



Legacies of the Past?

Assessing Claims for Reparations

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This innocent country set you down in a ghetto in which, in fact, it intended that you should perish. Let me spell out precisely what I mean by that, for the heart of the matter is here, and the root of my dispute with my country. You were born where you were born and faced the future that you faced because you were black and *for no other reason*. The limits of your ambition were, thus, expected to be set forever. You were born into a society which spelled out with brutal clarity, and in as many ways as possible, that you were a worthless human being. You were not expected to aspire to excellence: you were expected to make peace with mediocrity.

- James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time* (1963)

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Abstract

Major racial wealth disparities continue to plague Western societies. These economic gaps have been established centuries ago through projects of legal theft such as colonialism, slavery, segregation, racist housing policy, and other structural forms of violence. Hence, it is often argued that states and private elites, the former and current perpetrators of such misdeeds, bear the responsibility to right historical wrongs and eradicate contemporary injustices; to address and redress both the maldistribution as well as the misrecognition faced by colonial subjects and their descendants. If and how this problem is to be solved, remains a matter of debate. In my thesis, I shall attempt to map this discussion by analysing the concept of reparations, typically understood as matters of rights for those who have wrongfully been caused harm by a particular group or state. Not only shall I evaluate the legitimacy of such policy, but I will also attempt to show what potential recompense might eventually look like in practice. The validity of claims for reparations is assessed by determining whether or not they withstand philosopher Nancy Fraser's normative standard of participatory parity, which entails that justice requires certain social arrangements that allow all members of society to interact with each other as peers. Juxtaposing her framework with criticisms and adjusting it to make it more generous, I hope to show how the author's insights can provide a strong theoretical foundation for the topic at hand.

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. Problem statement

Centuries of plunder, expropriation of land, genocide, unfulfilled promises, and broken aspirations; entire histories wiped out, aided by the widespread commodification of human bodies, torture, death, and the continuous suffering under a culture of white supremacy. The chronology of colonialism starts in the 15th century, but its legacy remains. As expansive market systems emerged between nations in the Global North and South, intricate colonial enterprises were incorporated into a network of international free trade. What followed was the deliberate underdevelopment of these countries conquered by Western empires. This laid the foundation for the wealth these Western nations still benefit from today. And while Europe and the United States were taking big steps toward fully capitalist economies, the Global South remained in a state of abject economic deprivation; societies in Africa and Asia were developing independently until they were taken over either directly or indirectly by capitalist powers (Fanon, 1961; Rodney, 1972).

Exploitation subsequently increased, the export of surplus intensified, and entire societies were deprived of the benefits of their natural resources and labour. Crude exploitation was followed by diaspora of white people who sought their fortune elsewhere as we witness the emergence of settler colonies; areas considered more “habitable” saw the establishment of European communities with their own political, economic, religious, and educational institutions, many colonisers driven by what they saw as their *mission civilisatrice*. With that, the forceful implementation of a culture premised on ideas of white supremacy became further entrenched in the colonised nations while native populations started to internalise false narratives of inferiority. Roughly around the turn of the twentieth century, decolonisation occurred. Yet after many localities supposedly laid claim to their right to self-determination, neocolonial enterprises replaced the old colonial systems in novel ways (Harvey, 2007; Rodney, 1972).

Today, in Europe and the United States, we see how racism remains embedded in both the informal social interactions between citizens, as well as within the political, economic, and cultural institutions at the foundation of these societies. This has led to massive social and material disparities between white and non-white individuals. Hence, it is often argued that states and private elites of the Western world, the former perpetrators of colonial violence, have the responsibility to right historical wrongs and eradicate contemporary injustices; to address and redress both the maldistribution as well as the misrecognition faced by racialized individuals. If and how this problem is to be solved, remains a matter of debate.

In my thesis, I shall attempt to map this discussion by analysing the concept of reparations, typically understood as matters of rights for those who have wrongfully been caused harm by a particular group or state. Throughout my writing, I will analyse two different types of reparations, namely compensatory and non-compensatory. In both cases, however, the point of such recompense is that it paves a way towards righting wrongs in the rhetoric of forgiveness and reconciliation (Corlett, 2010).

International norms up until now have suggested that reparations should mainly take on the form of direct payments. We see several examples, such as Germany's payments of restitution to Holocaust victims, or the US government's compensation to Japanese Americans that were put in internment camps during the Second World War. But again, there is a difference between compensatory (i.e., payments of restitution, but also less liquid forms, such as annuities or trust accounts) and non-compensatory reparations (i.e., acknowledgements by state apparatuses that crimes against humanity have been committed in the past, or national apologies for such misdeeds) (Darity, 2020).

The distinction between these two types is not always that clear. Not only because it can easily be argued that neither is sufficient alone, but also because they affect each other in numerous ways. Non-compensatory reparations in the form of an apology or commemoration, for example, might set a legal precedent that can lead to the legitimization for future compensatory claims. But whichever type we are dealing with, a defining feature of reparations is that they offer some sort of satisfaction. It must provide affected parties with closure, which may paradoxically mean that the conversation is kept going. This is what distinguishes reparations from mere restitution. These two terms are often confounded, which is a major error once we consider that racial injustice is rooted both in the economic structure as well as in the status hierarchy of society.

After all, restitution means getting something back to its rightful owner; something that has either been lost or stolen. Hence, it does not necessarily presuppose that deliberate misconduct has taken place. Reparations, on the other hand, can only be made for damage or loss due to a prior wrongdoing. It thus implies intent. Though it can be a part of reparations, it must be stressed that restitution is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for reparations. After all, reparations must offer satisfaction and closure, which can depend on giving back something that has been stolen from an individual. However, it might be possible that the claimant has lost more than that which was stolen from them. And this may not even be something that can be understood in redistributive terms; there might be an element of recognition related to the satisfaction one seeks. In that case, mere restitution will obviously not cut it. Conversely, that which must be returned might not even exist anymore. Restitution is then downright impossible, but reparations could still be made (Boxill & Corlett, 2022; Darity, 2020).

In most cases across the Western world, former colonial powers have provided neither restitution nor satisfaction and closure. However, there are instances in which we see one of the two has been attained, such as when Germany attempted to right historical wrongs with Namibia. It is an example in which restitution was made, but that clearly shows a lack of satisfaction and closure. In 2021, the government of Germany agreed to pay Namibia 1.1 billion euros for the Herero-Nama genocide, which took place at the start of the twentieth century. Tens of thousands of men, women, and children were tortured, shot, or driven into the Kalahari Desert by German colonizers to fend for themselves and starve to death. Though Germany recognized the atrocities as “genocide”, the payment was described as a gesture of reconciliation, not as legally binding reparations. This was a deliberate choice made out of

fear that this terminology would set a legal precedent for similar claims from other nations (Oltermann, 2021). This is a clear case in which reparations are not consistently pursued. The payment of 1.1 billion euros coupled with the recognition of a genocide then acts as mere restitution without offering much satisfaction or closure.

By now, it should be clear what reparations are, and, perhaps more importantly, what they are not. As will be shown in the third chapter of my thesis, the racial wealth gap in the Western world is too big to be redressed through incremental programs. The United States as well as nations in Europe have fostered white asset ownership while building a racial divide in wealth. This is a debt created centuries ago in the project of colonialism, one that has accumulated over time. And because these disparities are so large in scale, they therefore beg for intervention at the national state level. Hence, I will assess whether justice requires Western governments fulfil their unmet obligations to colonial subjects and their descendants through a program of reparations. But clearly, such a project would not be as simple as expressing historical injustices in monetary terms. Nevertheless, wealth is an essential element of the debate, if not the most important.

Furthermore, the topic of reparations naturally gives rise to criticisms and impracticalities that must be accounted for. Even though immense racial wealth disparities are a clear indicator of the intergenerational effects of a highly exclusionary culture, one might wonder who bears responsibility. After all, most of the aggressors and their direct victims are no longer around. On a more fundamental level, there are also critics who argue that, when it comes to these disparities, it is not racism that is at play but something else. One traditional line of explanation involves the idea of natural inequalities in ability or chance occurrences like luck. Inequality is then said to be the result of causes found in every society across the globe. But there is another explanation employed by those who believe race should not be the defining element, one that is sounder than the previous one. Some scholars plead for something broader than race-based reparations: a program that takes racial justice as its mission but includes the poor of all races.

In any case, claims for reparations must somehow be critically evaluated in order to assess if and why such demands are legitimate in the first place. Additionally, one might subsequently wonder who owes who what kind of recompense. This brings me to an overview of the central questions in my thesis.

1.1. Research question and thesis structure

Following this introduction, in the second chapter I shall introduce the theoretical basis for my thesis, characterized by the academic debate surrounding redistribution and recognition. Two antithetical positions by philosophers Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth are explored, juxtaposed, and adjusted to provide a normative framework for the topic at hand. The third chapter subsequently looks at the salience of racial wealth disparities. Here, empirical cases are analysed and substantiated by theoretical insights. Then, in the first part of the fourth chapter, I attempt to refute three major criticisms often made against reparations. Following this section is an overview of certain practical issues that arise, how they might be tackled,

and hence what recompense for colonial misdeeds might eventually look like. Finally, the conclusion provides an overview of the most important insights used to reflect upon the research question. The thesis finishes with potential shortcomings and further questions that might provide a basis for future research.

The research question of my thesis is essentially twofold. The first part is concerned with the more fundamental aspect of the debate: whether claims for reparations can be accepted in the first place. Such demands shall be assessed by determining whether or not they withstand Fraser's normative standard of participatory parity, a theoretical framework that will be critically explored in the following chapter. The second part is focused on the practical aspect of the topic at hand: what such reparations might eventually look like. Hence, the research question of my thesis:

To what extent can claims for compensatory as well as non-compensatory reparations be accepted based on Nancy Fraser's concept of participatory parity and, if they can, what might such policies look like?

1.2. Academic relevance

When exploring the topic of reparations, one is inevitably faced with the academic debate regarding the distinctions between redistribution and recognition. Redistribution is typically understood as a concept linked to notions of justice that aim to generate social equality through the redistribution of goods that guarantee liberty, whereas recognition conceptualizes the conditions of a just society through acknowledging individual dignity. Both normative approaches have the goal to provide human beings with the means to live flourishing lives (Fraser & Honneth, 2003).

However, if and how to realize such ambitions, as well as who is responsible for actualizing them, remains a matter of debate. The contentiousness of this discussion is akin to that of the question regarding reparations, and therefore I believe both concepts warrant ample attention when exploring this topic. After all, distinguishing between compensatory and non-compensatory reparations essentially means dealing with a categorization based on theories of redistribution and recognition respectively. Though it seems that this academic debate lends itself particularly well to address the topic at hand, the two have never been linked to one another.

To map the academic debate regarding redistribution and recognition, I explore two rather antithetical positions conceptualized by philosophers Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth. According to Fraser, what is needed when approaching social strife, is a two-dimensional framework that incorporates redistribution as well as recognition. The goal, then, is to analyze the interplay of what she believes are two distinct ordering dimensions that are mutually irreducible, but nonetheless practically intertwined. The reconciliation of the two concepts is premised on her assertion that neither is sufficient on its own when discussing the topic of social justice. Based at once in the economic structure as well as in the status order of society, maldistribution and misrecognition thus supposedly involve injustices that are traceable to both (Fraser, 2003).

Conversely, Honneth suggests that both concepts must be represented under a one-dimensional, unified framework of recognition, because it would establish a clear link between the social causes related to widespread feelings of injustice and the normative objectives formulated by emancipatory movements. Even distributional injustices must therefore be conceived as an institutional expression of disrespect (i.e., as unjustified relations of recognition). His goal here, is to avoid introducing an unbridgeable chasm between symbolic and material dimensions of social reality, which he believes Fraser's theory runs the risk of doing (Honneth, 2003).

1.3. Societal relevance

Perhaps the first, most noteworthy demand for reparations as we understand such policy today took place in 1969 when US civil rights leader James Forman read his *Black Manifesto* to the masses. In this pamphlet, he demanded 500 million dollars in reparations from Christian churches and Jewish synagogues, amounting to about fifteen dollars per Black American. This claim was legitimate, Forman argued, because for over three and a half centuries, white people worked together with these religious institutions to seize vast amounts of economic advantages from African Americans through practices like slavery. Though the manifesto gained little popular support, it did start a discussion in the media as well as among academics (Boxill & Corlett, 2022; Coates, 2014; Darity, 2020).

The academic interest in reparations remained high among Black philosophers in the US, but the wider community of political theorists focused on Rawlsian thought generally ignored it. It also garnered little attention in Western Europe, where the issue is arguably just as pressing. However, in recent years, the interest in the topic of reparations has been somewhat reignited in a broader societal context, outside of academia. In each session of US Congress since 1989, for example, Congressman John Conyers had introduced a bill to create a commission for the study of reparations until he passed away in 2019, in 2014 journalist and civil rights advocate Ta-Nehisi Coates published a widely discussed essay in renowned political magazine *The Atlantic* titled *The Case for Reparations*, and a 2022 report filed by a California state task force details the harms done to Black citizens over the course of history, laying out recommendations to redress the wrongs that continue to plague African Americans today (Boxill & Corlett, 2022; Coates, 2014; Conyers, 2017; Sullivan, 2022).

Though much of the literature on reparations is primarily focused on the US, we witness more and more interest in Western Europe as well. We see, for example, how a country like Great Britain still struggles to make amends with Caribbean immigrants known as the Windrush generation, who have been wrongly classified as illegal aliens, facing many legal sanctions. Details of this "Windrush scandal" broke out in 2017 but demands for compensation are yet to be met (Gentleman, 2019). We also see how a nation like the Netherlands is extensively researching what part it played in past colonial crimes such as the transatlantic slave trade, and how during a state visit to the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2022 king Philippe of Belgium expressed his "deepest regrets" for misconduct committed during the country's colonization. He did not, however, offer a formal apology. This caused a backlash among some, with Congolese opposition senator Francine Muyumba Nkanga stating that the only way to right such wrongs is through an apology combined with compensatory

reparations (Brandon, 2021; Parker, 2022). In any case, this renewed societal interest in the topic of reparations across the globe makes the question more salient than ever.

1.5. Central literature

The theoretical foundation of the thesis is based on an academic debate between philosophers Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, captured in a joint publication titled *Redistribution or Recognition?* (2003), in which the two authors dish out their opposing views. As will become apparent, Fraser's evaluative standard of participatory parity shall be used to adjudicate claims for reparations in the later chapters, but I do not accept her concept at face value.

