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Doing epistemic justice in sustainable development: Applying the philosophical concept of epistemic injustice to the real world

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Abstract

Originally conceptualized by the philosopher, Miranda Fricker, epistemic injustice—unfair treatment of individuals and groups in knowledge-related and communicative practices—is increasingly being employed to delineate individual and collective injustice in healthcare, information sciences, education and sustainable development. Embedded in many other forms of social injustice and inequality, epistemic injustice is a particularly serious problem for sustainable development, undermining the global community's ability to deal with 'wicked' problems. Building on the more conceptually developed, philosophical framework of epistemic injustice and recent research from other fields, this article develops a holistic action-oriented framework of epistemic justice, namely fair treatment in knowledge-related and communicative practices, for sustainable development and beyond. It also adds to the current framework of individual and collective injustice by including a range of new insights on structural and systemic epistemic injustice, such as linguistic injustice and epistemicide.

KEYWORDS

development studies, epistemic injustice, epistemic justice, knowledge, sustainable development

1 | INTRODUCTION

Epistemic injustice comprises unfair treatment in knowledge-related and communicative practices in which the voices, experiences and problems of marginalized individuals, communities and societies are not being taken seriously. Epistemic injustice is linked to larger structures of socio-economic inequality (Coady, 2017), and may even entrench and amplify them (Kidd et al., 2017). It can cause existential suffering (Casuso, 2021), leading to imprisonment when the testimony of a defendant is not believed or, ultimately, even to death when a patient's description of their symptoms is not taken seriously. Although the philosophical concept of epistemic injustice has received

considerable attention since it was first delineated by Miranda Fricker (2007), actions to address epistemic injustice are still in their infancy.

Epistemic injustice is widely evident in development research, practice and policy. Although researchers from low and middle income countries (LMICs) are underrepresented in all academic fields (Demeter, 2020), underrepresentation in development research is a particularly 'sore point' because this is where the research is carried out (Liverpool, 2021), highlighting how development studies objectifies its area of study (Cummings & Hoebink, 2017). In development practice, epistemic injustice takes, for example, the form of the marginalization of local knowledge (Townsend & Townsend, 2021), lack of credibility being given to local consultants (Koch, 2020; Pradhan 2021), and absence of the voices of the poor in narratives of poverty (McKendrick et al., 2008). In development policy, local knowledges

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and realities have generally been ignored even in the most important policy framework of the current time, namely the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Cummings et al., 2018). This epistemic injustice means that development research, practice and policy are unable to harness local and other knowledges needed to achieve sustainable development, as argued by the *Jena Declaration on cultural and regional dimensions of global sustainability* (Alvarez-Pereira et al., 2021) and *Agenda Knowledge for Development* (Brandner & Cummings, 2018), both UN-supported civil society initiatives to recognize the multiple knowledges necessary to achieve the SDGs. In development, epistemic injustice is strongly linked to the continuing coloniality of knowledge systems (Bhargava, 2013; Khoo et al., 2020; Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Ramose, 2014). Coloniality is defined as the 'long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and **knowledge production** ... [Coloniality] is maintained alive in **books**, in the criteria for **academic performance**, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples' (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 243) in which we have highlighted specifically knowledge-related phenomena.

Building on a wide range of recent studies on epistemic injustice in philosophy (Bratu & Haenel, 2021; Casuso, 2021; Catala, 2022; Hänel, 2020; Smith & Archer, 2020), this article aims to complement new studies which go beyond philosophical study of epistemic injustice to consider its impact in the real world of sustainable development (Boogaard, 2021; Elías, 2020; Koch, 2020; Kosko et al., 2022; Townsend & Townsend, 2021), education (Khoo et al., 2020), health-care (Heggen & Berg, 2021) and information sciences (Patin et al., 2020, 2021). Although this focus on epistemic injustice has great value because it increases our understanding of this complex phenomenon, so far it has largely been divorced from action to address these injustices. Concerted action is needed because, just as 'there is no global social justice without global cognitive justice' (de Sousa Santos, 2016, p. 42), there is no global justice without epistemic justice. In sustainable development, there is evidence that ethics and injustice are receiving increasing attention (see, for example, Bainton et al., 2021; Henfrey et al., 2022) but our focus is not on justice alone. To tackle sustainable development as a 'wicked' problem facing the global community (Pryshlakivsky & Searcy, 2013), we need to make the optimum use of all knowledges, some of which are obscured and devalued by epistemic injustice, and to make sure that all voices are heard.

In this article, we develop a new holistic framework of the positive space of epistemic justice and demonstrate its relevance to sustainable development. This is based on the assumption that this new positive space makes it easier to provide signposts toward already existing development practices which are more epistemically just. We start this article by introducing the paper (Part 1) and then the methodology and positionality (Part 2). We recognize that starting with the methodology is unusual but we are taking this step because this is a conceptual rather than an experimental paper which requires more structural clarity (Jaakkola, 2020). Next, we provide an overview of the concept of epistemic injustice because it is a much more highly

developed concept than epistemic justice (Part 3), including recent insights on structural and systemic epistemic injustice. We then consider the application of epistemic injustice in sustainable development (Part 4). In the next section, we develop a holistic framework of epistemic injustice for sustainable development (Part 5) and this is then employed to develop a holistic action oriented framework of epistemic justice, offering signposts for future action and for more just development practice, also relevant to other domains. In this process, we are re-tracing the footsteps of Miranda Fricker in reverse as she used the 'positive space' of epistemic justice to understand better the 'negative space that is epistemic injustice' (Fricker, 2007, p. viii) while we are using the negative space to better understand the positive one. Given the importance of structural and systemic justice, we also recognize that efforts to increase epistemic justice call for systems-level reforms (Anderson, 2012).

