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CASE STUDY

Epistemic injustice in international development: a case study of a research institute's knowledge strategy

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In the past years, the presence, and consequences of epistemic injustice – unfair treatment of individuals and groups in knowledge and communication practices – has become a topic of concern and debate for actors in the field of research and international development. This debate is rightly a topic of concern for Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation (WCDI), part of Wageningen University and Research (WUR), the Netherlands. WCDI operates as a research institute in the field of international development. As a research institute, it is having a significant influence in the realm knowledge creation, knowledge use and education for professionals and institutions in its target groups and individuals. This case study shows how the concept of epistemic justice can be made concrete and actionable. In addition, it also critically reflects on the current practices and policies that reinforce epistemic injustice. This is done by using an epistemic justice lens to review the current strategy of WCDI to position itself as a knowledge partner in the field of international development. This was done by interviewing individuals within the organization, and by reviewing organizational and policy documents, and academic literature. Epistemic injustice remains largely ignored as a dimension of discrimination in research, knowledge development and programme implementation. This paper concludes that the strategy development process can be a key tool for tackling epistemic injustice in knowledge and practices, by institutions and individuals in international development.

Keywords: epistemic justice; decolonization; research institutes; knowledge; international development; universities; partnerships; Netherlands

1. Decolonization of knowledge: the current debate

The word today has diverse trajectories of development and knowledge generation that are facilitated through international development cooperation. Amidst these efforts, there are increased calls to 'decolonize' structures and institutions around the world (Bhambra, 2021).

Decolonization is based on the premise that existing knowledge, institutional and structural systems fail to consider the interests of all relevant stakeholders in different parts of the world, and often allocates privilege and or power to some, at the expense of others. In so doing, those who are dispossessed are made subordinate in these systems and processes that are mostly established by actors in the global North[i] (Bhambra 2021; Muschik 2022).

One part of the decolonization debate is the acknowledgement that global South[ii] actors are less able to participate in the development of existing development knowledges, practices and institutions. Researchers and practitioners engaged in international development cooperation efforts, regard their work as 'progressive' ; however, critics question and condemn these efforts as they often introduce unjust systems and adverse consequences. Decolonization and decolonization of knowledge creation and use, has become a popular and highly debated discourse in academia and knowledge development. However, dominant Eurocentric structures and ideas of development continue to dominate the development cooperation space; as well as the reproduction of colonial power structures and Eurocentric ideologies where realities of the development sector are determined by long established and emerging elite and powerful institutions (Sultana 2019). Scholars argue for decolonizing development ideology and from dominant narratives of development originating from the global North. These dominant models of development approaches are considered hypocritical due to their tendency to reproduce patterns of exploitation under multi-layered benevolent progressive interventions (Vásquez-Fernández& Ahenakew 2020). In the global development cooperation, scientists and policymakers undervalue, marginalize and systematically exclude knowledge from the global South. This practise is extra harmful since this knowledge is crucial for informing developmental decisions; this discrepancy leads to unjust and inequitable development systems. For transformation towards decolonization to take place, it requires critical reflection and awareness of 'issues of power, privilege, positionality, politics' (Sultana 2019: 36) and access to resources for knowledge development and research. In addition, it is crucial to reflect on the positions and roles of different stakeholders , to examine their privileges, locations, histories and disadvantages.

Decolonization of knowledge seeks to eliminate fundamental inequities in knowledge systems that exclude knowledge and knowledge holders from the global South. The term 'decolonization of knowledge' in this paper refers to processes and actions that intentionally identify and dismantle entrenched, unequal patterns of knowledge creation and use (Boyes et al 2023). Another space where the debate of decolonization of knowledge is explored is in the realm of epistemic injustice. This theory is rooted in feminist literature as well as well as critical theories that explore the exclusion of others such as racism and other social exclusion (Kidd et al., 2019). So, epistemic justice in the context of international development cooperation goes hand in hand with the debate on decolonization of knowledge.