Using a more generous formulation of the egalitarian ideal, based on the writings of sociologist Erik Olin Wright (2019), my goal is to expound on her theory to make it fit better with the topic of reparations.

The later chapters will focus on the disparities that might be redressed through reparations, primarily the racial wealth gap. Using insights from books like *Black Wealth / White Wealth*, written by sociologists Melvin Oliver and Thomas Shapiro (2006), not only do I hope to explain why wealth is an essential indicator, but it will also be my goal to show how a massive debt has accumulated over the course of history. The book by economist William Darity titled *From Here to Equality* (2020) will also provide important information, mainly to clear up impracticalities and to add credence to the viability of such policies. The author has written an extensive overview of reparations, primarily focused on the US context, showing from a calculative perspective that it is not such an unrealistic, far-fetched notion as some might claim.

Throughout the thesis, political science will thus be combined with sociology, legal scholarship, history, and critical race theory in order to explore the topic of reparations. Such a multidisciplinary view is, I believe, essential for anybody who wishes to analyse the many complex sides to such an issue. To be sure, much of the existing literature is rather US-centric. Nevertheless, these works still provide meaningful insights that can be extended to the Western European context as well.

Chapter 2. Redistribution, recognition, and reparations

Since the 1990s, philosophical theories of recognition have gained more attention as political action became increasingly aimed towards ameliorating the position of marginalised communities on a global scale (Taylor, 1994). The growing significance of this philosophy followed a period in which theories of redistribution had dominated political thought; Marxist theory in much of Europe and the Global South, and Rawlsian theories in the US. Both authors, as well as those who expounded on their ideas, have conceptualised guiding principles of a normative theory pertaining to the political order of society, aimed at envisioning a more egalitarian way of living. Though Marxist and Rawlsian thought differ in significant respects, there is a common thread that binds both of them: the agreement in calling for the eradication of socio-economic inequalities that can under no circumstances be justified with any reasonable arguments (Fraser, 2003; Rawls, 2005).

Redistribution, here, is thus understood as a concept linked to notions of justice that aim to generate social equality through the redistribution of goods that guarantee liberty, whereas recognition conceptualises the conditions of a just society through acknowledging individual dignity. Both of these normative approaches have the goal to provide human beings with the means to live flourishing lives (Fraser & Honneth, 2003; Rawls, 2005). However, if and how to realise such ambitions, as well as who is responsible for actualising them, remains a matter of debate. The contentiousness of this discussion is akin to that of the question regarding reparations, and therefore I believe both concepts warrant ample attention when exploring this topic.

After all, the fact of the matter is that the color of one's skin determines whether a person has equal access to the social and material means necessary to live a flourishing life. It has implications for an individual's chances of accumulating wealth and acquiring primary resources such as education, housing, and healthcare. Conversely, one's racial identity also has widespread consequences for the dignity one is able to receive (Darity, 2020). Therefore, approaching racial injustice from a merely redistributive perspective seems untenable, just as perceiving it only in terms of recognition can be equally unproductive. That is why, I contend, redistribution and recognition must not be understood as mutually exclusive concepts. After all, taking on a purely redistribution-based perspective, one might say that concrete economic problems tend to be overshadowed by identity politics that carve up segments of society. On the other hand, speaking from a purely recognition-based perspective, one could claim that such a difference-blind approach can buttress injustices by wrongly universalizing dominant group norms, asking marginalized communities to assimilate to them, ignoring what makes them distinct from the rest of society (Taylor, 1994; Fraser & Honneth, 2003). Both positions ignore important complexities one cannot help but account for when it comes to the question at hand.

To be sure, if reparations are understood as a question of both redistribution and recognition, a normative frame of reference needs to be employed in which these two objectives both receive ample consideration. Below follows an overview of the academic debate between the positions of philosophers Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, explored with the intent of assessing what evaluative standard is most suitable for my thesis.

2.1. Recognition according to Nancy Fraser

One problem with theories of redistribution, is that they run the risk of applying a universal difference-blind economic egalitarianism, failing to actualise justice for marginalised groups. Distributive politics, therefore, are sometimes seen as a type of outdated materialism that cannot begin to sufficiently articulate or challenge key experiences of (in)justice. We clearly witness the decoupling of cultural and social politics here. In the end it might seem, then, that we are presented with an either/or choice: we either opt for a politics of redistribution or a politics of recognition. But Fraser argues that this is a false antithesis. She writes that justice today requires both redistribution as well as recognition. Neither alone is sufficient, and both are wholly interconnected in ways that cannot be ignored (Fraser, 2003).

To bridge the gap between distribution and recognition, Fraser treats the latter concept as a matter of justice and not as a question of self-realization, which is done by authors such as Charles Taylor and Honneth. For both these scholars, to be recognized by the other is a necessary condition for actualizing complete, undistorted subjectivity. Denying another individual of recognition is to deprive this person of a fundamental necessity for human flourishing (Honneth, 2003; Taylor, 1994). Because misrecognition is typically understood in terms of impaired subjectivity as well as damaged self-injury, these negative effects are thus conceptualised within the framework of ethics; as hindering one's capacity for attaining the good life. Again, Fraser takes on a different approach. Instead of arguing that misrecognition is unacceptable because it makes self-realization impossible by perverting an individual's practical relation to the self, we should accept that:

. . . it is unjust that some individuals and groups are denied the status of full partners in social interaction simply as a consequence of institutionalized patterns of cultural value in whose construction they have not equally participated and which disparage their distinctive characteristics or the distinctive characteristics assigned to them (Fraser, 2003, p. 29).

Perceiving recognition as such, means conceptualizing it as a question of social status. In what Fraser calls the status model of recognition, one can analyze the effects of institutionalized patterns of cultural value on the relative standing of individuals. We speak of reciprocal recognition once these patterns constitute actors as peers, capable of participating on equal terms with each other in social life. If, on the other hand, these patterns constitute certain actors as inferior (i.e., as less than full partners in social interaction) we speak of misrecognition. In this model, misrecognition is thus expressed through social institutions, and not through deprecatory attitudes or freestanding discourses. It consequently becomes a violation of justice (Fraser, 2003). Following Fraser's model, the wrongness of misrecognition is thus placed in social relations and not in the individual or interpersonal psychology. As the author writes about the alternative perspective:

When misrecognition is identified with internal distortions and the structure of the self-consciousness of the oppressed, it is but a short step to blaming the victim, as in putting psychic damage to those subject to racism, for example, seems to add insult to injury (Fraser, 2003, p. 31).

Once we conceive of misrecognition as an injustice in the way Fraser does, it becomes a question of externally manifest and publicly verifiable obstacles that prevent people from

becoming full members of society. If we were to redress such issues, it would entail overcoming subordination, which in turn means reforming institutions and social practices. This means that one can subsequently better integrate claims for recognition with claims for the redistribution of resources. Because just like distributive justice, recognition is now connected to the universally binding domain of deontological morality (Fraser, 2003).

2.1. Participatory parity

To adjudicate whether the institutions of society are just in terms of both redistribution as well as recognition, Fraser has developed an evaluative standard she refers to as participatory parity. According to this norm, “justice requires social arrangements that permit all (adult) members of society to interact with one another as peers (Fraser, 2003, p. 36).” Thus, this principle means ensuring everybody has equal access to the institutional prerequisites (i.e., above all, economic resources, and one’s social standing) needed to participate on par with others in social life (Fraser, 2003).

For participatory parity to be actualized, Fraser asserts that there are at least two conditions that must be met. Both are necessary, neither are sufficient alone. First, she describes the objective condition, which entails that the distribution of resources must make sure that participants in social life are given independence and voice. This means that we must avoid socio-economic arrangements that institutionalize widespread material deprivation such as major wealth disparities that would deny some segments of society from being able to gain access to the resources necessary to interact with others as peers. Thus, it urges the eradication of material barriers that stand in the way of full social participation, which means only claims that diminish economic disparities are warranted. Second, the author details the intersubjective condition, which says that institutionalized patterns of cultural value must convey equal respect for all participants in social life, ensuring equal opportunity for achieving social esteem. This entails the elimination of patterns that deny some the status of full partners in interaction; either because their distinctiveness is not acknowledged or because they are burdened with excessive ascribed difference. Hence, it rejoins the dismantling of institutionalized cultural obstacles, which means only claims that promote status equality are justified (Fraser, 2003).

2.2. Disrespect as the basis of all social conflict

So far, an overview of the main approach conceptualized by Fraser. To see whether it holds up in light of the topic at hand, I shall scrutinize her theory by, first and foremost, applying an alternative perspective provided by Honneth. He has formulated an eloquent critique that questions some of the more fundamental elements in Fraser’s work.

According to Honneth, the language of everyday life is imbued with a knowledge that humans owe their integrity to the gaining of approval or recognition from others. When individuals face disrespect, they are denied such recognition. This hinders them in their positive understanding of the self, which one acquires through intersubjective means. What the author explains here goes back to Hegel's theory of recognition, premised on the idea that human individuation is a process in which people can develop a practical identity to the extent they are able to reassure themselves of recognition by an expanding circle of

communication partners. Those capable of language and action are constituted as individuals only through learning from the perspective of others who offer their approval, allowing them to relate to the self as beings who possess certain positive qualities and abilities. As one's consciousness grows, a person thus becomes increasingly dependent on the recognition afforded by the lifeworld of their social environment. Hence, Honneth argues that disrespect poses a significant risk of injury that can cause one's entire identity to collapse (1992).

The author differentiates disrespect into several gradations, classifying three specific forms. The first and most fundamental is related to a person's physical integrity. When practical maltreatment takes place, a person is forcibly robbed of opportunities to dispose freely over their body. Such physical injury is not just about raw pain, but about the feeling of being defenselessly at the mercy of another, losing all sense of reality. According to Honneth, this causes lasting damage to a person's confidence that they can coordinate their own body autonomously. The second affects a person's normative understanding of the self, referring to the forms of disrespect that exclude one from possessing particular rights within a society. This is a more legal form of recognition. If one is systematically denied certain rights, the implication is that they are not deemed to possess the same moral accountability as other citizens. Consequently, the subject is faced with a loss of self-respect. Finally, the third form of degradation Honneth describes pertains to the negative consequences for the social value of individuals or groups. These entail evaluative types of disrespect, related to the depreciation of certain lifestyles. One's status is imperative here, which can be understood to signify the degree of social acceptance forthcoming for a person's method of self-realization within the horizon of cultural tradition in a society. If this hierarchy of social values is structured to downgrade forms of living and convictions for being inferior, it robs a subject of opportunities to accord their abilities social value. The individual who faces this social devaluation typically experiences a loss of self-esteem (Honneth, 1992).

The author subsequently uses these negative conceptualizations to reformulate his problem in positive terms by describing three patterns of recognition: love, rights, and solidarity. First, love pertains to the idea that needs and emotions can supposedly only receive affirmation by being directly satisfied or answered. Recognition then takes on the form of approval and encouragement. The positive attitude one can assume if they experience this validation is self-confidence, which leads to a sense of security in expressing one's own needs and feelings. According to Honneth, this forms the precondition for the development of all further attitudes of self-respect. There are no more general terms for this specific reciprocal recognition beyond primary, intimate social relations, such as families, friendships, and romantic affairs. For the second pattern, mutual recognition must lead to the establishment of conditions under which one learns to see themselves through the perspective of their interaction partners as a bearer of equal rights. The positive attitude one can take on if they experience this legal recognition is that of self-respect. This allows one to see themselves as a person who shares the same qualities of a morally accountable subject with all other members of their community. The third and final one pertains to patterns of denigrative evaluation that deprive subjects of the potential for perceiving the abilities they have acquired during their lives as positive. The positive counterpart of this disrespect is a recognition that can help one acquire self-esteem, referring to a condition of solidarity with and approval of unconventional

lifestyles. This enables people to find recognition for the special characteristics that have been formed by their personal biographies, allowing one to identify with their qualities and abilities (Honneth, 1992).

In his joint publication with Fraser, we see how Honneth uses this differentiated analysis of recognition as a starting point to subsume redistribution within it. He does this by attempting to interpret bourgeois-capitalist society as an "institutionalized recognition order (2003, p. 138)". Here, the author clearly develops an alternative approach to Fraser. Whereas she suggests perspectival dualism of redistribution and recognition, Honneth formulates a normative monism of recognition. He understands the breakthrough to bourgeois-capitalist society as a result of the three differentiated spheres of recognition: intimate relationships, modern law, and social esteem. As Honneth explains once again in this joint publication, such relations allow humans to refer to themselves in three different attitudes within the context of the capitalist order:

. . .in intimate relationships, marked by practices of mutual affection and concern, they are able to understand themselves as individuals with their own needs; in legal relations, which unfold according to the model of mutually granted equal rights (and duties), they learn to understand themselves as legal persons owed the same autonomy as all other members of society; and, finally, in loose-knit social relations—in which, dominated by a one-sided interpretation of the achievement principle, there is competition for professional status—they in principle learn to understand themselves as subjects possessing abilities and talents that are valuable for society (2003, p. 142).

These three relations are distinguished by internal normative principles that establish different forms of mutual recognition. Love is the central idea of intimate relationships, the equality principle is the norm of legal relations, and the achievement principle forms the standard of social hierarchy. These principles represent normative perspectives with reference to which subjects can reasonably argue that existing forms of recognition are inadequate and thus in need of expansion. According to Honneth, only social relations that require such an attitude of mutual recognition can contribute to the development of a positive self-relation (2003).

2.3. Demanding recognition according to Axel Honneth

Again, Honneth believes that such a differentiated understanding of recognition provides one with a normative perspective that can be used to reasonably argue whether existing manifestations of recognition are adequate and, if not, to what extent they require expansion. Below it shall be explored what function they serve. This is where I mainly take issue with the author's claims.