2 | METHODOLOGY AND POSITIONALITY

This paper is not an empirical paper, based on experimental data, but is rather a conceptual paper, recognizing that conceptual papers have a less standard design than empirical ones (Jaakkola, 2020). In this conceptual paper, we are aiming to propose new relationships between constructs related to epistemic injustice, aiming to develop logical arguments about these relationships rather than testing them empirically (Gilson & Goldberg, 2015). With the five designated parts of the paper, we aim to develop conceptual clarity on the understanding that a clear structure is an important part of a conceptual paper because it enables the reader to follow the logical argument (Jaakkola, 2020). According to Jaakkola (2020) and based on a literature review from scientific journals, conceptual papers tend to have four approaches with concomitant goals, applications and research designs, namely theory synthesis, theory adaptation, typology characterization, and framework (or model) development. In this conceptual paper, we include elements of these four approaches. First, we are concerned with theory synthesis as we are aiming at conceptual integration of the phenomenon of epistemic injustice from a number of different domains. Second, we aim at theory adaptation because we aim to change perspectives of the existing theory of epistemic justice, informing it with perspectives from sustainable development. Third, we aim to make advances in typology characterization by organizing fragmented research into common distinct types, in this case individual and collective, structural and systemic epistemic injustice, aiming to reconcile findings from previous research which have not been considered within the framework of epistemic injustice. Fourth, we also have also attempted to develop two holistic frameworks: the first the framework of epistemic injustice and the second the framework of epistemic justice.

In this paper, we refer to the extensive literature on epistemic injustice in the field of philosophy and beyond while also aiming to include the much more limited literature on epistemic justice. Sampling of literature was undertaken, using a method 'akin to

snowball sampling' (Babbie, 2013, p. 265), to identify the relevant literature on epistemic injustice. Snowball sampling of literature is a recognized method in social research:

Once you identify a particularly useful book or article, note which publications its author cites. Some of these will likely be useful. In fact, you'll probably discover some citations that appear again and again, suggesting they are core references within the subject matter you are exploring ... it's about digging into the body of knowledge that previous researchers have generated (Babbie, 2013, p. 265).

Taking this approach, we started with Miranda Fricker's original book (Fricker, 2007), identified books and papers that cited her work, and undertook multiple searches of online databases and the internet, based on keyword searches as well as free text searches.

The approach we have taken is probably best described as methodological bricolage, defined as 'combining of analytic moves for the purpose of solving a problem or problems tailored to one's own research project' (Pratt et al., 2022, p. 211). We consider it to be a form of methodological bricolage because it combines key characteristics of bricolage, namely making do, utilizing the resources at hand, and combining resources for new purposes (Baker & Nelson, 2005). First, we have made do by aiming to 'cobble together'—a term which frequently appears in the literature of bricolage—a coherent argument that connects our research question with research answer through engagement with the conceptual literature on epistemic injustice and more applied literature from sustainable development and other fields. We have tried to do this in a manner that aims to convince the reader by building trust in the logical argumentation. This has been a messy and creative process, another characteristic of methodological bricolage (Pratt et al., 2022, p. 211), in which, for example, the first version of this paper had no methodological section. Second, we are also using the resources at hand by starting with the seminal book of Miranda Fricker (2007) and other philosophical literature on epistemic injustice and then looking for literature in which authors have attempted to apply the concept in practice. This literature can be described as emergent as much of the literature on the application of epistemic injustice in the real world is fairly recent (post-2018) and more will be published as this article goes to press. Third, we are combining existing resources for a new purpose, namely the development of a new holistic framework of the positive space of epistemic justice, demonstrating its relevance to sustainable development

2.1 | Positionality

The authors of this paper are development practitioners first and researchers second, and are less familiar with this philosophical literature. As development practitioners with a focus on knowledge, we have become interested in the concept of epistemic injustice because we see that it brings together that many of the issues related to

knowledge inequalities which have emerged within sustainable development over the past 30 years, such as the status of local knowledge and language; these are all issues that we have personally struggled with and have tried to resolve in the past. These issues receive some sporadic prominence, supported by champions in research and practice, but they then disappear again as the champions age and the development community's attention shifts to other areas. To be clear, we are not proposing that the lens of epistemic injustice should replace other pragmatic, political or ethical lenses to sustainable development. Instead, we consider that it will provide an additional conceptual framework as an organizing structure with anchor points and signposts which can support development actors—and particularly development organizations, their employees and the consultants that work for them—in their efforts to improve knowledge practices, rather than being the focus of sporadic attention. In this paper, we focus on the developing the organizing structure, anchor points and signposts within the conceptual framework of epistemic justice. In further papers, we will identify knowledge practices which are consistent with this approach in development practice and research. However, we also recognize that there is a limit to what can be achieved by the virtuous behavior of individuals and organizations when 'the root cause of epistemic injustice is structures of unequal power' (Fricker, 2007, p. 8).

3 | AN INTRODUCTION TO EPISTEMIC INJUSTICE

3.1 | The philosophy of epistemic injustice

Epistemic injustice is concerned with 'forms of unfair treatment that relate to issues of knowledge, understanding, and participation in communicative practices' (Kidd et al., 2017, p. 1) and has been defined as 'any unjust epistemic relation which disadvantages someone in [their] capacity as a knower' (Mitova, 2020, p. 708). Epistemic injustice is the consequence of the prejudice of powerful social agents to the knowledge of less powerful individuals and communities on the basis of their intersectional identity, for example their gender, race, class or ethnic group. Epistemic injustice is part of wider social injustice (Fricker, 2007). A wide range of epistemic injustices have been identified in the literature (Boogaard, 2021; Dotson, 2014; Fricker, 2007; Fricker, 2013). There is considerable interest in epistemic injustice among scholars because investigation can help combat injustice in the real world (Hänel, 2020).