This paper adopts an epistemic justice lens, and aims to explore how this concept of epistemic justice can be used in the context of a research institute operating in the field of international development cooperation. In the following sections, this paper will first looks at the role of this research institute as a knowledge and development cooperation partner. Secondly, this paper gives an overview of the methodology used to conduct this case study . Thirdly this paper adopts an epistemic justice lens to explore the concerns and inequalities in knowledge systems. This paper concludes by giving strategy and practice recommendations for development cooperation actors such as research institutes to adopt for there to be more epistemic justice and an overall move towards decolonization of knowledge.

2. Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation (WCDI) in the field of development cooperation

WCDI is a research institute linked to Wageningen University and Research (WUR). WCDI aims to bring 'knowledge into action' and strengthen local food systems, mainly in the global South. WCDI works on 'learning trajectories, research, and project implementation support in the fields of food systems and food system transformation' (WUR, n.d.-a). It is a research institute operating in the international development cooperation space and aims to support stakeholders, sectors, governing bodies, policy actors and researchers to apply research into practice, but also to bring lessons from practice into research.

As indicated above, WCDI is part of the bigger WUR university system. WUR is a joined collaboration between Wageningen University and Wageningen Research Foundation, based in the Netherlands. WUR aims to 'explore the potential of nature to improve the quality of life' and does that in three core areas namely; food, feed and biobased production/nature resources and living environment/society and well-being (WUR, n.d.-b). Figure 1 gives an overview of the institutional organogram and highlights the different science groups working on the three core areas of WUR. It is important to note that being part of this larger university and research structure significantly influences finance, policies, and overall decision-making processes.

In the past years, WCDI took the decision to move away from an implementing partner and position itself more as a knowledge partner within the field of international development cooperation by strengthen its knowledge development and applied research component (WCDI, n.d.-a). This led to the development of a strategy to operationalize this identity as a knowledge partner which is called 'WCDI knowledge ambitions and agenda' (Guijt, 2021). It highlights WCDI's goals namely; knowledge co-creation, knowledge use and education for professionals and institutions. This document is referred to as the knowledge strategy in the rest of this text.

This paper discusses the new knowledge strategy for WCDI and reflects on it with a focus on epistemic justice. WCDI has became more aware that epistemic justice is an important theme and is invested in the debate and call for equitable shift in power, including power over knowledge. Internally, there is a motivation to do something with this theme within the organization, but also in the wider development cooperation sphere. A second reason for undertaking this exercise was more from an academic point of view. The conversation about epistemic (in)justice is often a theoretical one and less attention is given on how to put this concept into practice. This paper aims to give examples and suggestions on how to make the debate about epistemic justice actionable and concrete.

The following section gives a summary of the methodology used to carry out this case study.

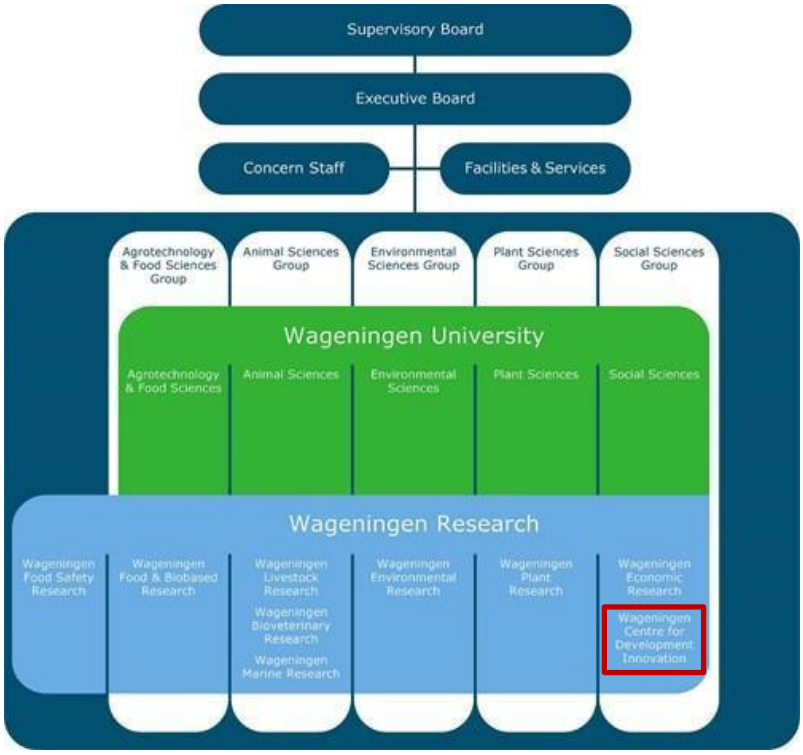

Figure 1: Organization chart WUR (WUR, n.d.-c)

