanitarian aid and peacebuilding has been pushed. The Grand Bargain agreement¹⁵, the major outcome of the World Humanitarian Summit 2016¹⁶, set out obligations by international humanitarian actors to provide more funding and support to organizations acting locally and nationally. Thereby, inherent benefits of responding capabilities to crises should be recognized (see PD 2020:15). Due to this agreement and centering local actors in

15 see <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/grand-bargain>

16 see <https://agendaforhumanity.org/summit.html>

peacebuilding, locally led approaches gained more and more relevance while addressing unequal power dynamics (see *ibid.*:8).

At the same time, the Annual Independent Report for the Grand Bargain 2020¹⁷ acknowledged that fundamental shifts in practice have mostly failed to emerge (see *ibid.*:15). *Strategies* to overcome these issues are, even if arranged, not implemented because of the hierarchies of goals established in the organizations. The necessity to overcome racist structures and the influence of isms is seen but not implemented yet. The problem of sending White staff and volunteers from the Global North to the Global South, reproducing dynamics of racism, can be found in the sector of UCP/A and humanitarian aid. Both share that their work represents a source of power, marked to a high extent by the privilege of being White and/or having passports from countries in the Global North.

While Whiteness is actively used by UCP/A practitioners, in humanitarian aid pictures of White doctors healing Black, Brown, or Indigenous children are seen often. This leads to the upholding of stereotypes and the reproduction of racism. Further, humanitarian aid and UCP/A can both be seen as paternalistic acts while assuming to know best what people need. Therefore, addressing colonialism in *organizational structures* is of interest in both sectors. The discourse reveals that the necessity of decolonization is significant. The questions remain how to do so but approaches in both areas implicate major changes. Changes in the structure of the organizations as well as in their positionality and self-reflexivity, while especially raising questions about power and power dynamics, are targeted.

The *recruitment* of staff and volunteers is another aspect to focus on when working towards decolonization in both sectors. Here, diversity in teams is highlighted. Having team members with different backgrounds and changing current standards is seen as a step forward to making changes.

Furthermore, a focus on *language* plays a major role in UCP/A and humanitarian aid. The use of vocabulary including vocabulary such as “aid” and “protection” can be harmful and reproduces power dynamics. As these words are directly included in the label of both sectors, this parallel should be considered as part of the decolonization processes.

Knowledge generation and analysis are further areas to work on to change the systems of UCP/A and humanitarian aid. Here, questions regarding who holds the knowledge used and from whom is learned remain. Knowledge-sharing and learning are still shaped by actors and headquarters¹⁸ from the Global North, including their monitoring, analysis, and evaluation methods. It is essential to support localization and fight structural inequalities. To reflect and start with oneself is an approach that can be found in both sectors as well. Recognizing that paternalism should be avoided, to reflect one’s socialization, and starting to listen more to others rather than tell them what to do are aimed to reach in both sectors. Lastly, UCP/A as well as humanitarian aid struggle with White savior images and organizations and funding led by headquarters in the Global North. Therefore, it can be said that in the discourse on decolonization, humanitarian aid and UCP/A exhibit a range of parallels. The challenges to face are similar, and so are the approaches to these. A case study on the approaches of humanitarian aid to decolonize the sector can therefore be helpful to create a path for UCP/A.

17 see <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/grand-bargain-official-website/grand-bargain-annual-independent-report-2020>

18 The term “headquarter” must be reflected on as well. Putting oneself at the helm “the headquarters” and the other on the “field offices” implies a hierarchy and thus colonialism. Most of the headquarters of these organizations are found in the Global North and mostly headed and directed by White persons. Even those with non-White directors, the structures ensure that these directors are mostly surrounded by White persons. This again can be seen as tokenism.

4.2 Delineating the Discourse on Decolonizing Humanitarian Aid

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, decolonizing humanitarian aid is a major topic in the overall discourse on humanitarian aid and peacekeeping. Especially with the emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020, the topic gained influence, wherefore numerous research papers were published. Furthermore, conferences offering a platform to practitioners, experts, and researchers were held, as expounded in the following chapter. These include a variety of approaches on how to decolonize humanitarian aid.

Discussing decolonizing global health, which is deeply connected to humanitarian aid, Khan et al. (2021) established ways in which practicing organizations can perpetuate systemic changes needed. These include a range of proposals introduced in the previous chapter (chapter 4.1), such as the demand for an allocation of powerful positions of organizations to be held by people with the relevant regional expertise and experience. Additionally, the necessity of having diversity, the decentralization of resource allocation and program design, and the acknowledgment of local solutions for local problems are mentioned (see *ibid.*:2). Concluding, Khan et al. (2021) highlight the importance of “a shift away from a dominant, colonialist culture in the global health sector that attempts to assimilate other cultures within a Western, ethno-centrist and neoliberal approach to global health practice” (*ibid.*:3).

Abimbola and Madhukar (2020) underline the problematics of supremacy, which manifest in valuing the powerful more than the ones with less power. This can be found in the example of the headquarters of international organizations as being more valued than regional offices. The goal of decolonizing the sector would therefore be to create allyships and to shift the leadership to local people (see *ibid.*:1627). They question if an international manifestation of aid can survive its decolonization. They conclude that the goal should rather be to live up to the demands of its mission than holding up its framework. Thereby, the possibility to change the label should be considered (see *ibid.*:1628). According to Hirsch (2021), decolonization has to be shaped by “brutal honesty” (*ibid.*:190). Therefore, appropriate conversations and vocabulary are needed.

Curion (2020) explains that the “anti-racism conversation makes a lot of people uncomfortable. The decolonization conversation might make them leave the room. But maybe that’s the point” (*ibid.*). Further, Degan Ali, director of the Somali-Kenyan NGO Adeso,¹⁹ has been a spokesperson in several debates on decolonizing humanitarian aid. In a forum concerning the question on needed changes to overcome racism and colonialism in the aid system, especially in the case of international NGOs, Ali took up the following position:

I would completely transform the board of your institutions and have people from the Global South [...] be the majority [...]. I would no longer have offices for “implementation”, I would have offices for partnership. I would remove all expats from the Global South and try to transition all these decisions to people of color from those countries. I would no longer be implementing programs directly [...]. I’m not gonna have this massive footprint on the ground, I would just be giving money and giving assistance technically only when asked for by my local partner [...]. I would not be assuming that I’m needed, I would just be there really primarily as a conduct, as a transfer of money from my wealthy country and I would see it as a form of reparations and I would not see it as “me helping you”, but [...] trying to create a system that’s more just. (Results UK 2020)

Other important insights to the debate on decolonizing humanitarian aid were gathered during participant observations in two online gatherings: the 7th Humanitarian Symposium Munich in February 2022 and the 3rd meeting of the Anti-Racism Forum of the Centre for Humanitarian Action in March 2022. The fact that both gatherings were held during a short

19 see <https://adesoafrica.org/>

period and only some months after the NP conference on decolonizing UCP/A in November 2021 indicates again the importance of decolonization in the humanitarian and peacekeeping sector.

Humanitarian Symposium Munich: February 19, 2022

The title of the symposium was “Decolonizing Humanitarian Aid and Development Cooperation”. As well as the discussion on UCP/A in the virtual gathering by NP, the symposium was structured by three questions:

- a. Where in your personal or professional life do you see nuances or sights of colonial inequality or power dissimilarities?
- b. Who needs to decolonize?
- c. How is the endeavor of decolonization realistic?