Fricker (2007) originally identified two kinds of epistemic injustice, namely testimonial and hermeneutical injustice with their roots in imbalances between social and political power. Testimonial injustice comprises attributing too little (or too much) credibility to a testimony due to identity prejudice on the hearer's part, often related to intersectional racial, class and gender identity, such as racial disparity in access to financial services (de Bruin, 2019) or disbelief of victims of sexual assault and particularly female victims (Jackson, 2018; Solnit, 2017). To illustrate identity prejudice, Fricker (2007) uses



FIGURE 1 Epistemic injustice as social injustice (derived from Byskov, 2021; source: Authors) [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/sd.2497)]

iconic examples of testimonial injustice from literature, including racially motivated disbelief of the accused, Tom Robinson, in Harper Lee's *To kill a mockingbird* and disbelief of Marge Sherwood on the basis of gender-related prejudice in Anthony Minghella's screenplay of Patricia Highsmith's novel, *The talented Mr Ripley*. One form of 'radical testimonial injustice' (Townsend & Townsend, 2021) has been identified by Fricker as 'silencing' where the speaker has so little credibility that she might not have even spoken. Anderson (2012) makes a distinction between transactional testimonial injustice when epistemic injustice is due to the identity prejudice of an identifiable agent and structural testimonial injustice where 'institutions are set up to exclude people without anyone having to decide to do so' (p. 166). Related to this, she also argues that testimonial injustice is not always the result of identity prejudice but is entrenched in ethnocentrism and bias toward the shared reality of social groups.

Hermeneutical injustice takes place when a gap in collective interpretive resources puts someone at an unfair advantage when they are try to make sense of their social experiences (Fricker, 2007, p. 1). Anderson (2012) argues that hermeneutic injustice is always structural because it relates to groups rather than individuals, and Fricker consider that this type of epistemic injustice is caused by structural prejudice in the creation of collective hermeneutical resources (Fricker, 2007). These resources can include cognitive tools, terminologies and language (McKinnon, 2016). Fricker (2007) explains the concept of hermeneutic injustice with the example of the term 'sexual harassment', first used in 1975. Before this term was created, women and other victims of sexual harassment faced barriers to explaining how they were being victimized.

There are, however, different types of ignorance or 'unknowing' associated with the related concept of hermeneutical ignorance which may be individual because they deal with individual intention. When this hermeneutic injustice is apparently intentional, it is known as 'wilful hermeneutical ignorance' where 'dominantly situated knowers refuse to acknowledge epistemic tools developed from the experienced world of those situated marginally. Such refusals allow

dominantly situated knowers to misunderstand, misinterpret, and/or ignore whole parts of the world' (Pohlhaus Jr., 2012, p. 215). Anderson (2012) argues that hermeneutic injustice is always structural because it relates to the lack of interpretive resources to make sense of important features of a speaker's experience because she or members of her social group have been marginalized in meaning-making activities as a result of identity prejudice (Fricker, 2007, p. 158–159).

Drawing on Fricker, Byskov (2021) argues that epistemic injustice is a social injustice based on five partial, interlinked, complex conditions which affect both individuals and groups (Figure 1): epistemic injustice causes epistemic and socioeconomic disadvantages and inequalities which result in unfair outcomes; it is based on prejudice about the speaker or speakers involving unfair judgment about epistemic capacity; it involves stakeholders who are affected by the decisions from which they are excluded, resulting in unfair denial of stakeholder rights; the individuals or groups possess relevant knowledge so that epistemic injustice represents unfair denial of knowledge; and the discriminated individual and group also suffers from other social injustice representing unfair existing vulnerability. Byskov (2021) argues that two of these conditions must be met for an epistemic discrimination to constitute epistemic injustice. He also makes a distinction between different degrees of epistemic injustice, ranging from direct or indirect or 'harmless or harmful, unfair or fair, advantageous or disadvantageous' (p. 130) on a sliding scale with accumulation of more injustice. For example, it varies from being 'indirectly harmful (such as in the case of future members of minority cultures suffering from hermeneutical injustice) to being directly harmful (such as in the case of someone being subjected to racism)' (Byskov, 2021, p. 130).

3.2 | Additional types of epistemic injustice

In recent years, there have been additional concepts added to understandings of epistemic injustice. Explanatory injustice, a category of culpable testimonial injustice, is when 'we explain someone's beliefs by appeal to stereotypes associated with her gender, sexuality, race, or class, instead of the reasoning that led her to believe as she does' (Mitova 2020, p. 707), undermining the individual as a knowledge holder. For example, women leaders are seen as overly emotional and this is used to explain and criticize their decisions (Brescoll, 2016); this is the 'reason-why' described by Mitova (2020). In the same Special Issue as Mitova, Smith and Archer (2020) identify an additional testimonial injustice, namely epistemic attention deficit, comprising the failure to pay attention to an individual as an epistemic agent which limits their ability to influence what others believe and to take part in exchanges of knowledge.

Spiekermann (2020) identifies an additional epistemic injustice related to networks, namely 'epistemic network injustice' which arises when groups of individuals are not able to connect with peers, reducing their political influence. Epistemic network injustice recognizes that individuals are epistemically dependent on their peers and 'only if one succeeds in finding one's true peers can one effectively identify one's

own interests and make them heard' (Spiekermann, 2020, p. 99). Individuals suffer epistemic network injustice when they are members of 'crippled networks' (Spiekermann, 2020), related to Hardin's concept of 'crippled epistemologies' (Hardin, 2002).