3. Methodology

Different information sources were used to gather the information for this case study. Reviewing the current knowledge strategy of WCDI and investigating policy developments within WCDI was done using internal and publicly available policy documents. Peer-reviewed literature was used to formulate and shape the concept of epistemic justice and investigate the different forms in which epistemic injustice can be found. Furthermore, five in-

depth interviews were done using a semi-structured interview approach. In total 3 scientific staff members of WCDI were interviewed, one liaison office staff member of WCDI and one researcher of the social science group department (not affiliated with WCDI) of Wageningen University were interviewed. In addition to these interviews, the authors also had multiple informal conversations with different staff members at WCDI who are engaged in programme implementation support, management, policy advisory, research, and knowledge development work. The findings from these data collection methods were analysed to shape the thoughts and arguments in this case study. Where possible, direct quotations and links are given to the interviews (see the reference list for an overview of the interview list).

Interviews and academic literature were used to reflect on the current knowledge strategy of WCDI. It must be noted that the given examples should not be seen as the only points of attention within the knowledge strategy since they do not capture all the viewpoints on epistemic justice concerns inherent within the organization and described within the literature. So, this case study should be seen as a start of a process rather than in-depth research of all forms of epistemic injustice within the organization.

4. Epistemic justice as a theoretical lens

Within the world of development cooperation, there have been intense debates about how the development cooperation system is intertwined, shaped, and affected by epistemic injustice (Koch, 2020). Epistemic injustice refers to the 'unfair treatment that relates to issues of knowledge, understanding and participation in communicative practices' (Kidd et al., 2019: 1). The unfair treatment can relate to individuals, groups and societies and is linked to larger structures of inequality (Cummings et al, 2023). Walker (2019) identifies two forms of epistemic injustice; the first one is structural injustice, which is experienced as exclusion of individuals or groups such as in the case of racism or other social exclusions that inhibit access to opportunities and resources. Structural epistemic injustice often arises when the injustice is understood and experienced by powerless groups, but not communicable or understood by those with power (Fricker 2007; Walker 2019); these differentiated social experiences create marginalization and injustice. The second form of epistemic injustice is testimonial injustice which arises from a credibility deficit due to overall prejudice about a person's or group's ability to contribute to knowledge, for example, in the case of minority language speakers (Fricker 2007; Walker 2019). Overall, reforms of systems and structures is needed to ensure tackle epistemic injustice and to ensure that our practices are just (Walker 2019). So, epistemic injustice is a potent, yet largely ignored dimension of discrimination in research, knowledge development and programme implementation.

5. Epistemic justice concerns in the new knowledge strategy

This section reviews different parts of WCDI's knowledge strategy and evaluates them using an epistemic justice lens. Furthermore, the epistemic justice literature touches upon different forms and representations of epistemic justice that are not mentioned or described in WCDI's current strategy document. Where this is the case, the paper reflects on current practices within WCDI and discusses how these forms of justice could be included in the current knowledge strategy.

5.1 A dichotomy between conceptualizing and contextualizing knowledge can reinforce epistemic injustice

The current knowledge strategy of WCDI shows a division between knowledge conceptualization within WUR on the one hand and contextualization with partners on the other hand as indicated in figure 2 (Guijt, 2021). The current knowledge strategy gives an overview of the conceptual and contextual frameworks that have been developed to guide the organization knowledge strategy development as seen in Figure 2.

