Queering development? The unsettling geographies of South-South cooperation

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Abstract

This paper deploys queer theory as a way of approaching South-South Cooperation (SSC). It examines the ways in which Southern development partners are not simply up-ending the long-standing spatialities, imaginaries and identities (re)produced through the mainstream international development regime, but queering terminologies and definitions, while presenting themselves in fluid ways, enrolling different identities and attributes in different places and to different audiences. At the same time, a queer lens reveals the (re)inscription of gendered, sexualised and racialized solidarities and hierarchies through the relationships, intimacies and practices of SSC. The paper proposes that queer theory can offer productive insights into the complex and compelling phenomenon of SSC, and its transgressive challenge the postcolonial hierarchies and binaries of 'traditional' international development.

Introduction

One of the most significant trends in international development in the new millennium has been the remarkable expansion of South-South Cooperation (SSC). This is the transfer or exchange of resources, technology and knowledge between "developing" countries, set within claims to shared colonial and post-colonial experiences, and anchored within a wider framework of promoting the collective strength of the "South" (Alden et al 2010; Chaturvedi et al 2012; Mawdsley 2012; Prashad 2007; Six 2009). Sometimes also referred to as South-South Development Cooperation (SSDC), these terms are challengingly capacious and indeterminate. SSC covers much of what the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) would deem to be "aid" or "aid-like" flows and activities (humanitarian assistance, scholarships, technical assistance, debt relief, grants, concessional loans and so on); but it also blurs and blends with trade, investment and diplomacy. SSC has always encompassed a huge diversity of states, economies, practices and relationships, with significant implications for theorizing. Moreover, and here not dissimilar to its heterologous

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Other of "Northern" aid and development, the claims of SSC can depart sharply from actual practices and experiences for different stakeholders and actors. As we will see below, queer theory provides a specific lens on this complexity.

Most analysis of SSC comes from the dominant epistemologies associated with economics, international relations and development studies. However, a small number of critical theorists have made important contributions based in radical political economy, critical security studies, postcolonialism, critical geopolitics, indigenous theory, critical race theory, and feminist theory (e.g. Amar 2013; Gonzalez-Vicente 2012; Henry 2012; Muhr 2017; Pieterse 2011; Six 2009). Indeed, Raghuram et al (2014) reverse this question, and ask what "Rising Asia" means for postcolonial theorizing; an inspirational question. In different ways, all of these analysts provide essential insights into SSC, challenging reductive Eurocentric accounts from mainstream international relations, political science and economics. Moreover, the majority are attentive to alternative South-South (re)inscriptions and exercises of power. Gudynas (2016), for example, questions the epistemic violence of development as articulated through the high modernization narratives associated with China, India and others. While transgressing Northern hegemonies in many ways, critical scholars draw attention to the power regimes and relations that suffuse the (supposed) horizontality and alignment claimed by SSC, of which more below.

This paper offers a queer lens on the discourses and practices of SSC in the form of two rather different approaches. The first focuses on the South's ontological challenge to the donor-recipient binary, and the spatialities, imaginaries and identities of developed/developing that this has historically (re)produced. A queer epistemology shows how Southern partners are changing the hegemonic social order not (only) by taking their place within it, but by profoundly unsettling and transgressing some of its orthodox categories and assumptions. For many scholars and activists, the remarkable rise of SSC constitutes a welcome expansion of southern agency. However, the second approach provides insights into how Southern partners are (re)inscribing hierarchies of gendered and sexualised others that can sometimes reinforce and sometimes run counter to claims of naturalised conviviality and more equal relations. An outstanding set of essays on the Chinese film, *Wolf Warrior* II (Liu and Rofel 2018) provide a particularly rich example of this.[i] Within this collection and elsewhere, Paul Amar (2013) shows how tropes of eroticism, tropicalism, sexuality and deviance are not confined to Orientalist, imperial and post-colonial histories/geographies, but also circulate within the South, and I argue that these are finding new expression in and through the evolving and expanding discourses, practices and

partnerships of SSC. That said, while state-led SSC may be queering some of the power geometries of development, it is for the most part not queer(y)ing the growth-oriented development ideologies of neoliberal globalisation (Gibson-Graham 1999; Kapoor 2015). China, Brazil and other partners are key actors within the wider drive towards the "deep marketization of development" (Carroll 2012),[ii] and "South-South" identities and discourses have been used to suppress dissenting voices amongst the dispossessed, exploited and marginalised (Gonzalez-Vicente 2017). The aim of this paper is therefore not to advance a singular argument about whether SSC is queering mainstream development or not. Rather, by deploying a queer lens, the paper offers novel insights into the transgressive and unsettling effect that SSC has had on the 'mainstream' international development regime. But queer(y)ing SSC alerts us to the constitutive roles of gender, race and sexuality – amongst others – in framing emerging and increasingly powerful narratives of conviviality, difference and hierarchy.