A further type of testimonial injustice has been identified by Grabelsky (2015) as the 'epistemic injustice of interpretive burden' which places an unfair burden of communication between social groups on the marginal group, a process resonating with the title and contents of the bestselling book 'Why I no longer talk to white people about race' by Reni Eddo-Lodge (2020). This process leads to 'deliberate dehumanization and devaluation of marginalized groups and their linguistic practices' (Grabelsky, 2016, p. 2) and includes wilful epistemic ignorance on the part of the dominant group. Grabelsky, in particular, relates this type of epistemic injustice to white supremacy and notes that 'women of color are often expected to take on the responsibility of bridging the interpretive gap—due to either language barriers or divergent life experiences (or both)—between their white interlocutors and themselves' (Grabelsky, 2016, p. 2).

Townsend and Townsend (2021) distinguish between cognitive and communicative forms of hermeneutical injustice. They argue that indigenous peoples in their study do not have a cognitive form of hermeneutical injustice because they have highly developed customs, systems of knowledge, rituals and mythologies for understanding their connection to their physical environment. However, indigenous peoples suffer from a form of communicative hermeneutical injustice because they are unable to express this in a 'foreign conceptual vocabulary', identified as institutional hermeneutic injustice (Townsend & Townsend, 2021, p. 154). This also provides a strong link to linguistic injustice, described below.

4 | TRANSDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: THE RELEVANCE OF EPISTEMIC INJUSTICE

Transdisciplinary research has four pivotal characteristics: it aims to resolve real world problems, such as sustainable development; it integrates various academic disciplines and actors, including non-academic actors; it aims to facilitate cooperation and mutual learning of all actors; and, in this process, it produces new societal and scientific knowledge (Arnold, 2022). In the production of new societal and scientific knowledge, it includes a knowledge making approach that aims to transcend disciplinary knowledge boundaries, legitimizing the equal participation of different types of stakeholders (Biswas & Miller, 2022). These stakeholders have multiple knowledges, such as community, technical and individual knowledges derived from diverse nested knowledge systems with multiple epistemologies, and the combination of these knowledges into a holistic approach are necessary to resolve the 'wicked' socially embedded, complex problems of sustainable development (Brown, 2011; Brown et al., 2010). Although transdisciplinary research aims to bring together a wide variety of stakeholders and their knowledge, it appears to underestimate the power and empowerment implications of combining stakeholders

from dominant and less powerful social groups in processes of knowledge co-creation. This apparent naivety is also reflected in Agenda 2030 and the SDGs which aim to 'Leave no-one behind' while almost totally ignoring local and indigenous knowledge (Cummings et al., 2018), despite the fact that indigenous peoples and their knowledge are seen as essential to achieving the SDGs because of their role in climate adaptation (Byskov, 2018).

Scholars are increasing recognizing that the different knowledge systems and power differentials between stakeholders can disrupt the process of transdisciplinary research. For example, Arnold argues that interactions between stakeholders are often described as cooperative, collaborative and showing values of equality while, in reality, '... scarcity, uncertainty, urgency, rule, power or dominance, and change or transition influence cooperation, mutual interaction and knowledge outcome' (Arnold, 2022, p. 30). Processes which bring together participants from the Global North and Global South face the biggest challenges (Hermans et al., 2022), probably because this is where power differentials are the greatest. As a result, transdisciplinary processes involve more than a neutral combination of knowledge as different knowledge systems have different practices, aspirations, economic needs, ontologies, and values, making these processes 'full of intellectual contestation, equivocation, misunderstanding, and tension' (Ludwig & Boogaard, 2021, p. 27).

Against this background, epistemic injustice is starting to be perceived as a barrier to collaboration and coordination between multiple knowledges and different stakeholders, and this barrier is particularly strongly felt in sustainable development because of the power differentials and distance. Byskov, for example, argues that the exclusion and underrepresentation of indigenous peoples from national climate strategy deliberations is epistemic injustice because they have 'a special interest in implementing sustainable and responsive climate strategies that take their knowledge and interests into account' (Byskov, 2018, unpaginated). In another example, Boogaard (2021) reflects critically on a participatory livestock project in rural Mozambique based on a qualitative analysis of 27 project documents. In this analysis, she identified five ways in which the project showed evidence of epistemic injustice: imposing a Western-based development ideology on the project participants; labeling participants as mainly knowledge beneficiaries, rather than 'knowers' or 'knowledge holders' in their own right; excluding indigenous knowledge and epistemologies from training; imposing Western concepts through project interventions; and framing research within Western categories and frameworks. These measures demonstrate, for example, wilful hermeneutical ignorance in which non-Western ideologies are excluded and epistemic objectification in which project participants are seen as recipients of knowledge and sources of data but not as knowledge holders in their own right. Boogaard (2021) also demonstrated that the SDGs, in particular, were employed to legitimize Western-based knowledge interventions in African agriculture, undermining the SDGs' apparently benign objectives.

Showing a similar pattern in which sustainable development is undermining the legitimacy of local knowledge, Townsend and Townsend (2021) focus on the epistemic treatment of indigenous people by

the Inter-American Court and the Commission on Human Rights, two institutions that have sought to affirm the rights of indigenous peoples in the context of colonialism and encroachment onto indigenous land. Taking the example of the Kichwa people of Sarayaku, Ecuador, Townsend and Townsend (2021) argue that despite its good intentions of consultation, 'the Court's judgment in the Sarayaku case threatens to entrench the practice of epistemically marginalizing indigenous communities, treating them not as informants with knowledge to share about their natural environments, but only as sources of information' (p. 151). This type of consultation process, in which the consulted are not consulted as knowers but rather as sources of information, is consistent with the results of the 2010 'Where are the ripples' practitioner-led research project, part of the IKM Emergent Research Programme. This project demonstrated that when international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) undertake participatory processes with local stakeholders, the results are not considered in organizational learning trajectories or by management but are rather used only for limited local problem solving and advocacy: the international NGOs may be the sponsors of these sorts of activities but are never the intended audience (Beardon & Newman, 2010). These three examples demonstrate that, despite the benign principles of consultation and participation, consultation processes can lead to 'epistemic objectification', namely a type of testimonial injustice in which a knowledge holder's testimony is not seen as coming from a knower but rather purely as a source of information (Fricker, 2007).