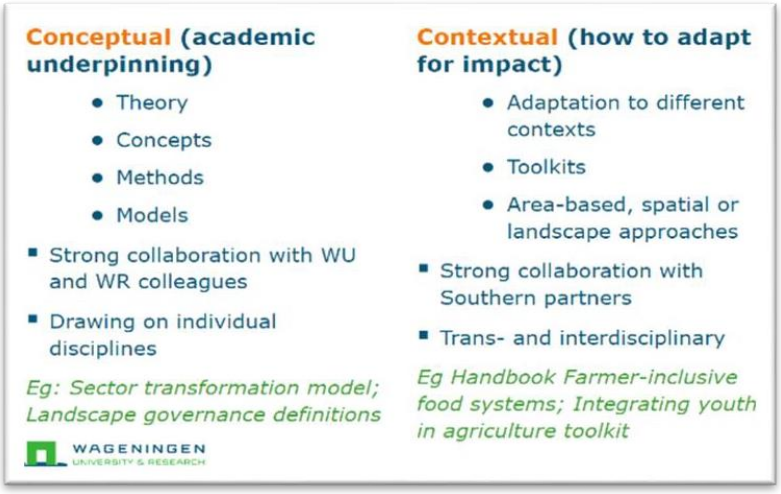

Figure 2: Slide of the knowledge strategy (Guijt, 2021)

Phrasing the strategy in this dichotomy is problematic because it structurally excludes WCDI in-country programme partner from engaging in the theorizing stage of knowledge creation. In the current strategy, the theory, concept, method, and model development are designed to be done by the WCDI team and their colleagues from the university; hence this dichotomous demarcation ends up excluding the in-country partners. Excluding them contains the unspoken assumption that they are less creditable or less able to theorize (B, personal communication, 28-11-2022; D, personal communication 29-11- 2022; E personal communication, 28-11-2022). As a result, even though the organization aims to establish a co-creation partnership with their partners across the world, the strategy, as currently formulated, can have an

excluding effect on partners as the process makes them unable to influence academic underpinnings that support programme design. This is one of the forms of epistemic injustice (Boogaard, 2021).

Koch describes this phenomenon also in her article as discriminatory credibility where experts with the nationality of the country they are working in are 'considered epistemically lesser' (2020: 482). She also points out that this way of thinking has the underlying prejudgment that country-based experts are unable to perform without external experts who 'knowing a little bit better' (Koch, 2020: 483) The dichotomy in Figure 2 gives the impression that similar prejudgments exist within the organization's knowledge strategy. During conversations with multiple people in the organization, it became clear that one of the underlying ideas and aspirations of this strategy is to amplify the voices of scholars and experts with the nationality of the country they work in; this includes development practitioners who have empirical knowledge and expertise. One of the aims of the knowledge strategy and this specific formulation is to help these experts to access spaces that are not always accessible to them. However, these aspirations are curtailed by a general credibility deficit that local experts suffer from, that is in constant tension with a contrasting credibility excess that foreign experts profit from (Koch, 2020). Credibility excess assigned to 'international' experts working for WCDI and WUR donor can be particularly harmful to the credibility and participation of their partners in target countries and populations.

The WCDI knowledge strategy in its current form does not address the power imbalance and the underlying prejudgment of the epistemic credibility of the country-based experts involved. WCDI/WUR experts will be the external experts involved that are institutionally enabled to come up with theories, methods, or models. Formulating the strategy as is, will not give experts with the nationality of the country they work in, the full opportunity to influence the academic discourse that supports the different implementation strategies in their countries. Moving away from this dichotomous thinking and including all scholars in all steps is of main importance to ensure WCDIs knowledge strategy does not reinforce epistemic injustice and enhances the credibility of country-based knowledge partners and their expertise.

5.2 Underrepresentation of Southern scholars within the academic space of development studies.

Publication bias, where scholars of the global North are overrepresented in publications about international development studies, is one of the more described, documented and known examples of epistemic injustice within the field of international development research (Cummings & Hoebink, 2017). These authors formulated the following causes of the underrepresentation of Southern scholars in development studies; the work of scholars in the global South is undervalued, scholars are less credited for the contribution they have in the research process or academic debate and/or these scholars have less access and resources to publish and share work (Liverpool, 2021; D, personal communication, 29-11-2022).