These questions should inspire the participants to reflect on the status and process of coloniality and decoloniality in their environment. The questions are suitable to induce an intense debate on the overall topic and introduced the participants to the immersion on the issue of decolonizing humanitarian aid. Overall, seven people gave their input in the symposium which are named individually to reveal the versatility of the discussion. The first speaker was Maria Eriksson Baaz from Uppsala University. Eriksson Baaz reflected on historical and contemporary challenges of Whiteness and humanitarian work. Underlining the Whiteness of decision-makers and experts in the sector, the positive developments in the past 20 to 30 years were described: periodic declines of White savior images, slightly more diversity at headquarters levels, changes in the language such as talking about partners rather than donors, and the switch from White experts and development workers to more nationally recruited staff. Nevertheless, major problems remain, and the continuance of White saviors and iconic images of helpless Black, Brown, and Indigenous children is going on. Eriksson Baaz states that these images are factually wrong, that most work is conducted by local staff, and that they promote a simplistic illustration of the world. This upholds power inequalities, an unequal division of labor, and reproduces stereotypes. Problems, why these images are still being reproduced, are among others the stubborn workings of history and the connection to an increasing marketization of development actors, meaning that NGOs and state actors becoming more similar to the private sector.

Tankred Stoebe, who works for Médecins Sans Frontières, spoke about the crisis in Afghanistan in 2022 and impacts of colonial structures. Introducing the crisis with an overview of invasions in Afghanistan starting in 1839, Stoebe highlighted the happenings in the summer of 2021 and the work of Médecins Sans Frontières. Still seeing reproductions of coloniality, for example, covers on publications showing White doctors helping Black children, the necessity to act is underlined.

Knowledge and coloniality in humanitarianism were the topic of Tammam Aloudat, working for Geneva Graduate Institute.²⁰ The first point made was that having Black, Brown, or Indigenous people hired is not a solution to structural racism. Aloudat depicts care as a paternalistic act itself, and so the health and aid system exhibit related structures. The illusion of solidarity by assuming to know better what people need must be kept in mind. Also, the fact that we all are socialized by racist structures is highlighted.

Malte Bräutigam from Freundeskreis Indianerhilfe e.V.²¹ reported about experiences and reflections of decolonizing a non-profit aid association. Talking about the organization Bräutigam is working for, the focus of the speech was on a letter they received concerning the organizations’ website. It includes accusations of discrimination and the imbalance in power regarding the name, White gaze,²² White saviorism, a lack of representation, only

20 see <https://www.graduateinstitute.ch/>

21 see <https://www.indianerhilfe.de/>

22 White gaze means “the lack of trust in non-Western, non-White practitioners’ abilities [and describes] the process by which people and societies are viewed through the lens of White

using the German language, and replicating photos and videos. The approach to handling the accusations was discussed at the time of the symposium within the organization. The fifth speech was about the power of localization and the role of INGO by Adeel Rahmat from Pak Mission Society.²³ Pointing out recommendations for donors, INGOs, and policymakers, acknowledging that structural racism exists and that there is a collective responsibility to tackle the problem is essential. To move from charity to enterprise development, from controlled development to indigenously led movements should be the goal. Therefore, creating space for change, especially for those with marginalized identities, and expecting and encouraging those groups to question the current system and power relations that underpin it, can contribute to changes in the system. To promote localization, acknowledging and investing in indigenous knowledge are further steps to take. Rahmat asks to reevaluate partnerships with local organizations to reach more equitability, accountability, and support for local leadership and sustainability. Concluding that the learning curve may take some time, institutional and operational support should be intentional to support the localization.

Hodan Ali from Durable Solution Unit²⁴ spoke about contextual White supremacy in the humanitarian aid industry and lessons learned from Somalia. The main question in this speech was about who makes the decisions for people on the ground. Ali mentions the problem that 60 percent of the money donated for Somalia never leaves the UN system, implicating the inability of local organizations on making decisions on funding.

Lastly, Jona Jäger, working for Kubekom,²⁵ spoke about the major impacts of structural inequalities, individual biographies, group dynamics, and cultural differences when working in an intercultural environment such as the sector of humanitarian aid.

At the end of the symposium, the participants were asked to reflect on the questions that arose in the beginning again to keep these in mind and continue to think about them regularly.

Anti-Racism Forum: March 3, 2022

The title of the meeting was "About the complicity of NGOs" with a focus on Rainer Lucht's text "Humanitarian Aid, development cooperation and aid organizations – their role, impact and influence in the context of colonialism and neocolonialism". At the beginning of the meeting, the organizing entities asked not to share concrete information beyond the forum, to be able to communicate in a safe space. Therefore, primarily my thoughts regarding the discussed topics are shared. The introduction to the topic was coined by the assumption that it is not likely that the whole system will change from one day to another but that organizations can act and must act to change something. The current localization agenda can thereby be criticized for being an assignment of integration within a system that is already given, which is not the main point of localization. Further, the COVID-19 pandemic caused new forms of neocolonialism. Global power dynamics, constructed identities, and the assumptions that humanitarian aid aims at making up for colonial times are further aspects that are important to the overall discussion.

When focusing on problems at a personal and a professional level, taking a position and reflecting on one's actions is of major importance. As elaborated before, starting with oneself instead of teaching others how to act, is an essential step towards unlearning paternalistic behavior. The questioning of the use of power and existing power dynamics, as well as discussing them openly and reflecting on them, should be part of a decolonizing practice. To deal with these issues openly enables dialogues. This includes the awareness of structural racism, the examination of the funding system, and the loss of privileges. To give other people the chance to act, it should be considered to accept to resign from

ethnocentrism, which assumes that Whiteness is the only referent of progress" (PD 2021:16).

23 see <https://pakmissionsociety.org/>

24 see <https://dsu.so/>

25 see <https://www.kubekom.com/>

situations to enable more equitable chances for everyone. Thus, the use of language and harming vocabulary must be reflected. When focusing on the power systems, aid organizations operate in a rivalry on funding rules. The necessity to promote change in the sector must be taken seriously to reach the process of decolonization in the sector. Getting away from agendas set by donors is one of the greatest challenges. Furthermore, organizational structures, especially staff and donors who often are White, must be criticized. Also, high staff fluctuation leads to the evasion of ongoing policy discussions on the topic of decolonization. In this regard, equitable partnerships with local research findings should be aimed, to look beyond one's comfort zone and start accepting not knowing everything. To initiate decolonization with oneself is a recurring motive. Reflecting one's socialization and beginning to listen more could be starting points in this case.

Concluding, approaches to decolonizing humanitarian aid are well-elaborated to this point. Steps to be taken have been summarized but still need to be implemented. The first achievements are stated in the Global Humanitarian Overview 2022²⁶ by OCHA (2021). Local communities and leaders gain more recognition as key responders in crises and long-term support providers by international actors (see OCHA 2021:21). Even if the overall goal is not reached yet, first steps have been made.

26 see <https://gho.unocha.org/>

5. Case Study: Decolonizing UCP/A

Having discussed the structures of humanitarian aid and UCP/A and conceptual approaches to decolonize humanitarian aid, the following chapter aims to outline PD's approach (chapter 5.1). Further, the needs assessment of UCP/A reveals the requirements for its decolonization (chapter 5.2), followed by the implementation of PD's approach to the case (chapter 5.3). The prior findings on colonial continuities in humanitarian aid and UCP/A, and the needs assessment are, therefore, the base to organize approaches on how to decolonize UCP/A.

5.1 Outlining Peace Direct's Approach to Decolonize Aid

PD and Adeso convened an online consultation for three days to discuss structural racism and how to decolonize aid in November 2020. More than 150 people from the humanitarian aid, development, and peacebuilding sectors took part in the consultation (see PD 2021:4). This consultation was initiated because of the attitudes and practices recognized in the aid sector, which are coined by colonialism. A range of dynamics and concepts are essential to understanding the context, such as structural racism and the White saviorism ideology. These and other terminologies are defined in PD's report before outlining the colonial roots and legacy of aid and peacebuilding.