Reflecting on Byskov's (2021) framework of complex conditions that indicate that epistemic injustice is a social injustice, we can see that all five conditions can be met in sustainable development in the examples described above, including unfair outcomes, unfair judgment about in epistemic capacity, unfair denial of stakeholder rights, denial of knowledge, as well as unfair existing vulnerability. Much of the epistemic injustice relating to local knowledges and indigenous people will likewise meet all of these conditions. However, we consider that epistemic injustice in sustainable development may also have at least two additional conditions which are directly harmful. First, in the case of sustainable development, epistemic injustice is embedded in structural and systemic inequalities of existing vulnerability in the relationship between the global North and global South and, second, the denial of stakeholder rights is often denial of the rights of the primary stakeholders, such as the local communities.

5 | A HOLISTIC FRAMEWORK OF EPISTEMIC INJUSTICE

In this section, we bring the literature on epistemic injustice and sustainable development together to develop a holistic framework of epistemic injustice. This is work in progress and can be added to and amended as further insights develop. As far as we are aware, it is the first attempt to develop such a framework. We have developed this framework as a hierarchy, linking the main concepts from the literature in a hierarchical structure as a heuristic device. In reality, however, we recognize that the relationships between these different

concepts are more network-like than we have been able to represent here with, for example, (structural) hermeneutical injustice being closely linked to (systemic) linguistic injustice because social meanings get lost in translation (see, for example, Goro, 2005). In this hierarchy, we are looking at coloniality through the lens of epistemic justice, although it would be possible to employ the lens of coloniality to consider epistemic injustice.

5.1 | Systemic epistemic injustice

Much systemic epistemic injustice has not yet been explicitly included in the current framework. According to Patin et al, 'collective injustices exist and are problematic on individual and systemic levels' (Patin et al., 2020, p. 1). Systemic injustice includes linguistic injustice, coloniality of the development knowledge system, epistemicide and curricula injustice. Catala (2022) describes linguistic injustice in which non-English speakers in the academic field of philosophy suffer epistemic injustice because of the widespread adoption of English as a lingua franca. In linguistic injustice, not only are non-English speakers considered to be less credible, non-Anglophone journals and institutions are also excluded (Catala, 2022). This issue of linguistic injustice is evident in development research (see, for example, Cummings et al., 2021) but is a frequently expressed problem in development practice where '...Development speak, a peculiar dialect of English, [has] become the lingua franca of the International Development Industry' (Eade, 2010, p. viii). In her study of Cambodia, Lindberg (2012) found, for example, that English is predominantly the first language of development cooperation, putting responsibility upon local development practitioners to translate and mediate between international organizations and local people. This inability to communicate with local people is also evident in the apparently systemic inability to engage with local languages and non-English intellectual traditions (Powell, 2006). Experiences from Kyrgyzstan, Malawi and Peru indicate that there is still a general failure to integrate languages into development practice, excluding some groups and making it difficult for non-native English speakers to receive promotion (Footitt et al., 2018). In South Africa, English appears to be excluding other languages, even when they are protected by the Constitution, while English is often also adopted by governments at the expense of indigenous languages in other African countries (De Varennes & Kuzborska, 2016).

Coloniality is primarily concerned with political and economic decolonization, although Maldonado-Torres' definition in the opening paragraph of this article illustrates the importance of knowledge. The epistemic injustice of colonialism, for which we are using the term coloniality of knowledge because this better recognizes the present day features of this concept, has been defined as '...a form of cultural injustice that occurs when the concepts and categories by which a people understand themselves and their world is replaced or adversely affected by the concepts and categories of the colonizers' (Bhargava, 2013), providing a link to hermeneutical injustice. Bhargava identifies three different types of epistemic injustice that are

perpetuated by colonialism, namely the 'inferiorization' of indigenous cultures', marginalization of elements of indigenous epistemic frameworks, and transformation of epistemic forms of indigenous cultures involving, for example, the loss of '...older conceptions of individuation, multiple belongings and fluid selves' (Bhargava, 2013, p. 415). Strongly related to coloniality, a further form of systemic epistemic injustice is epistemicide or the destruction of systems of knowledge. Bonaventura de Sousa Santos defines epistemicide as 'death of the knowledge of [a] subordinated culture' (de Sousa Santos, 2007, p. 149), caused by colonization, oppression, and genocide. In the context of information sciences, Patin et al. (2020, p. 2) define epistemicide as 'killing, silencing, annihilation, or devaluing of a knowledge system', arguing that it occurs 'when epistemic injustices are persistent and systematic and collectively work as a structured and systemic oppression of particular ways of knowing' (Patin et al., 2021, p. 1307). Patin and colleagues give examples including the devaluing and 'writing over' of indigenous knowledge and slavery (Patin et al., 2020). With its roots in coloniality, epistemicide is still ongoing with, for example, replacement of indigenous forms of natural resource tenure and management, loss of native languages and disuse of indigenous forms of food production and processing (Elías, 2020, unpaginated). Like Kapatika, we would argue that 'the ever hastening loss of various forms of indigenous cultural epistemic tools, apparent in the surge of language death and the loss of indigenous knowledge systems in present-day Africa' (Kapatika, 2022, p. 5) represents epistemicide.

Building on the work of Fricker (2007) and Paraskeva (2017), Patin et al. (2021) also propose a further systemic form of epistemic injustice, namely curricula injustice, and consider its implications for the academic field of information science. They define curricula injustice, evident in education and particularly academia, as education policies and practices which are used to 'naturalize' discrimination, racism, sexism, colonialism, and patriarchy by marginalizing diverse epistemologies, disciplines, theories, concepts, and experiences. In development education and research, this type of injustice is evident in the failure to publish and cite scholars from the global South and Eastern Europe (Cummings & Hoebink, 2017; Patel et al., 2022) but also the failure to integrate non-Western epistemologies in curricula. For sustainable development, South African experience indicates that curricula need recognize the tensions between 'development' and 'sustainability', introduce congruent and enabling conceptual frameworks, and be founded on the lived experiences of learners (Kumalo, 2017).