Within WCDI, almost all published products in the last year included authors from the global South and researchers living in the country the study took place. This was also a criterion mentioned in quarterly reports of WCDI, reporting its findings to the board of WUR (WCDI, n.d.-b). This indicates that co-authorship is one of the forms of epistemic injustice that is clearly on the radar of WCDI. However, the knowledge strategy does not touch upon publication guidelines (Guijt, 2022). This makes good author practices vary depending on the individual ideas and preferences of employees. Walker argues that combating epistemic injustice calls for a commitment to attaining epistemic justice by institutions as well as by individuals (Walker 2019)- individual efforts alone are not sufficient to promote the participation of partners from the global South. Gathering data for this case study made it clear that epistemic (in)justice is a topic of interest and concern for WCDI staff members. However, as one interviewees pointed out, you can have good intentions and still exercise (unintendedly) discriminatory practices that reinforce epistemic injustice (D, personal communication, 29-11-2022). Conversations about individual behaviour, let alone institutionalized structures and systems to facilitate these conversations, remain largely unexplored.

Furthermore, epistemic justice goes beyond counting the numbers of co-authors. Having 'checked' the box of co-authorship has the risk of silencing the debate about other facets of unfair publication practices described above. For example, two interviewees pointed out that we almost always use theories and literature from scholars in the global North (A, personal communication, 7-11-2022; D, personal communication, 29-11-2022). This is alluded to dichotomy described in figure 2 where the knowledge partners from the global South are expected to take part in adaptation of the products developed by WCDI and WUR experts. Since publication bias is not described in the knowledge strategy, good practices once again are left in the hands of individual employees and researchers.

5.3 The knowledge product fund and its accessibility to our partners

At the beginning of 2022, there were resources available to finish knowledge products. The resources were made available by the university Board to help WCDI to position itself better as a knowledge partner. Knowledge products were interpreted as academic articles, books, toolboxes, podcasts, or other forms of knowledge sharing (WCDI, n.d.-c). However, this call was put out only internally within the organization. This excluded our partners or other researchers we work with from this opportunity. This is a debatable practice since all the learning done within WCDI, is impossible without the in-country partners in the different countries. Furthermore, section 5.2 above indicated that lack of access to resources is one of the reasons for the underrepresentation of Southern scholars within the development knowledge space.

Understandably, it can argue that the money was made available by the university board for internal WCDI use. To the organizations credit, WCDI tried to be inclusive in this process by asking how the products are partner-purpose- driven, if the information was collected in a non-extractive way and enhances the learning capacity for partners (WCDI, n.d.-c). The money was indeed made available specifically for WCDI and it needs to support WCDI's knowledge and research outcomes. If WCDI involvement was a necessity for the board, WCDI could still have reached out to its partners and partnered with them to achieve their ultimate knowledge strategy goal of co-creating knowledge with partners. Unfortunately, the way co-creation was formulated (as written in the counterargument), it sounds like talking over instead of talking with WCDI partners which is also not an equal form of collaboration or co-creation. Ultimately, WCDI was going to formulate and decide on what a partner-purpose-driven product is and how it enhanced the learning capacity of our partners. Lastly, the call had no requirement for co-creation, in whatever form; this criterion was absent in the final rubric that reviewed all submitted proposals (WCDI, n.d.-d).

5.4 Making WCDI's work and knowledge more accessible

Knowledge sharing is a vital component of research and knowledge development. Almost all interviewees touched upon the practice of knowledge sharing and how that is an important part of epistemic injustice (E, personal communication, 28-11-2022; D, personal communication 29-11-2022; B, personal communication, 28-11-2022). Knowledge sharing can refer to communicating the results and insights of a study back to the participants or communities involved in a specific study, but also to making your research available to the whole of society (Parker, 2013; Taylor, 2019). In both aspects, interviewees felt that this is a topic already on the radar of WCDI but also felt that WCDI should improve its practices even more (E, personal communication, 28-11-2022; D, personal communication 29-11-2022; B, personal communication, 28-11-2022).