The question of what a manifesto for decolonizing aid would look like is divided into three categories: funding and program development, the attitude of practitioners, and monitoring, evaluation, and reporting. The following recommendations summarize and precise the approach to decolonize humanitarian aid and, hence, are the basis to conclude for lessons learned to adapt these on decolonizing UCP/A.

In general, the approach of PD and NP's approach to evaluating UCP/A can be compared. Both gathered practitioners, experts, and researchers in the sector to get firsthand information which they summarized and analyzed in reports afterward. Both recognize that "aid flows between former colonial powers and former colonized regions often mirror their past colonial relationships, with decision-making power concentrated in the Global North" (ibid.).

The recommendations of PD are categorized into recommendations for donors, INGOs, policymakers, and individuals. They are outlined in detail to subsequently implement them in UCP/A. A comprehensive aspect discussed in the report, which has to be highlighted before having a closer look at the recommendations, is language. It is remarked that some of the language used in the sector of humanitarian aid reinforces racist and discriminatory perceptions. Examples are "capacity building", suggesting that there is a lack of skills in local communities and organizations, and "field expert", perpetuating images of an "uncivilized" Global South (see ibid.:4).

Moreover, the self-perception of practitioners in the Global North as acting neutrally reinforces the mentalities of White saviorism and White gaze rooted in colonialism. Additionally, the problems emerging in the concepts of funding and the employment of staff, so donors from the Global North still having the authority of donations and staff being perceived differently depending on their origin, must be confronted. Further, the chapter on structural racism in the modern-day aid system raises the question of whether the INGOs engaging with local groups are aware of the country's history and that their presence can trigger. Additionally, asymmetrical power dynamics shape the interactions to a high degree, underlining the aspect of language. As English is the dominating language, practitioners are expected to be aware of the sector-specific jargon.

Another aspect of importance is the difference in the valuation of expertise. Expertise in technical issues is often more requested than expertise in context, which gives international staff an advantage over national staff. The assumption that the context of a conflict can be learned by international staff, but the theory of technical issues cannot be learned

by national staff is questionable as it implies a hierarchy in learning. Even the theories of change are mainly developed by practitioners and academics from the Global North and have a major influence on the structure of projects (see *ibid.*:24-27). Moreover, many country offices of NGOs are subordinate to global headquartered organizations based in the Global North. As a result, the organization under which the country office acts retain the governance and strategy of acting. Hence, changes in funding and strategies of the INGO can rapidly lead to decisive changes in country offices. “

At its worst, the INGO country office operates like a neo-colonialist outpost, staffed by White Western expatriates, dominating the funding for development, humanitarian and peacebuilding work while implementing programs with little local input, thereby competing with – and displacing – local organizations” (*ibid.*).

In social media, there have been attempts to raise awareness of developments in the sector of humanitarian aid, for example, #AidToo and #shiftthepower. These movements aim to display problems in the sector dealing with sexual abuse, global accountability, and power imbalances. With the appeals to move away from issues such as donor accountability, the movements were meant to introduce changes in the international aid system and to start a dialogue (see *ibid.*:31).

Lastly highlighted, program and research designs are often rooted in Western knowledge systems and values, creating a standard based on the West and thus devaluing local knowledge (see *ibid.*:5). As already stated at the beginning of the subchapter, PD divided its recommendations into three parties. Hence, the recommendations are summarized and analyzed according to the scheme. To properly apply the recommendations to UCP/A, they are fully quoted and connected to the arguments made by the participants of the Humanitarian Symposium Munich and the Anti-Racism Forum to assemble the lines of reasoning (see chapter 4.2).

PD's Recommendations for donors, INGOs, and policymakers

These recommendations encompass primarily the areas of the acknowledgment of structural racism and related issues, the encouragement of topic-related conversations, language, funding, and staff.

“Acknowledge that structural racism exists” (*ibid.*:38) and recognize the collective responsibility to confront the problem. It is highlighted that this acknowledgment does not imply personal guilt but asks for engagement. A concrete action recommended is publishing a public statement on the organization’s website admitting its position within the aid system, biases that could have shaped past actions, its power, and the power dynamics that privilege people over others (see *ibid.*). This argument also has been highlighted by Adeel Rahmat.

“Encourage conversations with grantees and communities about power” (*ibid.*:38). These power dynamics influence the relationships between local partners and INGO or grantee and funder. The need to permit occasions for a critique of the power and practices of organizations is emphasized. Anonymous surveys evaluating the perceptions of the organization, staff, and interactions could build the basis of dialogue (see *ibid.*:38). This underlines the argumentation of Hodan Ali.

“Create space for change” (*ibid.*:38). Here, the space for people with marginalized identities and the requirement to support them to question current power relations and the substantiated system are stressed. Further, to accept that the conversations about power can be uncomfortable is highlighted (see *ibid.*). To acknowledge individual biographies and cultural differences in this line was proposed by Jona Jäger.

“Mind your language” (*ibid.*:38). To shift a framework to inclusive approaches led by local communities with the possibility of the organizations reevaluating their usage should be accomplished. Outdated language should be replaced by terms described in a new way (see *ibid.*).

“Encourage a culture of openness to critique” (ibid.:39). This culture is targeted at internal organizational structures and influenced by the awareness of factors that can affect one’s readiness to critique, such as gender and age. Creating safe spaces and acknowledging failings to promote self-reflection and honesty are aims rooted in this recommendation (see ibid.) and can be reflected by the case Malte Bräutigam described.

“Fund courageously” (ibid.:39). The accessibility and inclusivity of funds and the acceptance of possible failure are underlined in this recommendation. These would facilitate flexible and innovative funding approaches to make a change. Generously trusting partners is significant in this recommendation (see ibid.).

“Recruit differently” (ibid.:39). The reassessment of the recruiting of expatriate staff for positions overseas and the commitment to more diversity in departments in the Global North is quoted. The assumption that all positions can be held by local staff is central to reach an equal treatment of actors (see ibid.), as pointed out by Degan Ali.

“Invest in indigenous knowledge and local researchers” (ibid.:39). Rather than funding the travels of researchers from the Global North, investing in local researchers should be considered. The design of programs should be rooted in local approaches and designed with local leaders. The evaluation should take place through culturally specific frameworks, and the results should serve the needs of the local community above those of the organization (see ibid.). These arguments reoccur in the discussion in the Anti-Racism Forum.

PD’s Recommendations for INGOs specifically

INGOs are highlighted because of the key role they play in decolonizing humanitarian aid. As they are often the main actors in bringing together donors, policymakers, local communities, and organizations, it is of interest to utter specific recommendations. These focus on organizational structures, partnerships, fundraising, and language.

“No more White gaze fundraising” (ibid.:40). Fundraising and communication should be examined through a lens marked by diversity, equity, and inclusion (see ibid.:5). Also, collaborative approaches to support efforts in the Global South should be considered (see ibid.:40).

“Adopt a transition mindset for organizational strategies” (ibid.:40), which marks steps toward transferring resources and power to local organizations. This mindset should be determined in the organization’s strategies to reduce its traditional footprint. The direct implementation of INGOs should be reserved for exceptional situations at the request of local organizations (see ibid.). These motives can also be found in the argumentation of Eriksson Baaz.

“Avoid localization spin” (ibid.:40). The term “localization” should not be used to preserve or justify certain positions within an organization but rather to introduce change. The acceptance of being an INGO, even if many staff are locally employed, and the awareness of power that it holds are required to be transparent (see ibid.).