Queer theory has been used to good effect to critique gender, sexuality and human rights in the institutions, policies and practices of international development (e.g. Cornwall et al 2009; Jolly 2000; Klapeer 2018; Nasser-Eddin et al 2018), although almost invariably in relation to a "North-South" axis. Queer International Relations is prospering (e.g. Puar 2013; Weber 2016; Weber and Sjoberg 2014; Wilcox 2017), and this literature has been invigorating in writing this paper. However, international development has not been a focus of these works to date, and queer IR is still overwhelmingly Euro-American: "queer theory as American studies", as Mikdashi and Puar (2016: 215) put it. There is now a growing debate over the intersections, synergies and tensions between queer and postcolonial theories (e.g. Boone 2014; Cossman 2012; Hawley 2001; Massad 2008) and a substantial and growing literature on non-Western queer histories, cultures and politics (e.g. Benedicto 2014; Bhaskaran 2004; Binnie 2004; Oswin 2005, 2008; Tucker 2009; Vanita 2002). These are generally set within national, regional or diasporic frames, rather than in relation to "international development" as such. An important exception comes from Corrêa and Khanna (2015), who address sexuality, gender and human rights in the context of the geopolitical turn that has followed the "rise of the South" (UNDP 2013) since the turn of the millennium. They argue that:

> … critically engaging with the "emergence of the South" … means activating post-colonial perspectives as well as expanding the horizons of social justice and revised human rights premises and, consequently, ensuring that issues of gender and sexuality cannot be circumvented. The deconstruction of post-colonial legacies of supremacist,

aggressive, classist, and racist gender and sexuality formations is essential for the reconstruction of geopolitics along [South-South] lines (Corrêa and Khanna 2015: 71; parentheses added).

A recent example of what Corrêa and Khanna articulate comes from Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Turkey's President, and a critical force in the Syrian crisis. In a major speech, he criticized western countries for being more concerned with "animal welfare and gay rights" than the plight of conflict-afflicted Syrians. He went on, "Shame on those who don't show sensitivity … to the women and children who reach out to them for help. Shame on those who deny the sensitivity they show to … the whales, the seals and the turtles in the sea to 23 million Syrians".[iii] We will return to this in discussion of Ilan Kapoor's essential insights below, but here note that Turkey's growing geopolitical role – one that is emblematized and pursued in part through the expansion of its development cooperation partnerships – invokes the assertion of different and superior gendered, family and sexualized South-South tropes.

The literatures mentioned above constitute some of what Oswin (2006: 777) called the "discernible global turn" in queer studies. This paper shares their desire to de-privilege and de-centre the metropolitan (Knopp and Brown 2003), and thus challenge the assumed hierarchies of "leading" and "backward" spatialities of queerness, whether big city versus rural or, as in this paper, "the First World" versus the "Third World". Here, the South is not a passive, feminised recipient of aid (see below), but actively queering development hierarchies, albeit in ways that do not evade southern (re)productions of gendered and sexualised others. After a brief introduction to SSC, the main section explores (a) queering of the formerly dominant geographical and conceptual binary of North-South development; and (b) motifs and imaginaries of gender, race and sexuality. The paper concludes by discussing what a queer epistemology can bring specifically to understanding the complex and freighted phenomenon of SSC.

South-South Cooperation

SSC goes back to the early 1950s at least, but in the decades that followed it was largely side-lined by mainstream practitioners and policy-makers and – interestingly – neglected by most critical researchers. For many, the roles played by Third World countries (and relatedly, but not covered here, Gulf and formerly socialist Central and Eastern European and Baltic states) as *providers* of development finance, goods, ideas and solidarity, were overlooked or treated as

peripheral. The reasons for this are partly to do with the material dominance of western aid, but also the hegemonic imaginary of the West that "gives" and the Rest that "receives" (Six 2009). The postcolonial cartographies of "development" were read through essentialised dichotomies of North-South, developed-underdeveloped, First-Third World, which framed supposedly moral and geopolitical justifications for intervention and (supposed) acquiescence (Escobar 1995; Kothari 2007).

This situation began to change around the late 1990s and early 2000s. In a period of uneven global growth driven in large part by the BRICS[iv] countries (O'Neill 2001), a variety of older and more recent (so-called) "non-traditional" development partners started to expand their development cooperation finances, programmes and partnerships. China was most prominent in this wave of change, a country that is particularly loaded with imagery for the West (Pan 2004). Accompanied by high-level summitry, SSC entered into a period of ebullient growth. Southern partners, large and small, increased their resources in the form of debt relief, concessional loans, technical assistance, humanitarian assistance, training programmes and scholarships, investment and so on. Critically, they insisted on and were able to defend their ideational autonomy, in particular refuting the imposition of Bretton Woods-type policy conditionalities on their partners. Resisting early attempts at tutelage and co-option, they also successfully defended and consolidated their identity as legitimate and essential development partners with their own modalities and approaches (Mawdsley et al 2014). They were overwhelmingly – if still with some degree of caution – welcomed by partner countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean and the Pacific. The realpolitik is of course, much more complex than this simplistic characterisation suggests; and the sheer diversity of actors, interests and sites cautions against generalisations. Brazil is a very different partner to China, Ecuador to Thailand, and so on. Humanitarian assistance has different dynamics to agricultural research, or to dam building. Moreover, SSC is currently in a period of consolidation and change, as Southern partners adapt to a decade and more of rapid growth and extension in a flattening and more volatile global economy. The historic "Third World-ist" narrative deployed extensively over the last 10-15 years recalls a more radical era, but the agenda, content and practices of contemporary SSC have changed substantially (Mawdsley 2019), and with few exceptions (see Muhr 2017), SSC serves the rolling-out of capitalist social and economic relations around the world in what Carroll and Jarvis (2014) call "deep marketization" (see also Gonzalez-Vicente 2017). We will return to some of these issues below, but one thing about which we can be more certain is that the new millennium

has witnessed an unprecedented (although by no means a complete) fracturing of the "traditional" hierarchies of international development.