Based on the literature, a new holistic framework of individual, collective, structural and systemic epistemic injustice (Figure 2) has been developed. Despite its value for understanding the phenomenon of epistemic injustice, it is not action-oriented and shows no direct pathways to addressing injustice. In Part 5, we will attempt to use the preceding review of epistemic injustice to develop a holistic, action-oriented framework of epistemic justice. In this approach, we recognize that while epistemic injustice can have an 'unblocking function' (Casuso, 2021, p. 8), new social knowledge, including a new framework of epistemic justice, is needed to address epistemic injustice through action in the real world.

5.2 | Limitations of epistemic injustice

Although the concept of epistemic injustice has had considerable value in increasing understanding of knowledge-related injustice and how it relates to social injustice, it has a number of limitations. First, the philosophy of epistemic injustice is generally focused on identity prejudice toward against individual knowledge holders or groups of knowledge holders, despite Anderson's (2012) emphasis on the structural implications. As a result, there seems to be a gulf between current philosophical approaches to epistemic injustice and the existence of the ultimate epistemic injustice, namely the violent destruction of the knowledge of communities and societies, such as the systemic, sustained epistemicide which has been part of the colonial legacy in Africa (Ramose, 2014). Second, and concomitant to the previous point, the level of suffering caused by epistemic injustice does not fully appear to be recognized in the academic descriptions of epistemic injustice. Societies, communities and individuals who are subject to epistemic injustice can have their knowledge, their cultural life, their livelihoods and ultimately their existence threatened by epistemic injustice, a process which must be responsible for untold suffering and despair. Given these limitations, we think it is necessary to make a distinction between the epistemic injustice experienced by individuals and groups of knowledge holders, covered in the current framework, and structural and systemic injustice. Structural and systemic injustice are consistent with Patin et al. (2021) conception of 'Third harm'. Building on Fricker's (2007) conceptions of primary (individual) and secondary (collective) harm of epistemic injustice, Patin and colleagues identify a 'Third harm', namely:

...a harm that is exponential in its potential to hurt, intergenerationally depriving not only the individual (primary) at this moment in time, and the current collective community (secondary), but addressing the scope of loss to the future, which is impossible to quantify but possible to imagine (Patin et al., 2021, p. 1312).

Fricker might not agree that these systemic issues are part of epistemic injustice because of her emphasis on direct knowledge holders, and she does not, for example, refer to colonialism in her influential book on this subject (Fricker, 2007) or in more recent reflections (Fricker, 2017). However, we argue that these phenomena have a distinctly epistemic aspects which are not 'largely incidental' (Fricker, 2007, p. 1) and remain 'bounded and specific' (Fricker, 2017, p. 53), thus making it possible to include them in the framework of epistemic injustice.

6 | A NEW FRAMEWORK OF EPISTEMIC JUSTICE

In this section, we propose a framework of epistemic justice based on the hypothesis that a positive focus on justice is more likely to avoid resistance and inform effective action, supported by diverse examples

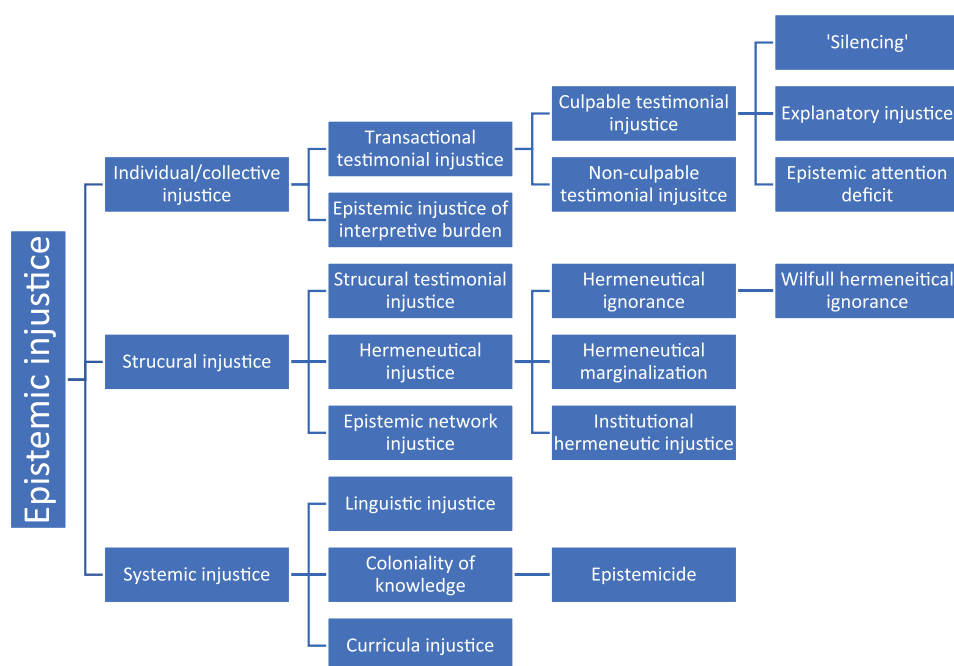


FIGURE 2 Individual/collective, structural and systemic epistemic injustice (Source: Authors) [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/sd.2497)]