“Re-evaluate partnerships with local organizations” (ibid.:40). Supporting sustainability, local leadership, and the equitability and accountability of local organizations are targeted in this recommendation. Therefore, long-term partnerships should be established, focusing on principles such as the challenge of power imbalances, the support of local leadership, the consideration of non-financial resources, and the insurance that partnerships are collaborative (see ibid.). Degan Ali emphasized this as well.

PD’s Recommendations for individuals

The recommendations for individuals include aspects such as the reflection on one’s role, the shifting of power, and the collaboration with like-minded groups. These are especially important when seeing that decolonization starts with oneself. The arguments from the Anti-Racism Forum coincide in many aspects with these recommendations.

“Reflect on your identity” (ibid.:41), including to reflect on privileges and motivations for working in the area. Questioning the privileges afforded by one’s identity and the reinforcement of White gaze in the sector are recommended (see ibid.).

“Remain humble” (ibid.:41), open to feedback and criticism, and reflect on those. Acknowledging that local approaches are the basis for disassembling established hierarchies is further highlighted (see ibid.).

“Shift access and power” (ibid.:41). To redirect opportunities towards marginalized practitioners, encourage conversations about discrimination, and step back to occupy space for local practitioners are recommended (see ibid.).

“Organize” (ibid.:41) and connect to groups supporting the agenda of decolonization. There are already existing groupings and networks willing to raise the topic at national and international level. It is highlighted that collaboration can make a change (see ibid.).

PD did not come up with these recommendations all by themselves, as they point out in the report. The recommendations have been told various times. The aim of the report is to bring them up again to enable affected persons and groups to “shift power in ways that create more equitable partnerships, leading to better humanitarian, development and peacebuilding outcomes for all” (ibid.:8). The approach to localizing the work in the humanitarian aid sector has been disappointing for many local actors so far. The World Humanitarian Summit and the Grand Bargain (see chapter 4.1) marked the beginning of these attempts. Even if local groups are funded more and transitions out of overseas offices took place, the risk that the localization is only reframed as hiring more local staff is given. These attempts do not address the structural problems and must be approached when talking about power (see ibid.:26). Concluding, PD points out that the participants of the consultation want to be meaningfully included in decision-making in the aid system. Past attempts to balance the unequal power dynamics only had limited success, which is partly explained by the failure to address the colonial legacy and ongoing racism in the system. Decolonizing the aid system is exposed as a necessity to ensure sustainable projects in humanitarian aid, development cooperation, and peacebuilding. It is to be acknowledged that the decolonization of norms, systems, and institutions that developed over decades will take time. For this purpose, efforts and collaborations of local civil societies, international organizations, and governments are required (see ibid.:37).

5.2 Needs Assessment of Decolonizing UCP/A

Defining what UCP/A “needs” to be decolonized is a major step to figuring out what can be done to fulfill the aim. Needs assessments in literature are often connected to organizational success (Popcorn 1991; Kaufman 1998), which can be transferred to some extent to the concept of UCP/A, or more specifically the organizations practicing it. Focusing on the needs of an organization or an area enables the development of more precise solutions to improve the methods and strategies to reach them. According to Watkins et al. (1998:40), a needs assessment should identify and prioritize needs.

As already summarized in the previous chapters (see chapter 3.3), there have been different approaches to finding solutions to the challenges UCP/A faces. These exhibit several starting points for the process which require to be specified. The needs formulated in the NP workshops are categorized (chapter 4.2) to further get an overview and elaborate on them (see figure 1, page 29). The categories are partly adapted to UCP/A. To concretize the needs, each category and its challenges are described and summarized by one or more questions. These are answered in the implementation of PD’s approach to UCP/A (chapter 5.3). In general, as Sonn and Stevens (2021) formulated, UCP/A demands a “fundamental reorientation for those who have been born into and/or educated into white, economic, and/or social privilege. The focus on power/privilege and the position of an outsider requires critical reflection on one’s positionality and its effects” (ibid.:14-15).

As indicated in the methodology (chapter 2), the identification of needs serves as the base for the implementation of the findings on the decolonization of UCP/A. The subsequent needs assessment follows an inter-sectoral approach that “allows for a more holistic understanding of the inter-relationships between needs, their root causes and underlying vulnerabilities and allows for a more targeted response” (OCHA 2022). As the needs assessment of UCP/A is not an analysis to improve a single organization’s impact but rather to reveal the need to make changes in an area of practices, the method of the evaluation is adapted to its demands. The joint assessment of IASC aims to have a single report as an outcome while bringing together data collection, processing, and analysis from different actors in the sector (see *ibid.*). For the case study on UCP/A, these needs are collected through the previous evaluation of literature, workshops, and other sources. In a further step, they are specified and coordinated to implement PD’s approach on decolonizing UCP/A. The main ideas of the needs assessment approach of IASC are adapted and used to conduct a process for collecting and analyzing information to advise strategic response planning (see IASC 2015). According to IASC, to identify relationships, correlations, causes, and effects is important and, thus, realized in the following assessment.

Role of the international community, relationships, and funding

In UCP/A, the assumption that international teams can bring different perspectives to the conflict is prevalent. For decolonizing UCP/A, it is crucial to recognize the different perspectives and not declare one as the “right” one. The handling of the involvement of international actors is, therefore, to be questioned. Further, seeing that organizations practicing UCP/A are only present for a period, there is a need to think about the time after their deployment. In any case, the upholding of global hierarchies is needed to overcome when decolonizing UCP/A. These can be especially found in fundraising and funding. Seeing that people from the Global South are still being portrayed as vulnerable and dependent on foreign aid and that donors mostly still decide how to use their donations is problematic. Reproducing stereotypes and racism on the one side and implicating to “know better” what others need on the other side must be faced.

- a. To what extent should international actors be included in UCP/A practices? How is the interaction and communication between actors affected?

Partnership with local actors (primacy of local actors)

The problem that still exists in the partnership with local actors, according to Boothe and Smithey (2007), is that nonviolent action, or UCP/A, that is based in local communities, can contribute to conflicts. Therefore, it should be focused to avoid undermining local potential by linking UCP/A to White privilege and failing the encouragement of nonviolent action by local actors (see *ibid.*:55). Even if the primacy of local actors, also connected to localization, is one of the main approaches toward decolonizing UCP/A and highlighted in most of the practicing organizations, there are still problems remaining. The non-interference in internal decision-making processes of local actors is underlined as highly important to guarantee the ability to act sovereign. At the same time, intervening and holding powerful positions within the collaboration undermines the local actors again. This is often connected to the power of funding and means that UCP/A can create a dependency between local and international actors.

- b. How can the primacy of local actors be assured and completely implemented?

Strategies to overcome racist structures and the influence of isms

In the framework of decolonizing UCP/A, it is asked for international nonviolent action against nationalism, racism, and police brutality. To avoid othering, dehumanization, and exclusions of groups are therefore principles to respect. The fear of the unknown, directly connected to the concept of othering, is a major problem still defining the fight against

racist structures. Strategies to stop the reproduction of power dynamics and racism in UCP/A are often not implemented because of the hierarchies of aims established in the practicing organizations. To reach the goal of decolonizing UCP/A, it is important to be aware of isms such as paternalism and White saviorism and work on strategies to combat these structures. Starting at the foundation of these complexes, developing harm-reducing strategies for each organization should be focused. Along these lines, it has been highlighted that it is essential to understand and respect that people have their own spaces one does not have access to.

- c. Which steps are necessary to overcome isms in the work of UCP/A? How to handle Whiteness and its repercussions in the context?