According to Honneth, love is related to relationships that nurture human beings during the first years of their lives, such as the family, but it also includes bonds like friendships and intimate relationships one might develop later in life. In any case, the main takeaway here should be that love is placed within the context of an intimate sphere. This does not, however, mean that this type of recognition is necessarily relegated to the private realm altogether. We see, for example, how Honneth talks of the legal recognition in the modern bourgeois nuclear family, wherein the principle of love has gradually been complemented by the "legal

regulation of intrafamilial interactions (2003, p. 146)". Nevertheless, the intimate relations do pertain to a specific category; the author assigns each recognition principle to its own sphere. Not only does this give the impression we are dealing with qualitatively different categories, but it also seems to have an aim of ensuring that the principles will not conflict with one another. And this rather traditional distinction between an "intimate" and "political" realm is heavily contested today, for good reason. After all, power also functions through the intimate realm; it is not immune to questions of justice and morality. Stereotypes and prejudices that essentialize individuals are all-pervasive and not exclusive to one sphere. Though feminist theory has extensively problematized the binary distinction between the personal and the political, the institutional and the individual, we can similarly extend this critique into the realm of critical race theory. Let me briefly reflect upon this.

According to critical race theorist Philomena Essed, a major problem with structural theories of racism is the distinction between institutional and individual racism. After all, this places the individual in a private sphere outside of the institutional, subsequently disconnecting rules, regulations, policies, and procedures from the people who make and enact them. The issue here, again, is that such a demarcation can give the impression that we are dealing with two qualitatively different types of racism rather than with different positions and relations through which racism operates. Within a more private realm, then, we run the risk of insulating such a sphere against critical questions pertaining to issues of morality and, perhaps most importantly, justice. Therefore, Essed holds that we must acknowledge both the macro (structural-cultural) aspects of racism as well as the micro inequities maintaining the system; a system which is perpetually construed in everyday life. In this sense, race relations are, as the author writes, "a process present in and activated at the everyday level as well as prestructured in a way that transcends the control of individual subjects (Essed, 1991, p. 50)."

This brings me to the two other spheres of law and achievement, which share a more similar function. As Honneth believes, there are two ways in which individuals can demand recognition of their life situations to struggle for greater social esteem as well as for more economic resources. One is to call for the application of certain rights that guarantee every member of a society a minimum of essential goods regardless of achievement, an approach which follows the principle of legal equality in the sphere of law. On the other hand, there is also the possibility of laying claim to one's achievements as something different, especially if one's social contributions receive insufficient consideration or esteem under the dominant hegemonic value structure. This second approach follows the achievement principle in the sphere of social esteem. Redistribution is thus subsumed under the moniker of misrecognition by positing that distribution struggles are generally a response to the experience of disrespect for an individual or social group's achievements (Honneth, 2003). Due to a lack of determinacy, however, I believe that the author's approach runs into several problems. Allow me to explain.

In order to avoid sectarianism, Honneth must somehow deny that his conception of human flourishing has substantive content, otherwise it would become one concrete ideal among many others. His theory of justice could then hardly be tailored to analyse specific case studies such as reparations, as it would be unable to justify binding obligations for those who

subscribe to alternative ethical ideals. The same rings true for his normative categories of care, respect, and esteem. They can only be conceptualized as purely formal, free of any concrete substance, or we would be dealing with a particular, sectarian view of the good life. If the latter were true, his theory would be unable to fairly mediate social strife across different value horizons (Fraser & Honneth, 2003). Hence, the author adheres to purely formal categories.

However, it is exactly this lack of concrete content characteristic of Honneth's normative categories that I argue is a part of the problem. Because without a substantive evaluative standard, it becomes extremely difficult to adjudicate normative demands as just or unjust. As Honneth posits, applying the principle of achievement in a just way, for example, begs for an estimation of every person's social contribution in society (2003). Without a concrete yardstick, however, it is nearly impossible to arrive at such an estimation, nor would one be capable of assessing whether the estimation itself is just. Similarly, without this determinacy it also becomes an unmanageable task to evaluate conflicting claims such as calls for monetary reparations on the one hand and calls for the dismantling of the capitalist status quo in which such monetary transactions hold value, on the other.

When further applying Honneth's approach to the specific topic at hand, we also see how it becomes rather counter-intuitive to understand reparations through the achievement principle. After all, such policy does not serve to redress a situation in which one's efforts receive insufficient consideration or social esteem. Though it is true that the achievements of people of colour are not appreciated the same way as those of white individuals, this is not necessarily what reparations seek to ameliorate. Closing the racial wealth gap means reckoning with a massive debt that has been unfairly established centuries ago. These disparities are not necessarily the result of achievements that have not received sufficient consideration, but about the undervaluing of human beings due to the color of their skin or their place of birth. Reducing poverty and ending white supremacy, after all, are not the same.

If we were to suppose that this is true, we would ignore the fact that closing the "achievement gap" will do nothing to close the "injury gap", in which, for example, Black college graduates in the US still suffer higher unemployment rates than white college graduates. Not to mention the fact that Black job applicants without criminal records enjoy roughly the same chance of getting hired as white applicants with criminal records (Coates, 2014). This is not just a problem in the US. A study conducted by several Dutch universities shows that in the Netherlands, for example, violent offenders without a migration background are more likely to be invited to a job interview than non-Western applicants without a criminal record (Van den Berg et al, 2017).

In the past, a racial wealth gap has been established that ensures an unequal starting position for people of colour. When such historically founded disparities are redressed through some policy or another, we speak of reparations. Naturally, we cannot separate this opportunity gap from a racist culture of white supremacy. However, even if racism miraculously ceases to exist tomorrow, these wealth disparities would remain. Consider, for example, that an institution such as slavery has been formally abolished decades ago, yet we clearly see its

legacy today. Surely, it is not the only system that has contributed to the racial wealth gap, but it is an important part of the story. And it goes to show that, even though certain barriers are removed, disparities are not eradicated.

We similarly run into problems in the sphere of law. Because adjudicating claims for reparations requires, at the very least, some degree of cultural sensitivity, we can scrutinize the fact that Honneth locates cultural disputes under the rubric of legal equality (2003). Again, we see how this particular issue clearly exposes the problems associated with the author's lack of determinacy. Social strife pertaining to cultural particularities of certain (minority) groups within society can, according to him, be resolved by laying claim to the principle of equal respect for autonomous personhood. However, due to the purely formal nature of this principle, it cannot be adequately employed to distinguish legitimate from illegitimate demands; to judge conflicts that pit one group's recognition claims against another's. It becomes very difficult, if not impossible, to then incorporate an acknowledgement of difference into the adjudication of recognition claims with Honneth's tripartite conceptualisation as it stands (Fraser, 2003).

Yet, in the case of reparations, such an awareness is necessary in order to see how one's racial identity factors into one's societal position. Consider a situation in which a Black person making a claim for reparations is faced with criticism from a white individual who believes his identity is being tarnished under a supposed rhetoric of guilt. Though I would contend that Honneth's formal principle of equal respect is insufficiently capable of resolving such conflicts, Fraser's standard of participatory does have the capacity to do this. After all, not all particularities can be considered *a priori* valuable and worthy of appreciation. It is thus impossible to discount differing views of the good life as such, nor is it possible to embrace them without question.

2.4. A critical analysis of Nancy Fraser's theory

In another context it might make sense to apply a perspective more akin to Honneth's, but for the question at hand I believe Fraser's approach offers a stronger theoretic foundation. In this section, I will argue why the latter author's dual perspective is more relevant for the topic at hand.

What Honneth finds unclear, is Fraser's choice to focus on redistribution and recognition. He describes this decision as arbitrary and wonders why it is not just as relevant to analyse the field from other perspectives such as "morality" and "law" (2003). She tries to justify her decision by explaining that (contemporary) capitalist societies differentiate a systematically integrated market order from value-regulated social orders. Both system integration and social integration are essential to those societies, and therefore the distinction between redistribution and recognition would supposedly not be as arbitrary as Honneth suggests (Fraser, 2003). Furthermore, for a thesis on reparations the distinction between these two concepts provides a relevant demarcation that can allow us to position the different dimensions of such a policy within a coherent framework. Perhaps it can be said, then, that the determination loses some of its arbitrariness when applied to a more concrete concept like reparations.

After all, a two-dimensional framework that incorporates both recognition as well as redistribution allows us to properly analyze the interplay of two distinct ordering dimensions that are mutually irreducible, but nevertheless practically intertwined: an economic dimension associated with marketized interaction, and a cultural dimension associated with value-regulated interaction. We can quite clearly see how such dimensions can be linked to compensatory and non-compensatory reparations respectively. This bifocal lens offers the ability to scrutinize marketized interactions in which cultural schemas of evaluation are refracted through an economic logic. Likewise, rather than reducing all social strife and subordination to one overarching framework of recognition, a dual approach allows for the analysis of distributive injustices that do not simply reflect status hierarchies, even though they might interact causally with such cultural patterns (Fraser, 2003). This is clearly seen in the example mentioned earlier when I explained that, even though certain policies and institutions have been eradicated, wealth disparities that stem from such manifestations of structural exclusion remain firmly in place.

Subsuming maldistribution under the overarching moniker of recognition like Honneth does, I argue, can simply not account for all the complexities one faces in social life. After all, it is not at all clear that daily discontent is always a matter of denied recognition. In fact, the idea that one single motivation underlies all such discontent is *prima facie* implausible, and it runs the risk of providing an oversimplification of reality.

There is, to be sure, a much wider range of motives that underly social strife, just like there also exists a purely material side to the injustices that plague our world. Somebody who receives a lower income because they work in the service industry, for example, could be limited in their access to the resources needed to sustain oneself. This would thus be a form of maldistribution. Sticking to the topic at hand, we see how a Black employee working this job likely receives the same meagre salary as his white colleague, so in that sense we cannot necessarily speak of racial misrecognition. The reason as to why this person of color occupies this job, however, might very well be because they have been discriminated against on the labor market due to the color of their skin, thus incapable of securing higher paid work. The lower income can therefore be considered a form of maldistribution, whereas the refusal of other companies hiring somebody due to this person's racial identity would be a form of misrecognition. And just like Fraser argues, these two ordering dimensions do intersect. After all, even poor white people are still white. Their lives might not be easy, but they are at least not made more difficult because of their racial identity. And a rich Black individual still faces racism, despite not necessarily struggling to get by financially.

Because for Honneth the sole experience of injustice is misrecognition, the result is a framework in which moral psychology constrains social theory, political sociology, and moral philosophy, curtailing those inquires while undermining their relative autonomy. Like Fraser, I thus reject the belief that moral psychology settles everything in advance. Claiming that we only need one privileged reference point (i.e., recognition), simply means investing such a perspective with too much authority. Subjective experiences of human beings are, after all, inherently fallible, and should never be taken at face value. They are unreliable

accounts. Such experiences should therefore be placed in relation to more objective yardsticks, such as structured analyses of social subordination and political sociologies of social movements that are more empirically based (Fraser, 2003). These can subsequently provide standards for assessing the legitimacy of experience's claims, as will be shown in this thesis when exploring what we may call the empirical benchmark of the racial wealth gap.

To argue that any given society is simply a recognition order, thus obfuscates the complexities of the real world, such as the ones associated with systems of structural violence like racism. Essentially all societies across the globe contain more than just one type of societal integration. In reality, interaction between human beings is coordinated by the functional interaction of both intended and unintended consequences of a wide plethora of individual strategies formulated by people from all walks of life (Fraser, 2003). Moreover, because Honneth mainly talks within the context of capitalist society, it should be stressed that the distinguishing feature of late capitalism is the creation of an anonymous, impersonal market order that follows a logic of its own. We need only think of simple examples such as exchange rates or the workings of supply and demand. The distributional effects of such a market order can therefore hardly be seen as a result of (mis)recognition, which clearly shows that Honneth's monistic theory is limited in its capacity to explain social reality.

This is not to say, however, that I claim the existence of a supposed "invisible hand of the market". The neoliberalization of the world's economy has led to widespread creative destruction. And this economic political project is anything but a natural consequence of an unfortunate set of circumstances; it is a deliberately engineered system that has been firmly implanted across the globe. Nevertheless, what remains true is that it has set in motion a certain market order that, when left unchecked, creates disparities among the most marginalized of society, as is clearly seen in the massive racial wealth gap that persists despite the abolishment of certain institutional barriers. Though Honneth believes that these resulting inequalities are themselves an indirect form of misrecognition, earlier I have shown how there quite clearly is a purely material side that the author does not account for. In short, his theory is too restricted in its scope for the topic at hand.

Additionally, I also do not claim that the market forces mentioned here are out of our hands. It has become painfully apparent why free markets, when left to their own devices, often do not lead to what is best for humanity. A stop can be put to certain market forces through, for example, regulation, nationalization, taxation, or increased government spending in the right areas. But the goal of this thesis is not to fix such issues. However, it is important to be mindful of these considerations when, in the next chapter, we delve into the intricacies of the racial wealth gap. To be sure, such disparities are facilitated by racism as profit-maximizing imperatives interact with status distinctions and with the legacies of past injustice. Hence, though the capitalist economy is not a purely technical system bereft of cultural forces, it can also not be said that it has no economic dynamics worth analyzing in their own right (Fraser & Honneth, 2003).

Whether claims for reparations are legitimate or not can therefore better be determined by virtue of Fraser's standard of participatory parity, which puts the wrongness of maldistribution and misrecognition outside of the individual subject. However, I believe there is one important problem with her normative framework, especially in relation to the concept of reparations. Before continuing to the next chapter, I shall therefore expound on Fraser's work to make it, above all, more generous.

2.5. Equality of what? A critical adjustment of Nancy Fraser's theory

The concept of equality is at the core of essentially all notions of social justice. Though the two authors disagree in significant respects, both Honneth and Fraser take this ideal as a starting point for their theories. Even libertarian justice, which would be less commensurable with a policy like reparations, argues for equality of rights. But where most people hold contrasting views, is over the substance of the egalitarian ideal. Such disagreements led to an academic debate among political philosophers in the last decades of the twentieth century. This is often referred to as the "Equality of What?" debate, referring to a question raised by economist Amartya Sen. He asked what touchstone should be employed by egalitarians to establish the degree to which their ideals are realized in any given society (Sen, 1980; Wright, 2019). This issue is also explored by Honneth and Fraser, albeit under somewhat of a different guise.

Nevertheless, what both authors fail to touch upon sufficiently is the question inherent to the discussion mentioned above, namely what the egalitarian ideal means for them. Again, when reparations are made, I believe they should be provided regardless of one's achievements or talents. The standard of participatory parity can then be used to assess who receives recompense, and who does not. But the problem with this evaluative norm lies primarily with the intersubjective condition Fraser describes. It entails that institutionalized patterns of cultural value must convey equal respect for all who participate in social life, guaranteeing equal opportunity for achieving social esteem (Fraser, 2003).