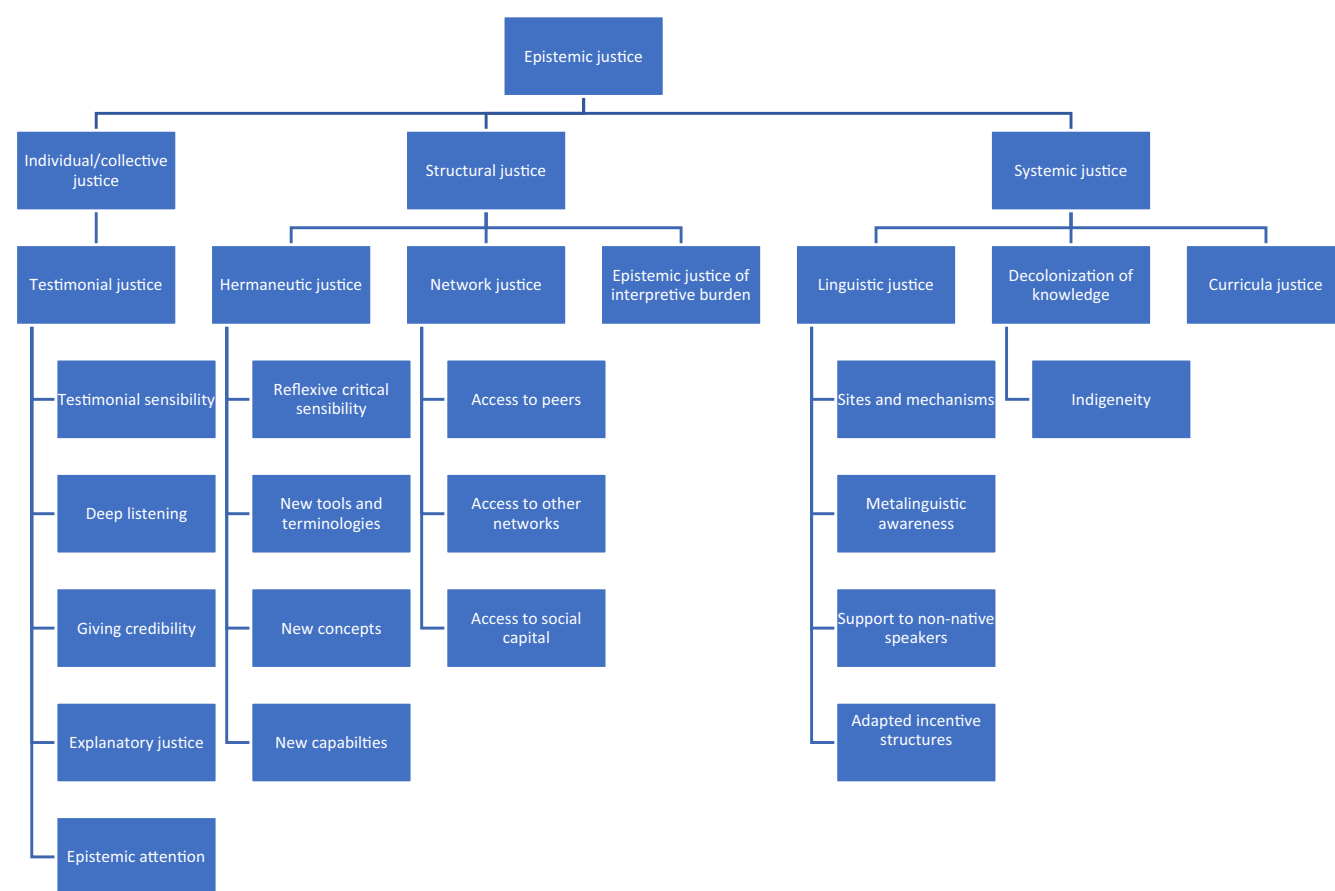


FIGURE 3 Epistemic justice (Source: Authors) [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/sd.2497)]

from theory (Fredrickson, 2004), method (Cooperrider et al, 2005) and practice (ZonMw, 2019). To signpost the way forward, we have developed a framework of action-oriented epistemic justice (Figure 3).

Strongly informed by the framework of epistemic justice described above, we also develop a hierarchical framework of individual/collective, structural and systemic epistemic justice. We also recognize that

changes in development practice at the level of individual and organizational practices, to be elaborated in a follow up paper, will be most feasible at the individual/collective and structural levels while systemic levels will be more challenging because they require systems change.

6.1 | Individual/collective justice

We hypothesize that epistemic justice, defined as forms of just treatment that relate to issues of knowledge, understanding, and participation in communicative practices, includes both individual and group justice, structural justice, and systemic justice (Figure 3), mirroring epistemic injustice (Figure 2). We consider that individual/collective justice has two main components, namely the 'virtue of testimonial justice' (Fricker, 2007, p. 87) and epistemic justice of the interpretive burden. In this new framework, testimonial justice comprises giving equal credibility to testimony without identity prejudice on the hearer's part. This will require testimonial sensibility which involves correcting for identity prejudice (Fricker, 2007) and deep listening, as outlined by Boogaard (2021) and others, but also the opposite of silencing, namely giving credibility to all, as well as explanatory justice in which testimony is seen as the result of reasoning rather than identity. Finally, 'giving epistemic attention' will involve paying attention to all as knowledge holders, particularly those who are not currently receiving attention.

A further type of testimonial injustice relates to interpretative burden. Its reverse is 'epistemic justice of the interpretative burden' where the interpretive burden is shared across epistemic actors, rather than being placed unfairly on marginalized groups. In international development, this resonates with Pailey's statement that white development workers have a role in dismantling 'unearned privilege' (Pailey, 2020, p. 742), although it also means that community organizations, international NGOs and other development organizations need to take up part of the interpretive burden for marginalized groups, representing their interests to other powerful actors in a way that fully reflects the interests of these groups.