Organizational structures

When working in an international environment, it is important to face up to colonialism and colonial continuities. To understand today's power structures and reflect on them critically, understanding its roots is necessary, especially in the sector of UCP/A. Internal work on colonialism and decolonization in organizations is therefore essential. Developing policies and practices to reflect and respond to racism and other isms should be a goal for each organization. The dual need to eliminate racism on both sides, the organizational and the societal, is depicted as the key to collaboration. Further, the need to give local organizations a voice rather than expanding the international control on situations and actors is needed to start decolonizing UCP/A.

- d. How to address colonialism in practicing organizations? How can local voices be strengthened?

Recruitment and diversity in teams

The problem of deploying White staff educated in the Global North rather than locally educated staff, especially in management positions, is prominent in the practice of UCP/A. Likewise, as elaborated during the process of the paper, particularly White volunteers are sent to deployment areas. The idea of insisting on sending teams consisting of staff and volunteers with a variety of backgrounds is proposed in the evaluations of the workshops to promote decolonization. Having the dilemma of UCP/A in mind, "strategic" uses of identities are suggested. Using White privilege or the advantages coming along with specific citizenships, or both, and their protective values when working for an organization are hereby portrayed. This dilemma is one of the main aspects to question when aiming to decolonize UCP/A. Coming along with the recruitment and formation of a team, training is highly relevant for making progress in decolonization. Established training programs should therefore be analyzed and specifications on decolonization could be considered. Not only staff and volunteers have to be trained, but also the organization itself and its political work. Another organizational aspect is the cohesiveness of teams and the possibility to recognize the practitioners in the areas they are working in, without relying on their Whiteness.

- e. How can specific training support the decolonization process? Can team-related identifiers be helpful?

Language

Language is as well an issue of utmost importance regarding UCP/A and its decolonization. One factor to pay attention to is the avoidance of vocabulary reproducing colonial hierarchies and paternalism. Vocabulary implying that "help" is needed, regardless of the needs of someone, again justifies colonialism. Seeing that UCP/A is entitled differently according to the practicing organization, as mentioned in the introduction, a closer examination of the label should be considered. Another factor is the issue of speaking a common language, which is helpful when working together with different organizations but not always

realizable. The acknowledgment of speaking different languages is of importance, as an obligation to communicate in a language that is not well-known shows paternalistic and colonial motives. Nevertheless, it has to be recognized that due to the plurality of languages spoken, agreements on which to use should be individually made. Further, the employment of translators is also debatable, as achieving a linkage between the groups working together is more complicated when direct interaction cannot take place.

- f. What is necessary to develop a common decolonial language? How can language barriers be overcome regarding specific initial situations?

Knowledge generation, analysis, and learning

The fact that UCP/A practices are often carried out internationally and mostly led by organizations from the Global North implies that knowledge, analysis, and evaluation methods are shaped by their backgrounds and perspectives. Knowledge-sharing should not only be one-sided but include stories and learnings from every actor involved. Therefore, the willingness to give up power is another important aspect of power-sharing and should be respected. Decolonizing UCP/A needs a procedure of decolonizing oneself and recognizing one's social position in the global environment. The awareness of privileges and their implication for the need to act is essential.

- g. How should knowledge and learning processes be treated in the practice of UCP/A? How to decolonize oneself?

Dilemma of UCP/A

As already discussed, the dilemma of UCP/A describes on the one side the wish to support local actors by sharing resources and on the other side the need to overcome the privileges which make the support possible. The reinforcement of existent power structures and colonial continuities which are uncovered when using White persons to act in an international context, sending them as emblems of White supremacy, must be ended to decolonize the sector of UCP/A. These colonial inequities, especially the one of race, are deeply intertwined in how UCP/A works by drawing attention to Whiteness. Boothe and Smithey (2007) highlight that organizations are encouraged "to pursue their highest goals of peacebuilding to acknowledge their roots in predominantly Western, white, and male privilege and use that awareness to mitigate unintended consequences of privilege" (ibid.:55-56).

- h. Should privileges and the reliance on colonial structures be used to support local actors or should the reproduction of power structures be avoided completely, accepting the incapacity to act internationally?

5.3 Implementing the Approach to Decolonize Aid on UCP/A

To implement the approach to decolonize humanitarian aid by PD, the needs of UCP/A that have been outlined in the previous chapter are connected to the recommendations of PD. To analyze which recommendations can be transferred to UCP/A, the identified needs are reflected regarding the proposed solutions. As an important first step towards the decolonization of humanitarian aid and peacebuilding, PD portrays the examination of how the sectors came into their form (see PD 2021:20). Seeing that this step has already been done in the case of UCP/A (see Boothe/Smithey 2007; Coy 1997, 2011; Furnari 2017; Julian 2020; Julian/Schweitzer 2015; Koopman 2013; Wood 2019), the examination of structural racism and the reproduction of colonial continuities is following. In PD's conclusion on their consultation, the fact that the participants underlined their will to be meaningfully included in decision-making is probably the most notable finding. Acknowledging that the multi-pronged implementation of changes will take time and focusing on the relationship between international and local actors are emphasized. To be more specific, the categories outlined by PD are further evaluated regarding UCP/A in this chapter.

In the argumentation of UCP/A, there is still no common ground on how to approach the issue. It is debated whether starting the decolonization by reflections on colonial roots and the continuity of the reproduction of existing power dynamics is sufficient. Acknowledging that the flexibility of the implementation of UCP/A as well as the varying approaches according to the diverse organizations provide different initial situations, the coherence of core values still connects these. The categories in which PD has divided its recommendations are adopted to the case of UCP/A, including the previously elaborated categories.

Funding and Program Development

To accept uncertainty in humanitarian response, such as not insisting on perfectly filled-in applications especially when talking about funding, is important when aiming to decolonize the sector. These applications portray the standards given in the Global North. Being a bridge, not an expert is highlighted “to connect colleagues to the resources and power they need to implement successful projects — transforming capacity building, into capacity bridging” (PD 2021:35). Inclusion and involvement of the beneficiaries are proposed as well as the reframing of “funding” to “reparation”. This would change the implication of doing a favor by donating to making it a right (see *ibid.*). For UCP/A, these recommendations can be transferred to different parts of the practices such as the overall communication and exchange.

Regarding the role of the *international community and relationships*, the extent to which they should be included in the practice is raised. As funding and fundraising in UCP/A do not play a major role, it is not elaborated on in detail in this paper. Nevertheless, letting local actors lead decisions such as in the financial sector is underlined. The inclusion of international actors, especially when focusing on UCP/A, can be difficult when it comes to their active presence in a conflict. Their presence can trigger intense emotional reactions as UCP/A emerges from coloniality and as colonial continuities can be found there.

Therefore, clear communication and arrangements of the cooperation are of high value. Recognizing that trust is important, focusing on diversity, equity, and inclusion is described as the first step to making a change. Thus, relationships between international and local actors as well as conversations about and the controversy on power dynamics must be focused on. Connecting to networks that continuously work on the topic of decolonization, or organizing them, is also proposed in PD’s report.

In UCP/A, the organization of the gathering by NP and the aim to create working groups to continue approaching the issue constitute the attempts in the sector (see chapter 5.4). Here, it is underlined that the case that the voices of international actors are often more valued must be changed. Further, the reality that citizenship is key and therefore power, the unequal requirements of working in the area are visible again. The idea of building a local support group around the UCP/A team is also mentioned in NP’s reports, which implicates again the superiority of the international group, only asking for support from the locals. To value the importance of changes and the necessity to still not forget about the roots of inequality should therefore be a part of the work of UCP/A. To shift power to create more equitable partnerships and include all partners in decision-making processes is a major argument in the outline of PD.

In NP’s workshops, it is labeled as a good practice to exchange resources and ideas between national and international staff and to use former connections and refer to former staff to learn from the past and create practices based on experiences. Therefore, in a collaborative approach, the distribution of power between international and local actors should be discussed for every cooperation separately. As every actor has their own needs and ideas, it depends on the context if and to what extent other actors than the affected should be included in processes.