Though it might be easy to gloss over, I argue that "equal opportunity" is insufficiently touched upon. To simply incorporate this notion without further justification could lead to adverse effects that have implications for the way we conceive of a policy such as reparations. Instead, I believe Fraser's conception of participatory parity should be premised on a more generous egalitarian ideal. Here I follow sociologist Erik Olin Wright, who argues that:

In a just society, all persons would have broadly equal access to the material and social means necessary to live a flourishing life (Wright, 2019, p. 21).

Equal opportunity presupposes that the main problem is that human beings lack "starting-gate equality". But if you begin with equal opportunity in life, then it is on you if you squander such opportunities. It is your fault, and thus you have little to complain about. Hence, we see how there is a liberal element of merit captured in this egalitarian ideal. Equal access, on the other hand, ascribes to a more generous and compassionate perception of the human condition. Additionally, it is more sociologically and psychologically realistic. Human beings, after all, are fallible. They make mistakes and can be shortsighted in their decision-

making. Random events and luck play an enormous role in every person's life, in good and in bad ways. Somebody who works hard, overcomes major obstacles, and accomplishes many great things, still owes much of their success to random good fortune (2019).

Another part of Wright's egalitarian ideal is "human flourishing", which is a notion he uses to refer to an all-around sense of an individual's life going well. Such a life is one "in which a person's capacities and talents have developed in ways that enable them to pursue their life goals, so that in some general sense they have been able to realize their potentials and purposes (Wright, 2019, p. 22)." This is not just a negative ideal, it should also be understood in positive terms; flourishing means a realization of capacities, not just an absence of deficits. When a society is just, then, not a single person who fails to flourish can protest that the social institutions under which they live barred access to the conditions needed to flourish (Wright, 2019).

This is where this egalitarian ideal differs from Fraser, but the two conceptions can nevertheless be reconciled. After all, the material means described by Wright are similar to Fraser's resources of redistribution. Likewise, the social means formulated by Wright are similar to Fraser's resources of recognition, with an important one in both authors' work being autonomy in the sense of control over one's own life. Therefore, I believe this more generous conception of the egalitarian ideal offers an important adjustment to Fraser's concept of participatory parity without altering her theoretical framework beyond recognition. To be sure, adjudicating claims for reparations will under no circumstances be a straightforward task, but the insights taken from this chapter shall offer a suitable starting point.

Chapter 3. An unequal starting position

For centuries, millions of Africans were shipped across the Atlantic by countries such as Great Britain, the Netherlands, Portugal, France, and Spain; human beings moved to the Americas to perform forced, unpaid labour while violence intensified in the colonies. Whether Namibia or Ghana, Indonesia or Surinam, Angola, or Algeria; the native population suffered at the hands of white oppressors who commodified the very soil of a nation that was not theirs. There too, we witness slavery; locals made to work on plantations, beaten into submission. The accumulation of capital in the colonies through the commodification of spices, crops, human beings, and other valuable resources allowed Europe to flourish. The deliberate economic underdevelopment of other nations created conditions for colonists to extract massive amounts of surplus value, used to enrich European industry (Fanon, 1961; Rodney, 1972).

Yet when we speak of colonialism in general, and the European slave trade in particular, one cannot ignore the United States. Much of what has been written on the topic of reparations is relatively America-centric. Though I shall attempt to offer a broader picture, one major reason for this strong literary focus is because of the significance of the history of slavery. To understand how European nations might ever come to terms with the historical injustices means one must take a close look at the US as well. Not only was the majority of the country's population of European descent, but Europe transferred its capitalist institutions more completely to North America than anywhere else in the world. As historian Walter Rodney explains, it established a very powerful form of capitalism that came to fruition after the elimination of indigenous inhabitants and the labour exploitation of millions of Africans. We see how the New World was used as a means of accumulating primary capital to be reexported to Europe, while European nations themselves maintained slavery in localities remote from their society (Coates, 2014; Oliver & Shapiro, 2006; Rodney, 1972).

By 1840, cotton produced by slave labour made up 59 percent of US exports. The network of this slave society spanned from the South of the country to the North, and across the Atlantic to Europe. It powered a great economic transformation that altered the very course of world history. At this time, “slaves” were the single largest financial asset of the US economy. But the enslavement of human beings generated even more additional wealth; loans were taken out for purchase to be repaid with interest, insurance policies were handed out against the death of an enslaved individual or a loss of profits, and slave sales were taxed. The trade of Black bodies and the tearing apart of Black families became an economy in and of itself, bringing in tens of millions of dollars to the US (Coates, 2014; Rodney, 1972).

Not only did this result in material conditions of exploitation, but it was coupled to the widespread entrenchment of a culture of white supremacy, both in Europe as well as in the US. Because, to quote Rodney, “the simple fact is that no people can enslave another for centuries without coming out with a notion of superiority, and when the colour and other physical traits of those peoples were quite different, it was inevitable that the prejudice should take a racist form (1972, p. 127).”

When discussing the topic of reparations, some genealogy is naturally in place. After all, legal theft that created wealth disparities between white people and racialized individuals started in the past and continues to this very day. Certain historical developments have made sure that particular demographic groups remain in a state of abject poverty with little prospect of getting out. Therefore, I trace some important events throughout the course of the past centuries, with a main focus on the period after slavery ended in most parts of the world. First, however, I will discuss the importance of wealth.

3.1. The importance of wealth

The goal of this thesis is to assess to what extent claims for reparations can be accepted based on the concept of participatory parity. Redressing maldistribution would then require restructuring the economic system to eliminate resource disparities, while redressing misrecognition requires changing institutionalized patterns of cultural value. In both cases the aim is to establish social regiments that permit all to participate as peers. Thus, participatory parity can be used as an evaluative standard to adjudicate claims for recognition as well as redistribution by assessing whether its conditions are met. Similarly, claims for both types of reparations mentioned can also be judged by virtue of this norm. In either case, claimants will have to show why the current state of society, its institutions, and social arrangements bar them from participating on par with others in social life.

In the case of compensatory reparations, it must somehow be elucidated how existing economic arrangements deny them the objective and material conditions required for participatory parity. When it comes to non-compensatory reparations, on the other hand, it must be explained that institutionalized patterns of cultural value prevent people equal access from the necessary intersubjective conditions. Hence, claimants are tasked with the objective of showing that the social change they seek through reparations will indeed promote such parity of participation while preventing new, unjustifiable disparities from being introduced or exacerbated. Naturally, the intersubjective condition is a lot more difficult to measure, but I believe that studying racial wealth disparities allows us to make an assessment based on Fraser's norm of participatory parity.

After all, wealth gaps add a number, a value to something we feel but can hardly express in words, namely that prosperity in the world was ill-gotten and selective in its distribution. Racial wealth disparities are the result of a deliberately engineered project that continue to this day. Hence, it goes beyond mere distributive justice. To quote author and civil rights advocate Ta-Nehisi Coates, redressing wealth disparities is about “more than recompense for past injustices—more than a handout, a payoff, hush money, or a reluctant bribe (2014).” Nevertheless, wealth is just one indicator that allows us to express the injustices mentioned here. So why not use another measure, such as income?

Generally speaking, social inequality is understood as pertaining to patterned differences in individuals' living standards, their life chances, as well as command over resources (Oliver & Shapiro, 2006). There are many ways in which we can begin to conceive of inequality, but when it comes to the amelioration of injustices through reparations, the focus tends to be on closing the racial wealth gap. According to economist William Darity, the reason for this is

because wealth is the most powerful indicator of the intergenerational effects of white supremacy on black economic wellbeing (2020). Allow me to explain.

Wealth is understood as the total extent, at a given moment, of a person's accumulated assets and their access to resources. It is the difference between what we own and what we owe; between the value of our assets and our debt. In short, it is the net value of our property. It therefore serves as a prime indicator of a person's economic security. Think of money in the bank, real estate, business ownership, stocks, and so on. Wealth is anything of economic value that's bought, sold, stocked for the future, or invested with the intent of bringing economic returns. Income is different; it refers to the flow of money over a certain period. It pertains to, for instance, salaries, wages, and government transfers. They are not the same, yet are often used interchangeably. But the distinction between the two is important within the context of this thesis, primarily because wealth disparities are both a form of maldistribution as well as misrecognition (Darity, 2020; Oliver & Shapiro, 2006).

Whereas income is often used for daily necessities, substantial wealth tends to bring power and independence. After all, when one holds a significant amount of wealth, it can relieve individuals from dependence on others for an income. It frees one from the occupational differentiation which is an important element of stratification in many societies across the globe. Wealth thus allows one to take ownership of the means of production, leading a person to gain authority, dignity, providing one with access to the good life. Furthermore, it is directly transferable from one generation to the next, ensuring position and opportunity remain in the same families' hands. This has widespread implications for virtually all facets of life. Wealthier families are in a better position to finance elite independent school and college education, capital to start a business, reside in higher amenity neighbourhoods, finance costly medical procedures, exert their political influence through practices such as campaign funding, purchase qualitatively superior counsel if confronted with an expensive legal system, or withstand more general financial hardships caused by any number of emergencies (Darity, 2020; Oliver & Shapiro, 2006). Here we see how maldistribution and misrecognition are linked to one another under the moniker of justice, as described by Fraser.

After all, wealth provides financial agency over one's life, giving individuals and families a choice (Darity, 2020). The alternative is dependency, which means being in an inescapable position. Not being able to take care of one's own children, potentially faced with the prospect of seeing your offspring slide into a state of abject poverty is not just a financial burden, but a psychological one as well. Because wealth improves life chances in the ways described here, it similarly secures prestige, passing status along to one's family, and influencing the political process (Oliver & Shapiro, 2006). Hence, it is also very much an issue of recognition.

What should be clear by now is that a call to eradicate the racial wealth gap is not necessarily a call for empowerment through enrichment. It goes beyond that. This is not simply about being rich or poor. Wealth disparities affect who has access to the resources necessary to participate on par with others in social life, and who does not. No, I shall not argue that the

solution necessarily lies within the framework of capitalism. But lack of wealth arguably cuts off one's access to the most essential material and social resources one needs to live a flourishing life more than any other factor. It provides economic security that allows one to take risks and shield against financial loss. Hence, whenever a major or minor crisis hits, whether unexpectedly or not, and whether it affects certain individuals or the entire globe, specific segments of any given society suffer more than others. As I will show, this is not due to inborn traits or cultural specificities. It is due to deeply entrenched patterns of cultural value that ensure a playing field that is anything but level.

When it comes to wealth, housing is an essential element. As sociologists Melvin Oliver and Thomas Shapiro write, homeownership is the "greatest mass-based opportunity for wealth accumulation (2006, p. 18)." Throughout this chapter, housing will therefore be explored rather extensively. The reason for this is because it quite clearly shows how institutional as well as individual racism cannot simply be separated from one another as two distinct types of violence. Today, whether in Europe or the US, it remains nearly impossible for many racialized individuals to make their way out of economically deprived areas, and those who do might watch their children and grandchildren fall back into the squalor of these run-down neighbourhoods (Coates, 2014). Downward intergenerational mobility is therefore a big issue. As Darity explains, wealth mobility processes "contribute directly to the maintenance of high levels of racial economic inequality across generations (2020, p. 52)."

So far, I have mainly touched upon the theoretical sides of the topic. In the following segments I will take a more empirical approach to substantiate my claims. Here we will follow the network of slave society described earlier, spanning from the South of the US to the North, across the Atlantic to Europe.

3.2. A brief history of the racial wealth gap in the US

White supremacy became somewhat of a religion for Europeans. Those of African or Asian descent were labelled as "bestial", "inferior", and white individuals believed slavery was for racialized people's "own good". Therefore, inhabitants of the New World, for example, saw little contradiction in the claim of the Declaration of Independence that "all men are created equal". After all, Africans were not seen as people. These patterns of cultural value operating on deeply held beliefs of white supremacy justified the economic political system in which European plantation owners appropriated vast amounts of wealth and land through brutality, torture, and coercion of other human beings. And after slavery ended, the idea of race lived on. White people feared their economy would be destroyed after they could no longer rely on the unpaid labour of former enslaved peoples. Furthermore, without the formal institution of slavery, it seemed the legal structure for maintaining a racial hierarchy had disappeared. The South of the US immediately comes to mind, where formerly enslaved individuals were now no longer made to work on local plantations. This led to fear on behalf of the white population that the "inferior" segments of society would mix with them (Alexander; Coates, 2014; Kendi, 2017).

All this hysteria associated with four million newly freed, formerly enslaved people led Southern states to the decision that a new system of racial control was necessary to keep the African American population "in check". As Black people gained in political power, beginning a journey towards more socio-economic equality, the white population thus reacted with outrage. A campaign to "redeem" the South was reinforced by a resurgent Ku Klux Klan, which carried out terrorist attacks against Reconstruction governments, local leaders, complete with bombings, lynchings, and mob violence. Vagrancy laws and other legal conditions were imposed in Southern states, defining activities such as "mischief" and "insulting gestures" as a crime, which were aggressively enforced against Black people. This created a market for "convict leasing", in which African American prisoners were contracted as laborers to the highest bidder. It was slavery under another guise. Court costs and fines had to be paid off by providing forced labour on railroads, farms, corporations, and even on plantations where former enslaved individuals worked. Many Black people lived in such debt peonage. Not just prisoners, but also farmers turned sharecroppers on account of them being indebted to planters; cotton kings who at one time enslaved these African American citizens and their families now served as their employers, landlords, and primary merchants (Alexander; Coates, 2014; Kendi, 2017).

The "redeemers" were motivated in their actions by retaining segregation practices. As a result, by the turn of the twentieth century, every state in the South of the US had laws that disenfranchised the Black population, discriminating against them throughout all facets of life, providing sanction to racial exclusion that permeated schools, housing, jobs, hospitals, prisons, orphanages, hotels, restaurants, even restrooms and cemeteries. This new racial order became known as Jim Crow. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 formally dismantled this system, and the Voting Rights Act in 1965 eradicated several legal barriers to political participation by Black people. However, economic issues remain to this day. And though all human beings are formally equal by law in most Western countries, this does not always translate into practice (Alexander; Coates, 2014; Kendi, 2017).