Communicating research findings back to the programme participants is a topic widely discussed within the context of clinical trials with human participants (World Medical Association, 2013). However, the same ethical considerations are true in the context of development studies. Participants in studies invest their time and sometimes other resources to contribute to studies and they have a right to know the results of the study. Disseminating the findings of studies is important for participants to apply the knowledge and change their own context (Degaga et al., 2020; Kurtulmus, 2020). Failure to communicate the findings with the relevant participants shows that participants are seen as subjects of study rather than people with the ability to use the knowledge developed from the study in their own lives once their knowledge requirements are met. A form of epistemic injustice is also excluding people from the conversation using specific language that is inaccessible to the participants (Kidd et al., 2019). Therefore, publishing research results in a way that is understandable to all stakeholders is important and can contribute to epistemic justice (E, personal communication, 28-11-2022).

In addition, sharing knowledge with a wider audience based on open access is also a widely debated topic and a way to contribute to epistemic justice. This is especially important when projects are funded by public money (Parker, 2013). Currently, most of WCDI's published work is openly accessed but not all. One interviewee indicated that fully adopting guidelines on open-access publishing could be an important way to contribute to epistemic justice (D, personal communication, 29-11-2022). Furthermore, another interviewee indicated that project related knowledge is also not always shared openly. It is often only available if you are part of WCDI because it is embodied within specific individuals (B, personal communication, 28-11-2022). This makes the knowledge developed from WCDI's work to not be publicly available. It adds to epistemic injustice because knowledge is often learned in collaboration with partners in the global South, but these partners have limited access to knowledge within WCDI in general but especially after the project lifecycle.

Therefore, knowledge sharing should be incorporated into the knowledge strategy to ensure that partners receive more attention. Institutional guidelines can help improve these practices in projects and during acquisition. Lastly, one interviewee pointed out that as an organization, WCDI should emphasize more on utilizing all the learning we do as opposed to leaving it in the internal grey materials. A suggestion on how to do that is to recruit a specific PhD or post-doctoral researcher who could consolidate and document all kinds of learnings over the span of different projects (B, personal communication, 28-11-2022).

5.5 The forming of a 'global South' center within WUR

Within WUR, there have been ideas to start a 'global South' center. This center would be a space for researchers working on projects in the global South to share, link and collaborate better. The specific role, shape and name have not been defined yet and are also already debated within the organization (Bruggeman, 2022). This section will focus on one interpretation of the center which brings together all researchers within WUR who work on projects within the global South.

One interviewee said: 'Intuitively I'd say: Why is a global South centre located in the Netherlands?' (D, personal communication, 29-11-2022). If this center has the shape that only researchers of WUR are involved, projects, areas and people run the risk to be seen as subjects of study rather than knowledge holders by themselves that can contribute to the debate and collective learning (Cummings & Hoebink, 2017). This objectification is another form of epistemic injustice described in the literature. However, more integration between researchers within WUR would indeed be desirable and the idea of this center by itself is not a bad idea. In fact, this research center also can contribute to epistemic justice if it is designed to address the existing gaps. The center should ensure that it includes scholars and institutions from the global South in an equal way, it could be an initiative to contribute to epistemic justice (B, personal communication, 28-11-2022; D, personal communication 29-11-2022; E, personal

communication, 28-11-2022). It is of main importance that institutions and scholars outside WUR can equally participate and contribute. This will ask for a power shift, shared agenda setting and shared resources (E, personal communication, 28-11-2022). For example, it cannot be the case that their contribution to the center is depending on their involvement in WUR projects. Also, equal access in physical presence was pointed out by two interviewees as important for the center to be able to contribute to epistemic justice (D, personal communication 29-11-2022; E personal communication, 28-11-2022). Last, also the name was seen as dividing, place-bound (we vs. them) and not covering what it aims for (B, personal communication, 28-11-2022; D, personal communication 29-11-2022; E, personal communication, 28-11-2022). Suggested alternative names included: center for collaboration (in development), center for shared leadership or global developing context center (B, personal communication, 28-11- 2022; D, personal communication 29-11-2022).