Regarding the *organizational structures*, an internal culture of openness to critique is targeted. Organizational strategies should, according to PD’s report, include localization, focus on the transfer of resources and power to local organizations, and measure success by

reducing the traditional footprint of the INGO. For UCP/A that would mean continuously reflecting on the practice and staying in dialogue with the local organizations asking for support. Being open to critique and accepting that this may cause offense is of major importance to be able to change. The focus on the decolonization of UCP/A should then, considering the localization, rather put local partner organizations in focus and adapt to their needs and wishes. Organizational strategies aiming to follow these requests should be developed, involving the voices of the partner organizations. Here, the act of direct intervention is again underlined as being reserved for exceptional situations at request.

The *team and its recruitment* are one of the most apparent factors to target when aiming for decolonization. PD highlighted the need for questioning the employment of expatriate staff overseas and for a greater diversity of staff working in the offices in the Global North. In PD's report, it is emphasized that local staff and staff from the Global South often bring certain competencies and experiences to the sector such as an insight to conflict dynamics and speaking local languages. Black, Brown, and Indigenous aid workers are still

not valued by the powerful agencies and their Western staff who run the sector.

[They] had no idea that the colour of [their] skin would define [their] work so deeply to the extent of questioning [their] ability, enthusiasm and purpose in life. (ibid.:25)

Seeing the value the employment of Black, Brown, Indigenous staff and staff from the Global South would add to the situation, this should be targeted in the practice of UCP/A. As elaborated before, the sending of mixed teams is already partly implemented but not a standard yet. Questioning that in UCP/A missions in North America only local staff and volunteers are allowed while it is assumed that for example in South America and Asia international staff and volunteers are essential to make a change, a bias in assumptions on the abilities can be presumed.

As emphasized before, practitioners usually want to be part of the solution but often do not want to see themselves as part of the problem. This bias should be studied when decolonizing UCP/A as well. Further, an examination of the recruitment in teams, even if attempts have been made to more diversity, should continue. In NP's workshops, good practices such as optimizing processes of training, norming mixed teams, and arranging influential allies are mentioned to increase the ability of UCP/A to engage properly in the sector. The identification of connectors between the people working in the area was also indicated as a good practice, as well as the promotion of "good stereotypes". This should be evaluated again, seeing that stereotypes remain stereotypes and can harm people. Rather, entering a situation without prejudices and aiming to get to know the people as they want to be seen could be an attempt. Getting to know the habits and realities of the partners in UCP/A should be a standard, to learn about the people and not what is said about them.

Another point made in the discussion on good practices for decolonizing UCP/A is to work collectively and to let people engage in the context they are best suited for, for example in terms of skills, education, experience, and race. Hereby, it must be considered that skills, education, and experiences are variables that can be developed and changed over time, whereby race is something people are born with, with no influence on or ability to change it. The way how education can be used depends on non-influential variables as well, as one cannot control in which environment one is born and how one is socialized. Nevertheless, learning is a process that never finishes, and experiences and skills can be earned over time.

The variable of race is, therefore, more difficult to discuss and should be questioned again when talking about the employment of persons. This question is directly linked to the dilemma of UCP/A, which is further elaborated in the process of the chapter. Nonetheless, by remaining in a continuous dialogue and having a specified training on decolonization in contemplation, the practitioners in UCP/A organizations can work on the issue. The option of team-related items showing the affiliation of staff and volunteers to specific groups and their ability to support the process of decolonization should also be further elaborated. To use distinct symbols such as shirts, caps, or logos to be identifiable was recognized as an

important step to not rely on the personal appearance of the volunteers and staff only. To have external factors influencing the perception of the team should help give them a specific status while still recognizing the influence of race and origin.

Attitude of Practitioners

The overall approach to working on decolonization through focusing on the attitude of practitioners encompasses testing new methods, having the courage to fail, and learning from that. To listen, to be inclusive, and to “treat others as they wish to be treated” (ibid.:36) are essential. Most notably, creating lasting and meaningful partnerships between international and local NGOs, and sharing opportunities such as skills and knowledge beyond joint projects shape the approach.

The primacy of local actors is one of the main principles that can be found in most of the UCP/A practicing organizations. The *partnership between international and local organizations* is as well stressed in the report of PD. To create space for change and encourage groups with marginalized identities to question the current system are further recommendations made which can be directly transferred to UCP/A. Therefore, the reevaluation of partnerships is necessary to make them more equitable and accountable, particularly considering the subordination of country offices to headquarters in the Global North, meaning the strategies of acting as well as the governance of the organizations. Rather than talking about partner organizations, having a dialogue to support local leadership is necessary, according to PD. Further, seeing that the understanding of local partners is still expounded differently, it must be highlighted that when

‘local partners’ come from the elite of the country we are working in, speak in English, say the jargons we want them to say, then we are definitely reproducing the colonial mentality of seeking out the ‘brown sahibs’ who were seen as the buffer with the colonials, who were the elite and had power but could ‘represent’ the colonial power. (ibid.:21)

For UCP/A this could mean not prioritizing organizational aims and principles but rather adapting to the requests and needs of the partner organizations and creating the primacy of local actors to what their understanding of this principle is. Important factors to keep in mind are, therefore, to only work on invitation by local actors and not speak for them.

Of utmost importance is the evaluation of *strategies to overcome racist structures and the influence of other isms*. The acknowledgment of a collective responsibility to tackle structural racism and the necessity to approach these are major steps to take in this regard. Shifting power and access to the ones without is as well highlighted. This can be transferred to the practice of UCP/A, as this sector is marked by structural racism and asymmetric power dynamics. To take a step back and speak less as a White person and give others the chance to raise their voices could contribute to fairer communication. Seeing that UCP/A is combating the praxis of othering and focusing on the creation of positive self-images rather than on negative enemy images is a suitable basis to further work on the issue. As racism and other isms are deeply rooted in society, they cannot be erased from one day to another. The involvement of states in racist incidents, such as in the case in which judges act differently according to the origin of accused persons, which has been elaborated on before, has to be taken into account when aiming at making progress. Finding ways to contribute to the change in the system should be targeted when decolonizing UCP/A.

As conducted before, *language* is a key aspect to decolonizing the practices of humanitarian aid and UCP/A. To change the outdated language to one that is neither harming nor implying power hierarchies is a goal aimed. In UCP/A, words such as “protection” and “help” should thus be replaced. That would implicate further investigation of the label of UCP/A, as “protection” is directly included. Considering language in the context of communication, enabling international and local groups to interact, the choice of which language to use matters as well. Choosing English or Spanish rather than indigenous languages excludes directly affected persons from the dialogue and underlines a superiority of languages

deeply rooted in colonialism. The primacy of the locals should also imply a primacy of local languages and therefore options to communicate in the preferred language of the affected community should be considered. Even if words and meanings can get “lost in translation”, expressing oneself in a foreign language also means losing some of the initial intentions one wants to express. Agreeing on a way of communication every actor is content with and able to express the main arguments is, therefore, an idea in this aspect.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting

In this part, the communal agreement on the measurement of the success of a project by the donors and local actors is seen as the main key to reaching decolonization. The valuation of knowledge, agency, and language matters to a major extent (see *ibid.*:36).

The *generation of knowledge, analysis, and learning* is a further aspect to emphasize when aiming to decolonize humanitarian aid as well as UCP/A in this context. PD underlined the importance of valuing local knowledge and investing in indigenous knowledge, considering the remaining difference in the valuation of expertise. The reflection of one’s own identity, motivations, and privileges is essential for the process of decolonization in the sector, as well as to remain humble.