By contrast, the North of the US offered somewhat of a refuge during the so-called Great Migration, which saw roughly six million African Americans move from the South to the rest of the country during the first and second half of the twentieth century. These citizens sought refuge from the violence of Jim Crow. That is not to say racism was absent in the rest of the US, on the contrary. It remained deeply embedded throughout the entire nation, albeit in somewhat different forms. Despite this, the false narrative of a liberal North came with promises of increased social mobility for the Black population. Yet as author James Baldwin recounted in 1960, whenever African American citizens move North, they:

. . .do not escape Jim Crow: they merely encounter another, not-less-deadly variety. They do not move to Chicago, they move to the South Side; they do not move to New York, they move to Harlem. The pressure within the ghetto causes the ghetto walls to expand, and this expansion is always violent. White people hold the line as long as they can, and in as many ways as they can, from verbal intimidation to physical violence (Baldwin, 1960).

Born in the New York City neighbourhood of Harlem in 1924, the writer turned prominent civil rights leader was first-hand witness to the virulent racism that pervaded the entirety of the US. In short, the North was not better, just different (Baldwin, 1960). Despite the squalor at the time, rents in Harlem were higher than in many rural parts of the country, food more expensive yet qualitatively inferior, and clothes seldom bought due to post-war asset inflation. Black people, as Baldwin notes, were "traditionally the last to be hired and the first to be fired (p. 61, 2017)".

Jobs have always been harder to find for this part of the American population. Prices rise, wages go down, and asset inflation has become widespread since the many financial crises of the past decades. As economist David Harvey explains, in US cities since the 1960s, poor communities typically pay more for inferior basic commodities like food. The under-servicing of these low-income communities, which often see many Black residents, adds undue financial and practical burdens on this part of the population. But it is not just in the US that we see these trends. These forms of exploitation, coupled with dispossession in many metropolitan areas all across the world, from New York City to Paris, are systematically visited upon vulnerable populations. As Harvey writes, for much of the low-income urbanized population, "the joint excessive exploitation of their labour and the dispossession of their meagre assets constitutes a perpetual drain upon their capacity to sustain minimally adequate conditions of social reproduction (2019, p. 57)."

In principle, the US federal government funded and encouraged the suburban growth from the 1930s through the 1960 by virtue of housing policies, taxation, and transportation. Employment opportunities rose in these outer rings of major metropolitan areas. Living there became convenient and affordable. While such policies made sure that more than 35 million families were able to participate in homeowner equity between 1933 and 1978, this was not a benefit reserved for the entirety of the US population. The suburbanization of the country had the effect of relegating Black Americans' residential opportunities to inner-city "ghettos", denying this demographic access to "one of the most successful generators of wealth in American history—the suburban tract home (Oliver & Shapiro, 2006, p. 16)."

The US government's first entry into home financing started with the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC), which introduced standardized appraisals of the fitness of particular properties and communities for both individual as well as group loans. This is an important development that set major precedents for racial wealth disparities today. After all, by creating this formal system, government appraisals institutionalized a racially discriminatory practice that eliminated Black access to suburbs and government mortgage money, all within a supposedly "rational" and bureaucratic framework. It paved a new way for legal theft, which subsequently not only swept the US, but Europe as well (Coates, 2014; Oliver & Shapiro, 2006).

The HOLC had to determine the useful or productive life of housing, including evaluative standards in their procedures related to the racial composition of the communities. Neighbourhoods that either saw people of colour moving there or that were already predominantly Black were deemed undesirable, placed in the lowest category. This process

became known as redlining. The categories were color-coded on a map, ranging from green to indicate the most desirable neighbourhoods (new, all-white housing) to red, which indicated the least desirable communities (old, racially mixed, or all-black areas). The Federal Housing Authority (FHA) used such maps in their policy, handing out loans on the basis of these designations. The result was that Black people were again excluded. But for the rest of America, the FHA was a success. The incentive to own a home increased to such a degree that, at least in some cases, buying a house became cheaper than renting one. Due to redlining policies, however, older houses and communities in which Black people lived were much less likely to receive approval for loans. The underlying motivation by the FHA was a fear that property values would decline should the rigid Black-white segregation fade (Coates, 2014; Oliver & Shapiro, 2006; Rothstein, 2018).

These policies have had a lasting impact on the wealth of Black Americans. After all, as Oliver and Shapiro write, not being able to participate in homeownership, this part of the population was "locked out of the greatest mass-based opportunity for wealth accumulation in American history (2006, p. 18)." Black people who were able to buy a house, were confined to inner-city communities where their investments were affected due to the FHA appraisers; cut off from sources of new investment, their homes and neighbourhoods deteriorated, and lost value compared to the areas deemed desirable. A Federal Reserve (i.e., the US' central bank) study from 1991 that looked at 6.4 million home mortgage applications by race and income shows why; it reported that the poorest white applicant was more likely to get a mortgage loan approved than a Black person in the highest income bracket (Coates, 2014; Oliver & Shapiro, 2006).

Though social mobility for this part of the population has increased somewhat, intergenerational poverty remains. Today, seven out of ten African American children born into middle-income families will likely find themselves with income that's one to two quintiles below their parents' once they reach adulthood. In short, many Black Americans not only fail to climb the socio-economic ladder, but there's an increased likelihood of them backsliding. Reasons for this are lower educational attainment, higher rates of single-parent households, and an overrepresentation in crime (Oliver & Shapiro, 2006). All these phenomena are driven by an important over-arching element of geographic segregation. After all, such factors intersect; the neighbourhoods people live in have implications for the schools children attend, the presence of police and the access to healthcare institutions, to name just a few examples (White, 2015).

To be sure, the predatory practices mentioned above continue to this day. We still witness the illegal seizing of private property and financial manipulations, particularly those related to the securitization of high cost, risky mortgages. Before the housing crisis in 2007 hit, it is estimated that the low-income African American population already lost somewhere between 71 and 93 billion dollars in asset value due to predatory sub-prime practices. In the end, the financial crisis reduced median annual Black household income by 11 percent, compared to 5 percent for white households. But the crisis went global, and across the world those racialized individuals who lived under the duress of lower socio-economic conditions took the biggest

blows. Whether in the US or Europe, exclusions based on policies mentioned here were and continue to be excused and justified as a legitimate response to high credit risk, not to the colour of a person's skin. Legal projects undertaken to challenge such discriminatory practices therefore have the tendency to fail, since usually it is too difficult to prove intent based on race. Meanwhile, it generates high profits for real estate companies (Harvey, 2019; Kendi, 2017).

To escape American racism, Baldwin left New York City and fled to Paris. In the end, he believed this decision had saved his life. However, it was not so much France that attracted him, but the prospect of being able to leave the US. Racism was alive in Paris as well, and Baldwin was there to witness it.

3.3. A closer look at racial wealth disparities in Western Europe

Again, much of the literature on racial disparities and reparations is focused on the United States. And to be sure, Europe is not North America. Racism manifests itself in different ways, but the overarching patterns of cultural value remain the same. By looking at specific Western European cases it should become clear that this culture churned out similar disparities across the Atlantic. The examples listed below are chosen because they represent three of the largest colonial powers in history: France, Britain, and the Netherlands. Let us first turn to Baldwin's second home.

3.3.1. The banlieues of Paris

In the late nineteenth century, French official Georges-Eugène Haussmann was tasked with the urban renewal of Paris. This new vision led him to tear through the old, impoverished quarters of the city, supposedly using the power of expropriation for civil improvement, environmental restoration, as well as renovation of derelict neighbourhoods. This entailed the deliberate removal of much of the working class from the city centre, where they were perceived as a threat to public order, health, and political power. But this bourgeois conquest of central Paris took more than a hundred years, and the problems associated with the city's slums were not solved but moved elsewhere. Though this urban renewal created the romantic Paris we know today, those banished to the slums still reside on the city's periphery (Harvey, 2019; Pitts, 2020).

Whereas before this was mainly working-class people, today it is often immigrants from West and North Africa. The first generations of this part of the population mostly made their way to the country in the post-war years, following the decolonization of the French empire. Their arrival coincided with an architectural revolution that stood in stark contrast to Haussmann's Paris; the design principle launched by Le Corbusier, which gave birth to an idea that spread across the globe. It was characterized by low-budget, high-rise towers; faceless concrete monstrosities that later fell into decay due to governmental negligence. Such "functional" accommodations were about the only living spaces the former colonial subjects could obtain (Harvey, 2019; Pitts, 2020). We see the consequences today.

Since the 1980s, people of colour are increasingly trapped in the social housing projects of the country's banlieues (essentially French "ghettos"), cut off from the centre of French society both geographically as well as imaginatively. Such areas are typically associated with

high unemployment, poor quality of education, and crime. Studies show that these neighbourhoods tend to increasingly concentrate disadvantage, coupled with a "flight" of upper classes from these areas. Immigrant parts of the population continue to face exclusion from homeownership, stuck in the public housing projects of the banlieues (McAvay & Verdugo, 2021).

3.3.2. Britain's Windrush generation

Across the strait, a similar development took place. Like many other countries in Europe, Britain brought colonial subjects to its country after the Second World War because it needed cheap labour to rebuild itself. Those who came to the UK from Caribbean nations between 1948 and 1973, became known as the Windrush generation. Because the Caribbean was a part of the British Commonwealth, those brought over were automatically British subjects, free to work and live in the country. They often staffed the new health system or transport networks, others were employed on construction sites tasked with repairing the devastation caused by wartime bombings; important, yet low-paid jobs. Thus, most of them did not have the financial means to take a holiday, and therefore never applied for a passport (Gentleman, 2019; Ramdin, 2017).

In 2017, a major political scandal broke out. It became apparent that citizens belonging to the Windrush generation were unjustly labelled as illegal immigrants. This was mainly due to national laws enforced with the 2012 Immigration Act, which the government dubbed its "hostile environment" legislation. It tasked banks, the National Health Service (NHS), landlords, and employers with enforcing immigration controls in order to make the UK unliveable for undocumented migrants, motivating them to leave the country. This particularly hit the Windrush generation, which counts hundreds of thousands of members today. After all, not only did many of these immigrants lack a passport, but the British Home Office also never kept any record of those who were allowed to remain in the country, which makes it difficult to prove one's legal status today. However, if these citizens wished to continue working under the hostile environment law, get access to healthcare, or remain in the country, they were required to provide the proper documentation, leaving thousands in fear about their status. Some had therefore received letters instructing to take immediate steps to leave the UK; others had been told they were unemployable because they lacked the paperwork to prove their right to be in the country. People lost access to healthcare, their bank accounts, and many more amenities; they lost jobs, were evicted from their homes, or prevented from travelling abroad to visit relatives. A lot of the people affected today were children who arrived with their parents from the Commonwealth countries, largely unfamiliar with their country of origin. There was an apology from the government in 2018, and a compensation scheme was established, but many are yet to receive the aid they require (Gentleman, 2019; Sanghera, 2021; Rawlinson et al., 2022).

By the mid-sixties, about 75.000 immigrants arrived in the UK every year, greeted with racism, discrimination, and hostility. Not only by individuals, but by the state as well; facing verbal abuse, physical harassment, racist policing and restricted access to housing and employment (Gentleman, 2019). The fact that a lot of families were relegated to ghettos, where they were barred from participating in homeownership, laid a foundation of major

wealth disparities in contemporary British society, with many Black citizens still forced to live in places they would rather leave.

Today, people of colour in Britain remain worse off financially than white citizens, with Black families facing the biggest deficit. Black people in the UK have the highest unemployment rate of all societal groups and are most likely to have a household income below 400 pounds a week. This does not merely pertain to disparities in pay, but much like in the US, there is a major wealth gap between these two parts of the population. Though 63 percent of all white families across England owned a home from 2016 to 2018, the figure is only 20 percent among Black citizens and 17 percent among Arabs. Such disparities span across generations. Between 2016 and 2018, median total wealth for British households ranged from 34.000 pounds for Black families to 314.000 pounds for white families. These numbers show striking disparities: white households were approximately nine times more likely to be in the top quintile of total wealth (above 865.400 pounds) as opposed to Black families (Kidd, 2020; Osborne, 2020).

3.3.3. Moluccans in the Netherlands

Finally, we take a brief look at a country that prides itself for having a tolerant culture, the Netherlands. There is one example that stands out in particular. The Moluccan population of the Netherlands faced a situation akin to that of Britain's Windrush generation, at least upon their arrival in the country.

After the independence of Indonesia in 1949, colonial subjects who had fought for the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army were no longer safe in their home country. They were seen as traitors by the new national government under the leadership of Sukarno, who sought to take over their territory. These soldiers hailed primarily from the Moluccan islands, an archipelago to the East of Indonesia that to this day aspires independence from the Indonesian government. Hence, due to this political tension, in 1951 these soldiers had no other choice but to come to the Netherlands, bringing their families along on the journey. At least 12.500 Moluccans made it to the port of Rotterdam, promptly put into improvised living spaces. Upon arrival, soldiers were stripped of their military title, which by many was seen as virtually the only remaining source of esteem under the humiliating circumstances of the time. Living conditions did not make this any easier (Chkalova et al., 2021; Verbaak, 2021).

Old concentration camps used by the Nazis during the Second World War were turned into provisional habitations; old, dirty, and cold encampments unfit for living. But the stay in the Netherlands would be temporary. After three to six months, the Dutch government promised the Moluccan communities could return to an independent home country, safe from the Indonesian government. And because the stay would only be temporary, the first generations were not allowed to become Dutch citizens. With many refusing to become Indonesian nationals instead, this effectively meant many Moluccans became stateless. Yet the stay turned out to last longer. Many members of the community subsequently became homesick, were isolated from the rest of society, and the supposed temporary nature of their residence meant Moluccans were not allowed to work, dependent on meagre pocket money provided by the Dutch government. Moreover, many children were unable to receive proper education in the early years, making integration even more difficult. In the end, the Netherlands failed to

fulfil its promise; the return home never happened. In the rhetoric of integration, Moluccan families were subsequently moved to specially designated neighbourhoods in the 1960s where these communities were concentrated in rental houses. Again, they were mostly segregated from the rest of society. Unallowed to provide for themselves before, Moluccans were now made to work for their own money, yet many of the first generations barely spoke Dutch. They worked low-paid jobs in factories or faced unemployment, experienced blatant expressions of racism, and were excluded from homeownership. In recent years, some local Dutch governments have acknowledged the maltreatment of Moluccans, but no formal apologies have been issued. Further calls for reparations have been made, both compensatory and non-compensatory, yet these too remain largely ignored (Chkalova et al., 2021; Verbaak, 2021).