6.2 | Structural epistemic justice

In this framework, we consider that the two main components of structural epistemic justice comprise hermeneutical justice and epistemic network justice. Hermeneutical justice, founded on the concept of hermeneutical injustice, involves new tools and terminologies, which facilitate the access to knowledge by socially disadvantaged groups. Given that hermeneutical injustice includes also lack of access to concepts and capabilities, hermeneutical justice requires not only that 'individuals have accurate concepts at their disposal but that they have the capabilities to use these concepts adequately' (Bratu & Haenel, 2021, p. 332). Another hermeneutical injustice relates to hermeneutical marginalization, namely 'not being able to participate in the shaping of society's hermeneutical resource' (Fricker, 2007,

p. 153). Hermeneutical justice, therefore, includes participation in the shaping of society's hermeneutical resources, namely the tools, terminologies and concepts discussed earlier. It also includes the virtue of 'reflexive critical sensitivity' (Fricker, 2007, p. 7) in which the hearer should recognize that a speaker's intelligibility might be negatively affected by a gap in collective hermeneutical resources.

While epistemic network injustice involves systematic deprivation of access to helpful epistemic peers and only access to so-called 'crippled networks' (Spiekermann, 2020), epistemic network justice must involve access to helpful epistemic peers or, paraphrasing Spiekermann, access to 'true peers.' Network theory and practice indicates that epistemic network justice would involve not only access to peers but also to other actors at the boundary of networks, providing access to social capital. Social capital has been argued by many others as playing an important role in knowledge sharing and networks in many different national contexts, including in LMICs (Cummings et al., 2019).

6.3 | Systemic epistemic justice

Reflecting systemic epistemic injustice, systemic epistemic justice comprises linguistic epistemic justice, decolonization of knowledge and curricula justice. Catala (2022) has outlined linguistic epistemic justice for academic migrants in the field of Anglo-American analytical philosophy, identifying four main pathways: identifying sites and mechanisms of epistemic linguistic injustice; cultivating what she calls metalinguistic awareness, namely 'a self-reflective, normative sensibility to linguistic diversity, the existence and effects of linguistic bias, and the potentially epistemically exclusionary dimension of language' (Catala, 2022, p. 9); concrete measures to prevent or counteract linguistic epistemic injustice, such as support to non-native speakers; and a new incentive structure. Footitt et al. (2018) have made a number of recommendations for development organizations and donors, including recognizing the importance of language within their organizations and at all stages of project implementation. They also make related recommendations for higher education which will be considered below in curricula justice.

Decolonization of knowledge is needed to address the coloniality of current knowledge systems. It represents 'a group of processes and actions that intentionally dismantle the entrenched, unequal patterns of knowledge creation and use that emanate from our colonial past' (Cummings et al., 2021, p. 65). Cummings et al. (2021) have outlined some steps which academics of development studies can take to bring about change namely working in protected 'niches' as parts of decolonization networks; supporting promising epistemologies, such as intersectionality which recognize that oppressions and privileges that result when peoples' identities or positions intersect with each other, and with social structures (Levac et al., 2018); adopting new ways of working, including mentoring; adopting new discourses which reject the traditional binaries of development discourses; and adopting new practices which reject current unjust knowledge practices. For development practice, decolonization of knowledge requires the development of new practices that disrupt current unequal power relations as

they relate to knowledge. One of the most fundamental changes must be a re-evaluation of local knowledges and recognition of the role of large development organizations in the knowledge system as described in the *Agenda Knowledge for Development* (Brandner & Cummings, 2018). There is evidence that the status of local knowledge is going through a renaissance (see, for example, USAID, 2022) and that its role as evidence is being better recognized (Young, 2021).

Related to the decolonization of knowledge is the epistemic justice of indigeneity which has been proposed by Canadian Indigenous artists, curators and organizers because decolonization should include a process of recentring esthetic and political indigenous structures (Mignolo, 2017). Charles Dhewa's work, advocating for an emphasis on indigenous commerce and the vibrance of mass markets in Africa is an example of such an approach because these phenomena have largely been ignored in development research and policy because they have been outside the dominant development discourse which is focused on the formal sector (Dhewa, 2022a, 2022b, 2022c).

Education has become the focal point of efforts to attain epistemic justice (Masaka, 2019). Curricula justice for sustainable development involves, for example, 'more holistic and realistic understanding of development [that] would put all forms and colors of knowledge at the center, producing other understandings based on contextual and empowering ideas emanating from indigenous cultures' (Syed & Ali, 2011, p. 362). The ways in which development should be taught (Cornwall, 2020) and analysis of reading lists (Schucan Bird & Pitman, 2019) are also areas which are receiving attention.

7 | CONCLUSIONS

The conceptual framework of epistemic injustice has been employed to develop a more action-oriented framework of epistemic justice which provides signposts for a more just future in terms of development research and practice. This new framework also provides conceptual anchor points for those advocating for, for example, new perspectives on local knowledge and the role of network justice. It is recommended that development researchers and practitioners should consider integrating this new framework into their work. Although this exercise is specifically aimed to create value for action related to research and practice, it has also integrated new categories of systemic epistemic injustice, namely linguistic injustice, coloniality and curricula injustice, into the framework.

In a next phase of this research, the authors will investigate how this new framework of epistemic justice is reflected in the work of networks which are aiming to 'decolonize' and increase epistemic justice in international development and, in particular, identifying practices which can support epistemic justice. This will have the dual purpose of aiming to validate this new framework but also to consider whether it can propose new actions—and practices—for increasing epistemic justice.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Sarah Cummings conceived the article with support from Charles Dhewa, Gladys Kemboi, and Stacey Young. Sarah Cummings wrote the first versions of the article and then received substantial feedback, suggested amendments and textual changes from the other authors. Charles Dhewa and Gladys Kemboi contributed equally to the article and thus represent equal second authors. They have been listed in alphabetical order.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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