5.6 Policy on consultant fees

Consultants' fees are not a specific part of WCDI's knowledge strategy. However, it is one of the very visible and materialized forms of epistemic injustice and a form on which WCDI has a sufficient and direct influence. A consultancy policy should be part of WCDIs knowledge strategy if it wants to contribute to epistemic justice. Right now, there is no policy or guidelines on fair consultancy fees for experts in the global South (C, personal communication, 29-11-2022). Research shows that international operating consultants, especially from the global North, are viewed and treated differently. This often results in a higher fee and different roles for international consultants in research activities (Koch, 2020). Also, multiple interviewees confirmed a difference in payment but also the difference in tasks between internationally working consultants and consultants with the nationality of the country they work in (B, personal communication, 28-11-2022; C, personal communication, 29-11-2022).

A standardized fee, based on the nature of the work and the experience of the consultant could be a good way to prevent pay gaps between different consultants. Within WCDI, there is already the intention to make such a list following the United Nations guidelines. However, this list differentiates fees based on country of residence (C, personal communication, 29-11-2022). Interviewees were not in agreement if specific fees per country of residence should be applied (B, personal communication, 28-11-2022; C, personal communication, 29-11-2022; D, personal communication, 29-11-2022). However, following market-conformed payment within countries is not always fair since adequate pension, good insurance and adequate healthcare standards may not always be reflected in country-specific market prices (D, personal communication, 29-11-2022).

A standardized fee structure does not necessarily address the difference in how we value different types of work. If, for example, data collection is still valued and paid less compared to writing reports, epistemic injustice is more institutionalized with the standard consultant

fees. These interviewees suggest critically reviewing the United Nations guidelines as a starting point, with external experts on the topic of epistemic injustice, to ensure WCDI does not institutionalize the devaluing of necessary but often in-country consultancy work. To ensure that unintended biases are filtered out of the system, WCDI could do a regular analysis to see if pay gaps exist between specific marginalized groups or between different project leaders. This enables WCDI to become aware of its biases but also enhances the conversation about fair payment within the organization.

Lastly, the Dutch procurement law states that WCDI should receive multiple tenders when the total sum of the assignment, including all costs, exceeds 70.000 euros. Below that amount, project coordinators can recruit one consultant without making the tender publicly available. Some organizations use a lower limit to ensure that more people have the chance to secure the tender and to reduce favoritism. Lowering the boundary of 70.000 euros before multiple tenders are obtained can promote fair competition between consultants (C, personal communication, 29-11-2022).

6. Conclusions

As one of the interviewees aptly put it, 'WCDI should change its knowledge strategy and its associated activities to ensure it contributes to epistemic justice'. This paper has tried to capture examples and facets of epistemic injustice in the context of WCDI's new knowledge strategy. Epistemic injustice can be found in the wording, structure, and viewpoint of the knowledge strategy; the awareness of epistemic injustice in publications; the way WCDI makes knowledge available; the use of the knowledge product fund; the ideas on a global South centre; and the absence of a consultancy fee policy. These examples use the knowledge strategy as a case study to show how organizational strategies are not always contributing to epistemic justice. The arguments give insights in suggestions on how the strategy can be improved to contribute to epistemic justice. This paper makes the following suggestions:

- WCDI has to make sure Southern partners can be part of influencing and co-creating theoretical and conceptual frameworks and not only in contextualizing example. Trans- and interdisciplinary research methodologies should not only be used when applying knowledge but especially in conceptualizing knowledge development processes, to be able to contribute to epistemic justice.
- Publication bias has multiple factettes and is not only a matter of co-authorship. Publication bias is also present in the selection of authors and theories used. WCDI should make sure that the goals it set for itself and the discussions it has around this topic are more than a 'co-authorship tick-the-box exercise'.
- Epistemic injustice is a problem deeply rooted within our society and our own behavioural patterns. If WCDI uses resources, it should critically reflect how and if it contributes to epistemic justice. If WCDI does not make a deliberate effort, it will repeat the status quo,

which institutionalize epistemic injustice even more, resulting in adverse conditions for Southern partners.