Many Moluccans have built a life for themselves today, but the population continues to experience certain setbacks compared to citizens of Dutch descent. Some earlier generations struggle with PTSD and other psychological ails, a consequence of the dire circumstances faced in the early years in the Netherlands (Rinsampessy et al., 1998; Verbaak, 2021). And though employment rates among people of Moluccan descent are comparable to that of Dutch people without a migration background, the former demographic is relatively more likely to work temporary jobs, receive a lower average income, and are more often dependent on welfare. Moreover, Moluccans tend to have a lower level of education and are more prone to leave school early. Research conducted by Statistics Netherlands also shows that this population faces downward intergenerational social mobility when it comes to, for example, education and criminalization, much like African Americans in the US. And for all age groups of Moluccans, rates of homeownership are significantly lower than for people of Dutch descent. In 2018, only 37 percent of all Moluccan households owned a home compared to 64 percent of households without a migration background. Additionally, the value of these properties tends to be relatively lower than Dutch-owned houses, with smaller living spaces of poorer quality (Chkalova et al., 2021).

3.3.4. From New York City to Paris

These are just some examples, but they are important cases that show an overarching problem. Though racism might manifest itself somewhat differently in the US, what rings true in the American case is also a part of reality in Western Europe; certain segments of the population have been denied access to society's most essential resources, unable to participate on par with others in social life due to the colour of their skin or their country of origin. These demographic groups were unable to participate in practices such as homeownership in the same way their white counterparts were able to, incapable of building wealth due to institutional barriers. This has had widespread implications for the social mobility of current and future generations.

Nowadays, we witness the gentrification and privatization of social housing projects, as well as of neighbourhoods like Harlem. Land value is artificially increased, expensive shops and fancy new buildings are erected; living becomes more expensive for the original population, which is predominantly Black. This is, simply put, a process of displacement and dispossession. This containment of people of colour in what is often referred to as “ghettos”

makes policing easier; it cuts off access from other essential resources such as education or healthcare, it leads to lives of crime and states of poverty (Coates, 2014; Harvey, 2019).

And what started as a deliberate project to segregate one part of society from the other, today such practices are often more hidden. The argument that financial considerations factor into the decision of giving people of colour fewer loans, and not discrimination, seems to be totally refuted. Though some of these neighbourhoods such as Harlem are not as run-down today as they once were, they maintain a rather negative image. Old, negative stories and stereotypes remain. These areas as well as its inhabitants are still connected to crime, poverty, and decay. Not to mention that gentrification has made living there more complicated for its original inhabitants, who continue to suffer under the weight of institutional racism. People of colour that have historically lived in such neighbourhoods, often not of their own choice, have built communities over the years; social relations that are now withering away due to the fact that many citizens from these areas are unable to participate in the increased wealth pouring into these localities.

3.4. Europe is not America

The societies explored here differ in the way they are structured, and we can contextualize, but racism remains racism. Just because there has never been apartheid or genocide of Black people in the Netherlands, just because there have never been Jim Crow laws in France, just because there were no enslaved Black people working on European soil, does not mean that white supremacy is absent in these different countries. Here too, as is shown above, have such patterns of cultural value denied people participatory parity based on the colour of their skin or country of origin. The kind of segregation described in the passages above prevents people from building a network, gaining access to a society's resources; anything from education to relations with the rest of society. The fact that many people of colour, whether in the US or in Europe, were unable to own a home and build capital the same way white citizens could due to racist housing policies, means a segment of society was denied a fundamental basis upon which to build a flourishing life from the get-go. There have always been many Harlems across the world. The point here is that discriminatory, racist practices have always happened, and they continue to happen to this day. Not just in the urban context, not just in the United States. It is sometimes said that racism is different, or even worse in America than it is in Europe. People like to compare crimes and violence, adding more weight to one expression of bigotry than another. But we would be remiss if we did not again echo the words of Baldwin:

The world has never lacked for horrifying examples; but I do not believe that these examples are meant to be used as justification for our own crimes. This perpetual justification empties the heart of all human feeling. The emptier our hearts become, the greater will be our crimes (1960).

Many of the institutions that perpetuate the abovementioned race-based exclusion wash their hands in innocence as they use legal language to hide the discrimination inherent in their policy. Whether governments or housing corporations, universities, or courtrooms: it is often an arduous task to prove intent based on race as opposed to credit risk, demographics, or anything else for that matter. This is especially true in today's world, where tolerance has

supposedly eradicated much of the structural violence described here. We might ask, however, why such disparities then continue to exist. Though I hope to show in this thesis that racism is very much alive today, and that it has historically made sure people simply do not “start” on equal footing, there will always be critics that question if it is really racism that is at play here. Here, especially in relation to reparations, it once again becomes important to question the distinction between institutional and individual violence.

As Philomena Essed argues, disconnecting such practices from individual expressions of racism can give the impression that there are two qualitatively different types of racism as opposed to different positions and relations through which racism operates. The macro maintains the micro, which is abundantly clear in cases such as racist housing policy. When white flight takes place due to a neighbourhood being labelled as “Black” or “ethnically diverse”, white residents who flee are driven by the same fairy tales as the real estate agents that find ways to exploit such fears; false narratives that label people of colour as “dangerous”, “deviant”, and the neighbourhoods they inhabit as “undesirable”. We see how the system, then, is continually construed in everyday life; race relations are structured in a way that often transcends the control of individuals. When these practices are subsequently denied to be racist, these policies and ideas invade everyday life; they become part and parcel of the overarching system. Therefore, as Essed posits, it is impossible to identify intentionality as a necessary attribute of the definition of racism (1991).

We can thus use Fraser’s model to place the wrongness of maldistribution and misrecognition in the overarching social relations, not in one’s individual psychology. We see how racial wealth disparities are a question of externally manifest and publicly verifiable obstacles that deny people of colour participatory parity. Redressing this gap, therefore, entails reforming the institutions and social practices that prevent such disparities from being properly tackled, all in the rhetoric of justice.

After all, once the other is described as “deviant” or “dangerous”, relegated to specific segments of a city or other locality in what can only be described as a process of segregation, it becomes nearly impossible for this person to participate on par with their fellow citizens in social life. What is important when it comes to reparations, is an acknowledgement that such inequalities have historically been crafted with the specific intent of preventing people of colour from participating in the rest of society. Housing is one example of many, but an important one. It is as much material as it is social; the incapacity to build wealth has severe implications for the way one is able to gain access to other essential resources such as education, food, as well as relations with fellow citizens that provide one with dignity. There is no level playing field; government as well as private institutions have always made sure of that by never allowing racialized individuals to become full citizens, and thus denying them many benefits that come with being a citizen. This goes for the United States, and it rings true in Europe as well.

Chapter 4. The critics and the practicalities of reparations

4.1. Criticisms against reparations

How the issues associated with the racial wealth gap can potentially be redressed through distribution or recognition shall be explored in the following segments. But in order to truly assess demands for reparations, for the two conditions of participatory parity to be met, we shall first look at three criticisms that are often levied against these claims.

4.1.1. The category of race

Some critics argue that it is not racism that is at play, but something else. One traditional line of explanation regarding observed inequalities in status or income among racially or ethnically differentiated groups, involves the idea of natural inequalities in ability or chance occurrences like luck. Inequality is then said to be the result of natural causes found in every society across the globe, perceived as something to be expected and inevitable (Oliver & Shapiro, 2006).

Before, it was racist pseudoscience that laid at the foundation of such theories. Today, at least in academia, this is no longer accepted due to the simple fact that such "science" is inherently false. Skin colour is a purely arbitrary way to categorize human beings and has no implications for one's natural abilities. Though some obscure authors on the far-right still try to conduct studies with which they, for example, try to show that Black people have a lower cognitive capacity than white people, this type of research is conducted on the fringe. It is, in short, bad science. To this day, no research has ever been able to show any average genetic differences between population groups that go beyond the superficial, such as skin colour, or that are related to hard survival, such as those that prevent certain geographically linked diseases. There is not a single variant of any gene that has been found to exist in every one of one "race", and not in another. This should really not even have to be said, considering the fact that, at least today, racist science is no longer accepted in academia. After all, race is accepted as a socially constructed category. It is a nonsensical way of placing people in biological boxes that do not exist (Saini, 2019).

However, even though pseudoscientific "race" theories are losing ground, cultural elements of racism are becoming more prominent. This is a more subtle way to frame the abovementioned line of thinking, but one that often has the same results. In the West, blatant ideas of "racial inferiority" are being replaced by an ideology constructed on a basis of "cultural inferiority". Such cultural arguments are used to blame people of colour for situations of poverty and their slow rise in the system compared to white individuals. This leads to the perpetuation of racist stereotypes of technological underdevelopment, social inadequacy, or other deficiencies such as the problematic view that Black workers are lazy (Essed, 1991). Views such as the latter can lead to discrimination on, for example, the labour market, whereby people of colour without a criminal record are less likely to even get invited for a job interview as opposed to white applicants who have committed violent offenses. The consequent underrepresentation of people of colour in many organisations due to such exclusion only serves to reinforce these negative stereotypes, and we witness how a vicious cycle of structural violence is maintained.

This does not mean that we need to rid ourselves of the notion of "race" altogether. After all, as a socially constructed category it has widespread implications for one's socio-economic status. There is plenty of valuable data on racial wealth gaps, health disparities, or educational inequalities, for instance. Race must be accepted as a social reality, not a biological one. It has implications for how we live our lives, but not for who we are genetically. Biologically, the differences between human beings are really only skin-deep. It is false to posit that internal differences are as profound as external ones appear.

4.1.2. Class-not-race

There is another line of thinking employed by those who believe race is not the defining element, one that is sounder than the one mentioned above. Legal scholar Charles Ogletree, for example, argues for something broader than race-based reparations: a program of job training and public works that takes racial justice as its mission, but includes the poor of all races. In short, he proposes a race-neutral approach. It is, according to him, class that should be the main focus, not race. Reparations are then not seen as a "Black remedy", but as a way to solve poverty all across the board (Coates, 2014).

Such class-not-race advocates generally favour beyond-race interventions. Often, proponents of such solutions do recognize that racial inequality is a major problem to be dealt with. However, they either believe that race-targeted approaches are not the most successful way of going about this, or that racism is a consequence of class inequality. Such considerations are usually based on "strategic" reasoning; class-based approaches are supposedly more likely to succeed in the political or legal process as opposed to approaches that focus directly on race. Policies that provide certain advantages for a minority of the population are sometimes seen as politically vulnerable to efforts by the majority to get some of those benefits for itself (Bagenstos, 2015; Oliver & Shapiro, 2006). Especially in today's world, where the idea of colour-blindness is often supported by liberals, this becomes a salient argument. It might be posited, then, that universal race-neutral policies might count on broader support by a majority. Simply put, it would be easier to persuade people to support such plans when it benefits them as well. But according to law scholar Samuel Bagenstos, basic public choice theory actually paints a different picture: it suggests that targeted programs tend to generate strong support from its beneficiaries, while the broad spreading of costs will reduce opposition from those who do not receive these benefits (2015).

In any case, to argue that the ills of capitalism are the same as the problems associated with racism, is to cut major corners and ignore important complexities. The conditions under which racialized citizens across the world live are not inexplicable. Instead, they are exactly what we would expect of a population that has lived in the West's crosshairs for centuries. Therefore, as Coates argues, "to pretend that the problems of a dual society are the same as the problems of unregulated capitalism, is to cover the sin of national plunder with the sin of national lying (2014)." After all, reducing poverty and redressing racial wealth disparities are not the same. Such a position will only exacerbate race-based forms of structural violence.

This is not to say that race-based policies such as reparations will be more easily attainable than class-based programs. The claim here is that the former should not be *a priori* written off as unrealistic. We need race-based policy to address specific forms of exclusion that class cannot account for. No matter how difficult it will be to implement, such aims must not be placed to rest for the sake of strategic consideration.

A second important takeaway here should therefore be that, despite what critics would argue, class is not a proxy for race. Though there is an overlap, racial disadvantages are distinct; they are not a subset of class disadvantage. Racism involves economic deprivation, but it also involves stigmas, stereotypes, challenges to one's dignity and humanity, which all has consequences for the daily lives of even economically advantaged members of racial minority groups. To be sure, economic disadvantages exist for people of all racial identities. There are white people that are living in states of abject poverty, barely making ends meet; there are also Black individuals with millions of dollars, enjoying vast amounts of wealth. Once we consider, then, that class disadvantage is different, yet somewhat related to racial disadvantage, we can also make distinctions that separate different forms of structural violence (Fraser, 2003; Bagenstos, 2015; Oliver & Shapiro, 2006).

According to Fraser, we should conceptualize a type of social division that lies somewhere in the middle of this conceptual spectrum; a hybrid configuration that combines elements of the exploited class with features of the undervalued identity. The author calls such divisions two-dimensional, which “rooted at once in the economic structure and the status order of society. . . involve injustices that are traceable to both (Fraser, 2003, p. 19).”

Taking on this perspective, we can similarly define “race” as such a two-dimensional social division. In economic terms, we see how it constructs wealth disparities, systemic partitions between menial and non-menial jobs, as well as exploitable and superfluous labor power, all resulting in racially specific forms of maldistribution (Darity, 2020). In terms of the status order of society, conversely, Eurocentric patterns of cultural value remain dominant, privileging traits that tend to be associated with “whiteness”. Consequently, people of color are stigmatized, relegated to an inferior position in which it becomes difficult or downright impossible to participate on par with others in social life (Fraser, 2003; Kendi, 2017).

Certainly, neither of the two dimensions of racism described here are completely an indirect effect of the other. Instead, it can be said that the side related to redistribution and the one regarding recognition interact with one another. Racist maldistribution cannot merely be conceived of as a byproduct of the status hierarchy, nor can racist misrecognition be seen as a byproduct of the economic structure of society. So, even though they are interconnected, these dimensions do bear a degree of independence. Consequently, neither can be remedied indirectly through solutions aimed exclusively at the other. Overcoming injustices related to racism therefore requires both redistribution and recognition (Fraser, 2003). In short, it requires participatory parity.

This is a thesis on reparations, not on economic inequality. There is no universal solution that can ameliorate both class and racial disadvantages at the same time. Additionally, it should

also be apparent that we need not choose which of the two is the real problem. They are different, and they both have widespread negative implications for one's social reality. We can recognize that members of disadvantaged socio-economic classes face common barriers on the path to equality, whatever their racial identity.