Other aspects which can be useful to decolonize UCP/A are the ongoing mapping of conflicts and actors, as well as capacity bridging to form a group of people working in the sector. For UCP/A this means that the decolonization of oneself and transferring the learnings directly to one’s work is essential. The self-decolonization could be introduced by the organization practicing UCP/A and is, therefore, directly linked to the paragraph on staff and training.

To educate oneself instead of educating others is a responsibility to make a change. Further, learning from the past and implementing gained knowledge in the future can make a difference. Established guidelines by headquarters in the Global North can be reevaluated to adapt these to the needs of partner organizations.

Maintaining an overview of the situation, the conflict, and the capacities as well as the knowledge on how to deploy it can be useful in these situations. To emphasize again, the inclusion and leadership of the local communities are necessary. Further, as proposed in one of NP’s workshops, working with the youth can also be a part of the learning process, especially when trying to secure a future.

It has also been highlighted that negotiations in an environment that one knows, regarding language and knowledge, can be easier. This underlines the capabilities of local actors again and that they must be valued. As already described in the paragraph concerning racism and other isms, the importance of taking a step back, of focusing on one’s problems first, must be considered. Before telling others what to do, understanding one’s situation and reflecting one’s advice would be an option to not be paternalistic and prejudiced. Accepting advice and creating trainings together to enable involved persons in developing a sensitivity for decolonization can therefore be an option to create change.

Dilemma of UCP/A

Adding this category acknowledges that it is an issue of major importance. During the observed workshops and meetings, as well as while analyzing literature concerning the topic, the dilemma was part of almost every discussion. The question of whether privileges and the reliance on colonial structures should be used to support local actors or whether the reproduction of power structures should be avoided completely, accepting the incapacity to act internationally, has to be observed closely. As an adequate answer cannot be given within the frames of this paper, further research at this point is appropriate. Seeing that taking advantage of Whiteness reproduces colonial structures and signifies colonial continuities is a dilemma that should be taken into consideration when further elaborating on the decolonization of UCP/A. Focusing on the primacy of local communities and seeing

direct interventions as the last step to take into consideration, the dilemma plays a role. Recognizing that situations differ and that every actor has own needs, it is not likely that there is a general answer to the dilemma. Structural racism is still part in almost every layer of today's society and to combat it successfully, awareness and communication are important steps to take.

Concluding, PD stresses that the participants of the consultation aim to be meaningfully included in the decision-making processes in the aid system. Seeing the parallels between the sector of humanitarian aid and UCP/A, it can be assumed that this matters for involved persons in UCP/A processes as well. Having a balance of the unequal power dynamics as a major goal, starting to consciously treat every participant in such processes equally is crucial.

5.4 Evaluation of and Reflection on the Approaches

The implementation of PD's recommendations on the case of UCP/A is realizable to a great extent, as both sectors show parallels in colonial continuities. The approach to confronting structural racism in humanitarian aid can therefore be transferred to UCP/A. Nevertheless, the particular recommendations can be further evaluated when being implemented. For this evaluation, the extent to which the recommendations by PD could be transferred to the case of UCP/A is revealed with a focus on their possible implementation. The evaluation correlates to the categories in which the arguments are ordered in the previous chapter (chapter 5.3). Hereby, it must be highlighted that the evaluation of specific ideas should be reflected for every case separately, as some arguments might be useful in one case and not at all in others. Overall, it seems as if the approaches to decolonize UCP/A and humanitarian aid are reappearing, both in the reports of NP and partial in the report of PD. For this reason, the case study consists of many repetitions and emphasizes the same aspects, which again shows their importance and the necessity of their implementation.

In terms of the program development, the fields of *international community and relationships*, *organizational structures*, and the *team and its recruitment* were further investigated. The research shows that certain values are of utmost importance when decolonizing the sector, such as diversity, equity, and inclusion. It is highlighted again to continue dialogues and work collectively to change the power dynamics. The inclusion of local partners in decision-making processes is stressed.

These approaches are already targeted by NP and the ongoing good practice approach, especially in terms of a constant dialogue. In these dialogues, the core values of decolonization should be kept in mind to find solutions for the individual partnerships as well as for the creation of an overall approach for the sector of UCP/A. The openness to critique and the willingness of adapting the organizational measurement of success to the local partners' measurements should as well be respected. Of significance is the statement that direct intervention should be reserved for exceptional situations at request.

This assumption has to be investigated further in UCP/A, as intervention is one of its major purposes. Further, investigating the recruitment and collocation of staff is a part of decolonization that could directly be implemented in the process and show results rapidly. Training could as well immediately be applied and contribute to a major extent to the decolonization process. Further investigation would be necessary in its creation and optimizing processes. The capabilities of team-related items can in this term also have a direct impact on the process. The recommendations of PD in this section can be transferred to UCP/A to a great extent, as nearly every proposal could address aspects of structural racism found in the area. Merely the recommendations regarding funding are not as valuable in UCP/A as in humanitarian aid, as this is rarely part of the practice. Even the recommendation to avoid a localization spin can be assigned to the meaning and implementation of the primacy of the locals.

Concerning the attitude of practitioners, the *partnership between international and local organizations, strategies to overcome racist structures and the influence of other isms, and language* play important roles. This paper shows that the *principle of the primacy of local actors* is already grounded in the practice of UCP/A, but that it can gain even more meaningfulness in the practice. The realization of the principle could be strengthened in the process of decolonization, which would be in line with the reevaluation of partnerships. These steps seem to be part of the basis and augur to create change. Recognizing that the combat against racism and other isms is probably highly protracted, the importance of its treating as a collective responsibility while shifting power to the ones lacking it is an ongoing process. This could and should be included in every sphere of UCP/A.

The issue of language and the changes that have been recommended are changes that probably need time as well, seeing that current developments in language such as regarding gender equality also continuously change and are implemented differently. Its importance is not deniable, wherefore a reconsideration of the label of UCP/A could be aimed while at the same time this would also influence the current state of research expansion. Adapting languages in communication processes according to the needs of the actors and finding translators to use primarily local languages are challenges that probably need evaluation and resources. The implementation has to be figured out carefully. The recommendations made in this section could as well be implemented to a great extent in UCP/A, nearly every suggestion by PD could be transferred to the issues of structural racism detected in the sector. Only the creation of space for marginalized identities and individuals to question the current system does not find as much space as the other recommendations in UCP/A. This aspect could be investigated in further research.

In the section on monitoring, evaluation, and reporting, the *generation of knowledge, analysis, and learning* was pointed out. Here it can be noticed that the recommendation of a shift from relying on knowledge and strategies from the Global North to local approaches is complex and likely to take some time. The execution of this must be evaluated, best in cooperation with the local communities. Concluding, the necessity to decolonize oneself is the step of decolonization that probably requires the least resources and planning, as the reflection on one's own identity, motivations, and privileges can be inspired through reading and speaking. Nonetheless, it needs motivation, willingness to change, and probably time to be implemented. The transfer of recommendations in this section could be implemented completely, as the revealed parallels between humanitarian aid and UCP/A coincide greatly.

Reflecting on the implementation of the recommendations in the case of UCP/A, there can be detected strengths and weaknesses in the approach. On the one side, not all issues UCP/A exhibits regarding the occurrence of structural racism could be confronted, such as the described dilemma. This can be explained by its specificity. Nonetheless, ideas on its treatment can be gathered when discussing the recommendations. Moreover, these are to some extent repetitive and seem to be superficial but as they should be reflected for every case individually, this could be seen as a strength for their implementation. On the other side, there can be found congruence between the occurrence of structural racism in humanitarian aid and UCP/A, and therefore the implementation of PD's recommendations as well. The demonstration of structural racism, its conjunction with its roots and developments, and the reveal of the state of research contribute to the discourse on decolonizing UCP/A.