- Making WCDI's work more available for others can be a win-win situation. It gives WCDI more credit as a knowledge partner and contributes to epistemic justice by giving outsiders access to the internal learnings of WCDI. The organization can take steps into this direction by prioritizing sharing knowledge, archiving and making knowledge accessible to the relevant stakeholders.
- The forming of a global South centre within WUR can contribute to epistemic justice if all stakeholders are able to participate in an equal way. Power difference should be acknowledged, removed where possible, and otherwise factored into the co-creation design. Removing conditionality for participation for actors outside WUR is one of the ways to do this. These ground rules should be adopted in the formation, the design of the of the centre and its review process. This can be supported by guidelines to institutionalize epistemic justice in knowledge production.
- At first glance, consultancy fees may not seem to be part of a knowledge strategy. However, differences in payment for different steps of knowledge creation is a very visible form of treating different knowledge creators in an unequal way. Furthermore, it is also one of the most tangible and described forms of unequal treatment in knowledge creation. It is also one of the easier steps to take since WCDI is less dependent on external actors for a policy change on this point. That is why the authors argue that clear and stricter guidelines on consultancy fees should be part of the knowledge strategy.

During the research process, it also became clear that there are limited institutional guidelines, strategies, visions, or institutional conversations on an organizational level about epistemic injustice. This is remarkable since the importance of this topic was felt by many staff members. The lack of institutionalization is a missed opportunity for WCDI since the institutionalization of the goal to contribute to epistemic justice could lead to a shared understanding of 'good practices' and concrete institutional guidelines. Thes guidelines could, for example, focus on language, what epistemic justice means to us as an organization, a partner strategy that takes epistemic justice seriously, and feedback systems with regards to organizational strategies, individual staff member and organizational behaviour. Embedding epistemic justice within the knowledge strategy could be a good start for institutionalization. In addition, regular reflection to reveal structures and practices that maintain epistemic inequality in knowledge creation need to be part of the strategy development process. Other organizations can also learn from this WDCI reflection journey. First of all, the world of development cooperation is changing and different actors are pushing for a redistribution of power. However, the discussed knowledge strategy of WCDI shows that these changes does not automatically result in a change that is more just. It takes deliberate effort to attain epistemic justice.

Furthermore epistemic justice is complicated and multi-layered, while injustice is entrenched into our societal structures. We cannot leave change to individual behaviour only; structures that support positive change are needed. Institutionalizing efforts can help individuals to make different choices. Furthermore, it is important to recognize that existing structures can reinforce epistemic injustice. Therefore, critically reflections from different voices on these structures is essential to contribute to epistemic justice. However, it may be challenging to receive critical feedback from partners when there is a power imbalance hence the feedback process should be designed to take this into account.

Epistemic justice is often experienced as a difficult topic and it is unclear how to operationalize it. However, epistemic injustice creates, re-establishes and re-enforces other inequalities that exists within our world. So, a world that is more just cannot exist without more epistemic justice. If it is the mandate of an organization to contribute to a world that is more just, it is worthwhile to invest time and effort to be more epistemically just.

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Appendix

Interviews

Code	Position	Date of interview
A	Sr. advisor Natural resources management	7-11-2022
B	Nutrition and gender advisor, Co-lead cluster youth & gender	28-11-2022
C	Liaisons office advisor	29-11-2022
D	Multi-stakeholder partnerships advisor, VP Co-lead Fostering Lifelong Learning	29-11-2022

E	Researcher on public-private partnerships within the department of social sciences (Outside WCDI)	28-11-2022

Ongoing conversations

Name	**Position**
I	Business Unit Manager
II	Advisor Food & Nutrition Security Co-lead Cluster Learning & Managing for Impact
III	Sr. advisor Inclusive Agri markets & Knowledge Manager
IV	Food & Nutrition Security advisor
V	Advisor Facilitating Multi-stakeholder and Learning processes

[i] These authors mean with global North: countries with an high income, often located in the Northern part of the world. (Inclusive Language Guide - Oxfam Policy & Practice)

[ii] These authors mean with global South: countries with a low or low-middle income, located in the Southern part of the world. However, Australia and New-Zealand are not included. (Inclusive Language Guide - Oxfam Policy & Practice)