In most Western countries there are more poor white people than Black people. But when we consider that a much higher proportion of the racialized population is poor, we begin to see the difference between racism and class-based violence. As outlined earlier, racial minorities across the world have less wealth on average, are more likely to face downward intergenerational social mobility, and more often have relatives who live in poverty. Even middle- and higher-class people of colour deal with such problems. They, too, face discrimination by the law; a police officer practicing racial profiling, for example, does not see class. Then there is of course also everyday racism, which at times manifests itself in subtle, unconscious, or implicit racial biases. There is an expectation for racial minorities to live up to a norm, to break with the stereotypes that pervade society. They are made to engage in impression management, driven by a demand to live up to, for example, "Black excellence". People of colour, as Coates puts it, "repeatedly paid a higher price for citizenship and received less in return (2014)." These issues go far beyond class-based oppression. Making progress against racial inequality thus means having to enforce both anti-discrimination provisions as well as employing a wider focus on economic development, such as eradicating racial wealth disparities by, for example, providing housing and educational opportunities through reparations programs (Fraser, 2003; Bagenstos, 2015; Oliver & Shapiro, 2006).

4.1.3. Responsibility

To be sure, Western governments have the tendency to treat colonisation and slavery as if they were mysteries buried in the past; something to investigate if they choose to do so. When it comes to such misdeeds, however, there is no statute of limitations. As long as current generations continue to suffer under the massive weight of such historical and contemporary crimes, the debt is owed. The past holds promises that either remain unfulfilled, or that long ago have been broken. After the American Civil War, for example, Black Americans were promised forty acres of land, as well as a mule for the cultivation of the fields. What came to be known as the "forty acres and a mule" order would eventually mean that 40.000 acres of US land, from the coast of South Carolina to Florida, would be redistributed amongst newly freed Black people (Darity, 2020). The promise, however, was never fulfilled. We see broken promises of a similar nature in the case of former colonial subjects that came to European nations with the assurance that one day they would return to their homes. The hopes and aspirations associated with such promises will be dealt with in the future if you pay attention to them, but only if you continue to do so. But who is responsible for keeping the conversation going? Who has to own up and pay these debts?

By now, three common errors should have been cleared up: that racism no longer exists in the Western world, that there are no significant economic disparities between people of colour

and white individuals, and that such residual inequalities are due to dysfunctional behaviour on the part of a racialized population.

Nevertheless, economists with a wide range of ideological perspectives have embraced racial-cultural determinism, whereby race-linked behaviours and attitudes explain racial inequality, presented even by rather progressive academics such as George Akerlof and Rachel Kranton in their joint article *Economics and Identity* (2000). They suggest that identity, a person's sense of self, affects economic outcomes thus incorporating the psychology and sociology of identity into an economic model of behaviour. One's economic position, and the choices one makes within this realm, thus becomes somewhat of a self-fulfilling prophecy (Akerlof & Kranton, 2000). According to such a theory, should individuals with a racialized identity exercise enough willpower to "do the right thing", group-based inequality can be eliminated, and all disparities simply fall away. In short, it pushes a narrative of individual responsibility. Insofar as people of colour possess the capacity to improve their status by adjusting their own behaviour, a nation could thus be absolved of collective responsibility.

However, as I have demonstrated by now, positive effort coupled with strong motivation and high academic achievements have not been sufficient to eliminate disparities in racial economic well-being, security, and opportunity. Furthermore, cultural determinism wilfully ignores predatory acts such as the seizure of Black-owned land, segregation, and the destruction of property (Coates, 2014; Darity, 2020).

Naturally, there have been a lot of improvements. Slavery has been formally abolished, people of colour are allowed to vote, we no longer see Jim Crow laws; there is more recognition and mutual respect between Black and white citizens, and certain disparities have been redressed through civil rights reforms or the implementation of minority rights. We see further evidence of this in, for example, a significant increase in the number of racialized individuals in professional positions, a growth of the number of students of colour in universities, and a sizeable increase in homeownership among racial minority groups throughout the Western world. On average, however, the economic status of these demographics has stagnated or deteriorated; true inequality remains a distant reality (Darity, 2020; Oliver & Shapiro, 2006).

Nevertheless, this progress is important to acknowledge when we distinguish between compensatory and non-compensatory reparations, between distribution and recognition. The denial of wealth, after all, is far from a purely psychological issue of misrecognition. Despite being faced with regular assaults, the progress mentioned here shows that racialized individuals in the Western world display a significant, noteworthy degree of motivation and resilience in the face of such exclusion and violence. Acknowledgement of and material recompense for the harms these groups have suffered would then be essential to offer some closure, to help one "move on". Again, even if racism were to somehow miraculously disappear, racial wealth disparities that have developed over the past centuries would remain unless they were somehow redressed.

Therefore, we must acknowledge that white people generally control political and economic power in the Western world. No shift in the power relationship will take place unless society

as a whole takes action to transform the structural conditions to make racial equality a real possibility. Given the current existing distribution of financial and social resources that has led to a widespread denial of participatory parity, racialized individuals cannot close racial wealth disparities by independent or autonomous action. Hence, the responsibility to do so does not lie with this group.

Instead, I argue that responsibility lies with a country's national government. In the past, the state has sanctioned, maintained, and enabled slavery, colonialism, legal segregation, racist housing policy as well as continued racial inequality. Private actors have been involved in this process perhaps just as much, but the responsibility of the national government remains paramount since Western state powers have established and perpetuated a legal structure and pattern of enforcement that has enabled these private actors to engage in racist practices with impunity (Darity, 2020; Oliver & Shapiro, 2006). This means we speak of collective responsibility.

The concept of collective responsibility is not entirely uncontroversial. The question naturally arises whether it is even possible for groups to have intentions and to act on them. Likewise, we might wonder if collective entities are to be considered morally blameworthy for bringing about harm. Should we then distribute responsibility across individuals that make up such a group? Especially because we are dealing with a situation in which many individual actors that laid the foundation of systems like colonialism, slavery, and segregation are no longer around, assigning individual responsibility is not a viable solution. It could be, to an extent at least, but the degree to which we can assign individual responsibility would insufficiently account for the historical misdeeds that form the bedrock of massive racial wealth disparities that exist today. Again, this does not mean we should be letting individuals off the hook. If, however, I were to get into the intricacies of moral responsibility on such a deeply theoretical level, I would likely be faced with enough content for another thesis. This is a can of worms I shall refrain from opening in this section. What remains an important takeaway, however, is that I adhere to a notion of collective responsibility.

This concept has been famously panned by authors such as sociologist Max Weber, who argues that such a position is untenable because it supposedly impossible to isolate genuinely collective actions from individual ones due to the fact that groups cannot formulate intentions normally considered necessary for certain actions to take place, which individuals can do (2019). This notion, however, rests on the idea that bad intentions are a necessary condition for responsibility. This, I argue, is not the case.

Violent, exclusionary institutions from slavery to Jim Crow, as well as state-sanctioned racist housing policy would never have been able to materialize as such if certain actors did not have the power of the state to back them up. Whether individuals or groups, this institutional influence allowed them to decide who gets to participate on par with others in social life and who does not. Let it again be clear that I do not deny individual agency. Instead, I argue that those who have acted together to create these circumstances would not have been able to do so if they had acted alone. Whether intentional or due to bureaucratic negligence, the result remains the same. Therefore, the state must be held accountable in this situation. After all, collective entities such as a nation's government entail varying membership. There is not a

single determinate set of individuals necessary for the existence of a collective, yet the actions, burdens and successes perpetuated by such an entity remain firmly embedded, carried over from one collection of individuals to the next (Corlett, 2001; French, 2014). Such odious debts must be reckoned with, even if at times they are the unfortunate consequence of the banal, seemingly normal workings of a society's institutions.

Furthermore, the state possesses well-ordered decision-making procedures. As philosopher Peter French posits, it is an identifiable moral agent in the form of a representative body capable of carrying out group actions. There is a set of decisions in place that are made self-consciously on a rational basis that takes the form of collective intentions, and the members of this entity have clearly defined roles that allow them to exercise certain powers. Hence, the existence of these purposeful and controlled actions allows us to hold the state collectively accountable for the harm it commits (Corlett, 2001; French, 2014).

Furthermore, as is detailed by philosopher Janna Thompson, who has written extensively on reparations, it is also important to understand that benefitting from harm is not the same as causing it. Though most white people alive today have not instigated racial housing policy, for example, intergenerational wealth clearly shows that they do still benefit from it. Benefit may then not be an appropriate source of collective responsibility for the past actions of others, but it might be a viable source of collective responsibility for the perpetuation of this harm, as well as its consequences for future generations. Again, in this case the decision-making bodies of national governments extend over time, making them a legitimate site of responsibility (Thompson, 2002; Marion, 2017).

Here I adhere to a concept propagated by authors such as French, namely forward-looking collective responsibility. Responsibility, in this sense, is not necessarily a question of having caused an existing, morally problematic state of affairs. Instead, it tasks a group, in this case national governments, with the responsibility of bringing about a particular state of affairs that is better than the current one. In short, responsibility is not necessarily understood in causal terms (French, 2014; Thompson, 2002).

After all, certain institutions are sustained that profoundly shape our life prospects, and they somehow need to be redressed to create a more equal playing field. Again, relating it back to Fraser, what we must strive for here is a society that is just to the extent that all its members are permitted to interact with one another as peers. As it stands, this is currently not the case. Hence, national governments ought to be tasked with bringing about the circumstances for participatory parity to be actualized. What this might look like in a more practical sense, will be discussed in the following part of this chapter.

4.2. What could reparations look like? Clearing up the impracticalities

Though this thesis is first and foremost a theoretical study on the topic of reparations, where potential solutions usually fall flat is on the practical side of the debate. Quite a lot has been written on the issue, yet we see little of it translated into concrete policy. After all, this is where an active commitment starts, and when such a project has been set in motion, it is nearly impossible to turn back. Nevertheless, once it has been established that reparations are

necessary, certain issues must naturally be solved, such as who will be paid, who will pay, and how much will be paid. These three questions shall be explored below.

4.2.1. Who will be paid?

The aim of my thesis is to make a case for reparations that redress harms caused by colonial violence. There is no question that other groups have legitimate claims as well, such as Eastern Europeans dispossessed by communist governments who are calling for the return of their property. But the existence of these communities that also deserve a form of recompense does not, in any way, negate the obligation Western countries have to offer reparations for colonial crimes such as slavery.

Then there are also questions related to reparations for the righting of wrongs associated with the dispossession of native populations in many places across the world. We might wonder, then, how far back into the past we should look. After all, such claims could be more costly, considering countries like the US and Australia are essentially one big colony made up of land expropriated from a native population. There is unfortunately not enough room to discuss all such cases, but there is no reason that the insights of my thesis cannot be applied to assess the demands of these groups as well, even though the harm caused to them might have taken place a longer time ago. Sticking to the norm of participatory parity, I believe that the legitimacy of reparations should not be determined by temporal bounds. After all, racial wealth disparities also remain an issue for these native groups. As Darity writes:

. . .the failure to pay a debt in a timely fashion does not extinguish the obligation, particularly since the consequences of past injustices continue to be visited upon the descendants of the direct victims. A national act of procrastination does not eliminate the debt (2020, p. 329).

Besides, we do see that such claims are being made. Aboriginal communities in Australia, Māori in New Zealand, and many native populations in North America are demanding the return of tribal lands from white people as a form of reparations. And these claims are not necessarily unfeasible. In 2022, for example, descendants of native American tribes on the northern coast of California reclaimed more than 500 acres of their ancestral homeland (Anguiano, 2022).

As we have seen, participatory parity is an evaluative standard that can be applied to determine who will and who will not be paid. Naturally, a descendant of a former colonial subject might hold vast amounts of wealth today, not made to suffer from the same deprivations a Black single mother living in the “ghetto” faces. Applying the evaluative standard expounded upon in this thesis can thus help us exclude certain parts of a population from laying claim to reparations. It should be stressed that the wealth gap remains an important indicator. Let us look at an example of what such criteria might look like.

According to Darity, who writes on Black reparations in the American context, in order to receive such policy, a person would need to have one enslaved ancestor in the United States. Second, somebody needs to have self-identified as Black on official documents for at least twelve years before the enactment of a reparations program (Darity, 2020). The latter is to make sure that people were self-identifying as Black before there was a chance that they could be paid for being a person of colour. This also prevents people from claiming

reparations based on a certain racial lineage deduced from, for example, a DNA test that shows a negligible percentage of West African heritage.

But what about Black Americans who do not have an enslaved ancestor? What about those who have descendants that voluntarily immigrated from the Caribbean, for example? As Darity posits, those would have to make a claim for reparations with the country that colonized their nation, such as Great Britain (2020). This is a rather controversial claim, considering that, in the eyes of the law for example, one's Blackness cannot and will not be discerned on such grounds; a police officer unjustly apprehending an African American person will not see such a difference. But my goal here is not to extensively develop a set of criteria that every colonial subject and their descendants must meet. Showing Darity's example is to prove that such conditions can be developed. And though they might spark controversy, at least it starts a conversation that might have been long overdue.

As mentioned earlier, another concern is that a uniform payout to eligible candidates can aggravate interracial wealth disparities within the community. One way to prevent this, is to generate a more equitable distribution by designating some of the potential funds for competitive application, with priority given to those with lower current wealth or income (Bittker, 2003; Coates, 2014; Darity, 2020).

In any case, there is not one universal design for a reparations program. As globalization is accelerating, with flows of people and communication across borders intensifying, divergent value horizons are colliding with startling results. Everyone experiences a new proximity of the other, adding new salience to concepts like identity and difference. This has also contributed to a reignited interest in the topic of reparations. Such struggles are not new, but they assume a new prominence in this context as they penetrate through national boundaries. In the present context it is therefore hardly possible to regard any given society as a culturally homogeneous bounded hole in which reparation claims can be adjudicated by appeal to a single shared value horizon. Rather, we must evaluate claims across disparate value horizons, no single one of which can insist to trump all others.

4.2.2. Who will have to pay?

Earlier, I have described the theoretical implications of collective responsibility, arguing that states have the obligation to right historical wrongs. This does not, however, solve the practical questions that follow such a conclusion, such as whether or not a program or reparations is implementable to begin with. And after all, responsibility does not necessarily lead to political praxis.