In line with these findings, several aspects were additionally pointed out in the recently published report on the virtual gathering by NP. The report adds a discussion on tactics of communities to protect themselves to the discourse, indicating that community self-protection and international accompaniment sometimes work hand in hand. These could be useful in further investigation of approaches to decolonize UCP/A, as community self-protection encompasses several aspects that have been highlighted in the case study. Examples of community self-protection are the participant-led realization of agency, the visualization of protection measures for their overall awareness of them, and rumor control. For

this strategy, two models of implementation are mentioned in the report: 1. develop or renovate and implement tools by the local community and 2. build international solidarity networks (see Schweitzer 2022:5). The parallels between the community self-protection approach and the approaches to decolonizing UCP/A have to be recognized. As prioritizing the local community is a major value and aim in decolonizing UCP/A, by local actors developed tools and strategies seem to suit the requests in the decolonization approaches. The measure to build international solidarity networks to stop violence seems to be a good starting point to contextualize UCP/A in the overall international context. The notion that this practice can lead to accusations of illegitimacy by understanding it as sponsored by outside actors is mentioned to be kept in mind (see *ibid.*). This can be as well transferred to the overall practice.

Continuing the exchange on decolonizing UCP/A, discussing the topic, asking questions, and questioning current structures are highlighted to support the overall process. Coming back to the questions asked in the session on decolonization during the virtual gathering by NP and the Humanitarian Symposium Munich, these can initiate conversations on the issue in several situations. These questions (see chapters 3.3 and 4.2) are targeting the occurrence of colonial continuities and inequalities in the personal and professional life. They can be answered individually and in the context of a group collectively, not having the claim to be universally appropriate, but aiming to contribute to an ongoing discussion.

Further questions that can contribute to the discourse and the reflection of the decolonization process include the role privileges plays in the work of UCP/A and the approach to decolonize the work at a practical level (see Schweitzer 2022:33). These were directly asked to the participants in the session on decolonization in the online gathering by NP. Discussed in breakout sessions, the answers included, related to the role of privilege in the work of UCP/A, the access to conflict areas and the ability to interact with authorities, the exemption of White staff and volunteers in conflict situations, the power of funders to set rules, and being known as part of a team with good reputation and research. Approaches regarding the second question are starting with oneself, giving up power, and questioning the structures and impacts of funding.

The limited number of answers to the second question underlines again the necessity of the conducted case study and further elaborations. Besides, in the aftermath of NP's virtual gathering and the publication of the corresponding report, two working groups were initiated to work on the good practice approach as a step toward creating a UCP/A community of practice.

Out of a survey after the conference in which the participants were asked to indicate the most important topics, the two with the highest priority were chosen for further development. These also have the highest number of volunteers to work on the issues. Accordingly, two working groups to develop materials are created: "Engaging Local Voices" and "Decolonization".²⁷ The first group explores approaches for engaging local communities in creating/maintaining their security, whereas the second explores the approach for the decolonization of the assumptions and the work of UCP/A as well as on a personal level.

The working group on decolonization focuses on four aspects that were reoccurring in the virtual gathering materials: tools/processes to identify colonialist practices within the current practice of UCP/A and sharing the findings with practicing organizations, training for teams to decolonize the work, joint cross-training on the topic, and approaches/processes for partners to take charge and remain in charge of the work. Considering the approach of NP to gather practitioners and reflect on the practices of UCP/A, an approach for the process of decolonization could also include local partners in the gathering. To hear their voice in the decolonization complex and consequently involve them directly in the process could hence be elaborated further.

27 The information concerning the working groups derives from internal communication within the board of NP and participants of the virtual gathering in November 2021.

6. Conclusion

As already introduced by Lamboi in NP's virtual gathering 2021, Chimamana Adichie originally identified power in relation to decolonization as "the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person" (Adichie 2009). As shown in this paper, power is one of the main features of decolonization. The revealed parallels that can be found in several sectors in which decolonization takes place, especially the emphasized connected colonial continuities, are highly interwoven to the stories told. Recognizing that these structures and processes cannot be changed from one day to another but seeing that the need for decolonization gets more and more visible is a signal to start now.

As elaborated in the previous chapter, the approaches introduced by NP's workshops and reports are, to some extent, comparable to the ones in PD's report. Recognizing that the evaluation process, the establishment of a "guiding line" for decolonizing UCP/A, is still ongoing, the already summarized findings in NP's reports and PD's recommendations can serve as a basis to further develop the approach. It is noticed that especially the dilemma of UCP/A needs further investigation and is relevant. It must be noticed that this should be treated according to the situation, while the implications and effects of colonial continuities should be acknowledged. Aiming at a stage the absence of discrimination in all its forms and the equal sharing of power is a standard, the path to reach it must be faced. This paper described the current state of research and findings on the progress while combining it with findings made in humanitarian aid. The findings concerning the attempt of decolonization in this paper and the answer to the question of *to what extent can lessons learned from decolonizing humanitarian aid be useful in decolonizing UCP/A* reveal that these can be transferred to a great extent. These processes are highly individual and should be adapted according to the needs and wishes of the partner organizations, so the degree of implementation can vary from one case to another.

Areas of the practice in UCP/A which have to be further investigated for its decolonization were identified. Nonetheless, the paper is not meant to give concrete proposed actions. There is a need for case studies to be further elaborated and adjusted to the everyday issues of UCP/A.

The methodology used to conduct the case study is mainly based on literature analysis combined with participative observation. As the research in the area is still ongoing and the material on decolonizing UCP/A is rather limited, the state of the art encompasses a vast number of findings made in the sector. For the research, the available data was, therefore, restricted, and as I did not engage in the area before, my knowledge is based on these findings and exchanges with practitioners.

As stated in the introduction, my role in the research as a White and inexperienced person in the sector is not as multifarious as it could be. Nevertheless, having gained impressions through various papers, workshops, and dialogues on the topic with people working in the area for years gave an insight into the subject.

Further, the view of UCP/A affected persons, such as local communities, is not included directly in the paper. This would have enhanced the research but was not feasible in the framework of the paper. As elaborated during the research, the inclusion of local actors in the research and the gathering could, thus, be beneficial for future research.

Future research, as indicated in the process of the paper (especially chapter 5.4), could focus on the elaboration of the approach to decolonize UCP/A for different partnerships that already exist. The implementation of concepts and ideas that have been gathered can lead to further insights and steps towards the elaboration of the findings in the sector. The planned conference in 2023, based on NP's virtual gathering in November 2021, depicts a step to elaborate research already made and combine it with the outcomes of the implemented working groups. Hereby, the fields of concrete actions in decolonization and the dilemma in which UCP/A finds itself could be focused on.

Coming back to the beginning of the paper, the current incidents at the borders of Ukraine highlight the need to change, as indicated in the introduction. Both the treatment of

people at the borders and the reporting about them are marked by structural racism. In the context of UCP/A, it can be imagined that White companions have the power to influence situations like these, which again mirrors the dilemma. Moreover, the current global focus on the conflict between Russia and Ukraine is criticized by Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the chief of the World Health Organization. Adhanom Ghebreyesus questioned whether “the world really gives equal attention to Black and white lives” (Aljazeera 2022) and gives examples of ongoing emergencies in Ethiopia, Yemen, Afghanistan, and Syria that have gained only a fraction of the global interest for Ukraine (see *ibid.*). “The power of whiteness is paying attention to what you do here” (Wood 2019) is, therefore, not only relying on the dilemma of UCP/A but also on the structural racism society faces every day.

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