It is impossible to shirk responsibility by hand-waving at the past, choosing to bury colonial crimes in history, disavowing the acts of one's ancestors or predecessors. It is true that the last slaveholder is long gone. Those who made sure that the operations of the Dutch West India Company ran smoothly are all dead, and they have been for a while. But to claim one historical success with pride yet to disown a dark chapter in history such as slavery is, to be sure, patriotism à la carte. As Coates writes, "a nation outlives its generations (2014)."

Nevertheless, there are people alive today, whether in America or in Europe, whose grandparents or great-grandparents were enslaved. Many Black citizens of the US, for example, are only three generations removed from slavery (Darity, 2020). It is not such a distant past as some might claim. Slavery is one part of the story, but European colonialism and all the violence associated with it endured in most parts of the world until roughly the turn of the twentieth century. Not to mention that there are plenty of Black Americans alive today who lived under Jim Crow laws. Again, it is not such a distant past. Public narratives of continued societal progress are important, but they should not serve to dismiss the dark parts of our past and present.

It makes intuitive sense to seek recompense from perpetrators that are clearly identified. We have seen several examples in the previous chapter, such as in the case of the Windrush generation or Jim Crow laws in the US. And through extensive genealogical studies, it is certainly possible to deduce who was responsible for what. But when, as I have argued in the section on responsibility, the political order is complicit all across the board, it will not suffice to bill individual perpetrators. As Darity writes, “piecemeal reparations may assuage individual guilt but cannot meet the collective national obligation (2020, p. 347).”

Hence, again, the bill for reparations ought to be given to national governments, considering they bear responsibility for maintaining, enabling, and sanctioning a culture of white supremacy that made such systems like slavery possible; they have authorized, perpetuated, and turned a blind eye to legal segregation and continued racial inequalities. Furthermore, practically speaking, racial wealth disparities across the world are simply too big to be redressed through piecemeal reparations. The US and Western European nations have fostered white asset ownership while at the same time building a racial divide in wealth. This debt created centuries ago has accumulated over time, taking on a size that begs for intervention at the state level.

This might nevertheless be a project conducted in several steps, beginning with, for example, an apology. Such a symbolic gesture lays the potential legal groundwork for subsequent economic steps. In 2021, for example, the municipal council of Amsterdam was the first Dutch city to offer apologies for its history of slavery. Prior to this gesture, academic research was conducted to show that the Dutch Republic and its successor state the Kingdom of the Netherlands were both deeply involved in the transatlantic slave trade, with the city council of Amsterdam in particular playing an enormous direct role in the maintenance of this system (Brandon, 2021; Misérus, 2021). Additionally, a truth and reconciliation commission can be set up to investigate the history of racial injustice in any given nation, done by a country like Germany to look into crimes committed during the Second World War. Non-compensatory reparations, then, could pave the way for compensatory reparations, as long as the ultimate goal is satisfaction and closure.

Hence, it is national governments that have the power to oversee such an initiative at the necessary scale in order to appropriate the required funds and ensure the mandate is carried out. There is little doubt that states have vast capacity to provide the funds required for a

properly designed and well-financed reparations program, especially if such funds are disbursed over the course of several years (Bittker, 2003; Coates, 2014; Darity, 2020).

Finally, some might argue that reparations do little to tackle the structural issues associated with racism. One could wonder about the accuracy of such a statement, considering the aim of reparations policy is to redress the socio-economic disparities associated with racial injustice. But even if it were true, again, we can hardly get around the fact that there is a debt to be paid. Though the two cannot be completely separated from one another, this obligation bears a significant degree of autonomy from the fight against structural racism. Misdeeds have been committed in the past. The legacy of such historical injustices remains, yet it is not always directly linked to contemporary forms of racism. States must somehow reckon with their past and right historical wrongs, redress wealth gaps and pay for past crimes that have established economic disparities that remain firmly embedded in Western societies, even in the face of emancipation.

4.2.3. How much will have to be paid?

In an extensive analysis regarding the potential size of reparations, Darity looks at the land distribution that was promised but never made to former enslaved persons in the US. The size of Black reparations might then be estimated by calculating the present value of the unfulfilled commitment of forty acres and a mule, mentioned earlier in this chapter. This is what Darity ends up using as a foundation for his thesis in which he identifies the racial wealth gap (2020).

The grants would have given 400.000 acres along the coast of South Carolina to Florida to newly freed Black Americans. This land would be worth around six trillion dollars today, based on the cumulative ramifications of that broken promise. Taking a more generous approach, at the time of emancipation it was interpreted that each freedman would be eligible to receive the forty acres of land. This larger allocation would have led to a higher total value of the land to be distributed, amounting to about 12.6 trillion dollars today. Considering there are about forty million people in the US eligible for reparations, each of these citizens would, based on this calculation, be owed 392.000 dollars (Darity, 2020).

What Darity has shown with this figure, naturally goes beyond mere monetary value. Perhaps more importantly for my thesis, is that his work proves that a calculation can be made. Determining how much is owed, and how much debt has accumulated over the course of the past centuries, is a very real possibility. This goes for the US, but it rings true for Europe as well. Rather precise methods can be applied to determine the amount of wealth robbed and reinvested into national economies. In the second half of the eighteenth century, for example, the Dutch Republic was one of the most developed commercial societies in all of Europe. And the processing and export of slave-produced goods from sugar to tobacco played an essential role; as much as forty percent of all the growth of the country's economy in the decades around 1770 can be traced back to slavery (Brandon & Bosma, 2021). Considering such calculations can be made for virtually any nation, it should similarly be within the realm of possibilities to estimate what such a country is owed to those eligible for reparations.

Chapter 5. Conclusion

The actual number of the reparations to be paid might be so large that it becomes difficult to imagine. Nevertheless, countries that for centuries managed to organise an intricately designed project of plunder and trade of human bodies would surely be able to make such a calculation today, especially with contemporary technological and academic advancements. That being said, engaging publicly with a conversation about these questions matters perhaps as much as the specific answers that come out of such a debate. And if racial wealth disparities teach us anything, reparations will not divide the world any more than it already is.

We cannot solve all such historical and contemporary injustices in a similar manner. There is no universal solution, not even for reparations. But looking away has the same effect everywhere; it ignores the crimes of the past, the present, and the future. Perhaps there is no country in the world that can ever make full reparations. However, there is much to discover about ourselves as human beings in such a conversation. The result can be the full acceptance of our collective biography, as well as its consequences. Maybe that is precisely what frightens many. To be sure, this conversation is not necessarily about privilege, it is about justice. The goal of reparations is not that others give away something they did not deserve, but that everybody gets their due. This is a conversation about rights. Those who aspire white supremacy want more than to just have their privileges acknowledged; they want to be able to do whatever they want without taking into consideration the lives of non-white people. They mistakenly perceive reality as a zero-sum game; where one makes strides towards more equality, the other loses access to benefits.

More than anything, perhaps, I hope to have shown that disparities between Black and white people are the result of deliberately constructed mechanisms rooted in the institutions of European and American societies. Further, I hope to have shown that the solution will be complex, but that there nevertheless is a debt to be paid.

What rings true for Black Americans as well as for former colonial subjects and their descendants in Europe, is that these communities have lived, as Coates eloquently writes, "under the heel of a regime that elevated armed robbery to a governing principle (2014)." This has always offered leeway for private companies, investors, and other institutions as well as state apparatuses to conduct policies based on racial profiling; to rob, kill, torture, and exclude; to make sure basic resources such as housing, education, and healthcare are denied, squandering any chance of gaining the same opportunities as white citizens.

Despite steps towards economic equality, many people of colour remain trapped in a system that prevents them from taking advantage of the opportunities white individuals benefit from. Educational deficiencies make it difficult to find proper foothold in an emerging technological economy. Such deprivation starts at a young age, and spans across generations. Racialized subjects across the world struggle to move from deteriorated, run-down inner-city neighbourhoods and older suburban communities, where their children become caught up in a school system that can seldomly provide them with the educational basis necessary to climb the racially skewed economic ladder. The result is isolation, both social and economic. As Oliver and Shapiro point out, a focus on wealth tends to reveal an important dimension

related to the seeming paradox of Black economic progress alongside economic deterioration (2006). Black wealth might have grown in many places across the globe, but at the same time it has fallen further behind than that of white people. Though both demographics might have similar achievements and credentials, this gap remains (Oliver & Shapiro, 2006; Essed, 1991).

As we have seen, homeownership is an essential part of the story. Those who can secure land, those who are able to buy a home or gain access to a house in general, can take advantage of new and more lucrative ways of acquiring the good life and participating on par with others in social life. It allows one to finance education for their children, provide resources for their offspring's self-employment, or seize political rights through the electoral process. Excluded from this process, it becomes apparent how African Americans, Moluccan Dutch citizens, or Caribbean Brits have been denied the benefits of vast increases in home equity assets (Oliver & Shapiro, 2006).

These inequalities are not the result of inborn traits. They are not the product of one's nature or one's failing to live by society's meritocratic standards. They are not the consequence of culture, identity, isolated incidents, haphazard events, or individual accomplishments. Racial wealth inequality has persisted across many generations through the same systemic barriers that have always hampered people of colour throughout the course of history, from colonialism, slavery, racist housing policy to segregation. Sure, people lead imperfect lives, and make short-sighted decisions. But those who believe that the immense disparities described here can be attributed to individual accomplishments are, at this stage, choosing to remain wilfully ignorant about the racism inherent to American and European societies. We do not live in a post-racial reality where everybody is afforded starting-gate equality. To remain colour-blind is to ignore the racial injustices that pervade the world.

As is shown primarily in the class-not-race debate, economic safeguarding is not enough. Citizens must be able to participate in social life with their peers, all the while given the capacity to make a meaningful contribution within such a context. To become a full-fledged member of society, means being recognized as such.

Two-dimensionally framing maldistribution and misrecognition as an injustice in the way Fraser does, we can ultimately express the issues related to these concepts as externally manifest and publicly verifiable barriers that prevent people from interacting with one another as peers. Such obstacles have clearly been exposed with respect to the topic at hand once we consider that the two conditions of participatory parity have been severely violated for racialized individuals across the Western world.

First, the objective condition of this normative framework suggests that the distribution of resources must make sure that we avoid socio-economic arrangements that institutionalize major material disparities that prevent some parts of society from being able to gain access to the resources necessary to interact with their fellow citizens as peers. Material barriers between white people and racialized individuals have, to be sure, been all but removed in a way that allows these different demographics from enjoying social participation the same

way. The racial wealth gap, after all, has not only created a material distance, but it has also engendered a social distance.

Second, the intersubjective condition, adjusted to be more generous than Fraser initially formulated it, tells us that institutionalized patterns of cultural value must convey respect for all participants in society, ensuring that everybody has equal access to the social means necessary to live a flourishing life. Again, racialized individuals have, both in the past as well as in the present, been denied the status of full partners in interaction; legally, but also through bureaucratic negligence. Their distinctiveness is either not acknowledged in the rhetoric of color-blind liberalism, or they are burdened with excessive ascribed difference, as we see, for example, in the case of labor market discrimination.

To conclude, participatory parity is not met. From being unable to participate in homeownership to mass incarceration and exclusion from higher education; racialized individuals in the Western world have been denied equal access to the institutional prerequisites needed to participate on par with others in social life. Reparations, then, should be more than a simple compensatory policy for past injustices, more than an indulgence to absolve Western states of their sins. What such a project entails, is a reckoning that would lead to a renewal of nation's consciousness, a reconciling of one's self-image rooted in historical fact. This might be a painful project, but nevertheless one that, at the very least, must be considered a legitimate answer to the problems discussed here.

5.1. Shortcomings and further research

Colonialism is, first and foremost, rooted in the system of global capital. After all, capital originates from a long period of expropriation of land and labor of people who were either not properly compensated or received no compensation at all. This means that it similarly planted the seeds for contemporary racism and neocolonial exploitation. That naturally begs the question whether economic reparations that express historical injustice in terms of monetary value maintain such exploitative market systems; structures that lead to a significant abrasion of social relations.

If anything, reparations must also focus on repairing pre-existing normative patterns, mending relationships. And across the globe, people have suffered immense pressure due to capitalist greed and individualism. When making a case for reparations it is therefore essential that we question the very structure of global capital within which we conceptualize the nature and criteria of such reparations, a structure that led to a situation in which reparations became necessary to begin with. Perhaps it can be said then that economic reparations with the intent of assigning monetary value to historical injustice is not a definitive solution to, but a symptom of our problem. And tasking a collective with the responsibility of ameliorating the ills associated with capitalism might be in conflict with the fact that this system has also been causally responsible for some of the things we value, such as improvements in healthcare or education. However, to say that for reparations to be viable we first need to witness widespread economic reforms that redress the late capitalist status quo in general, and intensified marketisation in particular, would be rather unproductive. It would only serve to stall a conversation that has been stalled for way too long.

To be sure, it has been a long time coming. Where the injustices start matters less, however, than where they end. They need to be addressed, and that might mean opting for less-than-ideal policy within the context of capitalism. People are suffering now. That similarly means we need solutions now. At the same time, this does not entail that challenges to late capitalism need to be put on hold. We can do both, and we should.

How to undertake such an arduous project, however, cannot be solved here, and therefore it might provide important questions for further research. Anti-racist and anti-colonial struggles have and always will be coupled with anti-capitalist endeavors, and for good reason. The fight against racism, after all, does not aim solely at transforming a status order, considering the category of “race” implicates class struggle as well. It is difficult to imagine the end of capitalism, just like it is equally difficult to image the end of racism and (neo)colonialism. This does not, however, mean that all attempts to disrupt such systems are in vain.

To be sure, whenever radical political action is discussed, we are dealing with a complicated dilemma, namely the disconnect between what we want, and what we can get. Should we, then, as Fraser puts it, “sacrifice principle on the altar of realism (2003, p. 78)?” We know that major political transformations tend to take years, perhaps even centuries, but that people continue to suffer in the meantime. When we ameliorate such suffering in the short-term, it is likely to have implications for long-term goals. We might not, for example, want people to have to compete in an exploitative labour market, but until we can abolish such practices (if we ever can), we had better make sure there are certain economic safeguards in place that protect people from violent market forces. Perhaps short-term solutions, then, only make the long-term radical alternatives an even more distant ambition. Hence, the goal when it comes to such dilemmas might be to avoid mistaking concessions for decisive victory.

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