Queer Theory, International Development, and the Third World

Ilan Kapoor (2015) provides a rare exception to queer theory's neglect of international development, as noted above. He suggests that "queer" and "Third World" can be brought together through their "common inheritance of subjugation and disparagement and their shared allegiance to non-alignment and a politics aimed at disrupting domination and the status quo" (p. 1611). Kapoor references work on how the West consistently imagined and framed the "Third World" as deviant, perverse and abnormal, and very frequently as effete, feminine and passive (e.g. McClintock 1995; Mackenzie 1995; Sinha 1995). He argues that the international development regime has inherited the legacies of colonial queering of the Third World, relying on pathologised binaries in its determination to "straighten out" poor countries. Feeble economies must be disciplined by a dose of externally administered austerity, while perverse polities are restrained and retrained under the tutelage of donor states driving good governance. He cites Mark Duffield (2007) on the security-development nexus, and the construction of violent borderlands as places of excess, unpredictability and violence. From the sick bodies of Third World states and citizens flow disease, crime, refugees and terror. In response, argues Kapoor, some Third World countries are attempting to "un-queer" themselves through anxious and sometimes aggressive mimesis, as Southern elites seek to realise visions of hyper-modern cities, technologies, and cultures of consumption. For Kapoor, the amplifying violence being unleashed on LGBTQI[v] folk in parts of the Third World is central to this un-queering, framed as it is by an insistence on queer identities and practices as a "western" disease (as analysed in Msibi 2011; Tamale 2013), and the assertion of more masculinised and muscular national identities (see Amar 2013; and below). Kapoor argues that by persecuting queers, some states are inverting but still replicating the binary thinking that has characterised colonial/postcolonial constructions of the queer "Third World". Kapoor's invocation of the geopolitical is important for this paper. The non-conformity of the Third World – expressed, he argues, in events like the Bandung Conference (1955) and the Non-Aligned Movement (est. 1961) and their legacies - are examples of how Southern states and platforms sought historically to contest and destabilize dominant socio-political norms.[vi] But in its current commitment to neoliberal capitalism, he argues, the Third World has abandoned this economic and political dissidence. Kapoor concludes by urging the Third World to embrace its queerness, both geopolitically and in its treatment of queer folks.

QT-SSC

Kapoor is a rare exception in taking queer theory into the realms of non-western geopolitics, but his main axis continues to be that of North-South development/First World-Third World. In the analysis that follows, I examine what queer theory offers to a critical analysis of South-South Cooperation in two registers: queering the normative taxonomies of development; and motifs and imaginaries of gender, race and sexuality.[vii]

Queering the Geographies of Development

SSC grew rapidly from the early/mid-2000s in terms of material resources, visibility, and ideational power. This was taking place within partner countries (notably within sub-Saharan Africa, but also beyond), in emerging forums and platforms of Southern diplomacy and cooperation, and increasingly rippling through mainstream development institutions - foundations, think tanks, civil society organisations, bilaterals, multilaterals and so on. So-called "traditional" donors watched with various degrees of admiration, bemusement, alarm and hostility as China and others began to expand their diplomatic relations, investments and influence in partner countries (Manning 2006). Naim (2009) was the emblematic voice of the hostile end of the spectrum in asserting that China, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela were "rogue donors" using "toxic aid" in pursuit of their revisionist agendas. For Naim, these Southern development partners were transmitting their pathologies and deviancy to other parts of the global South through the vectors of SSC. Most recipient governments, on the other hand, were highly appreciative of the alternative and additional resources, ideas and approaches brought by these Southern partners. For the first time since its establishment in the post-WWII era, the international development regime could be said to be provincializing (Chakrabarty 2000), as Southern partners challenged assumptions about the "rightful" direction of travel of knowledge and authority, and provided new models and aspirations (Constantine et al 2016; Sidaway 2012). Instead of being a place to discipline and tutor, a source of sick bodies and dangerous disorder, they framed the "Third World" as a site of positive energy, opportunity, mutual benefit, and of science, technology and policy advancement. Ngaire Woods (2008: 1220) put it thus:

> In Africa and elsewhere, governments needing development assistance are skeptical of
> [Western] promises of more aid, wary of conditionalities associated with aid, and fatigued by

the heavy bureaucratic and burdensome delivery systems used for delivery of aid. Small wonder that the emerging donors are being welcomed with open arms. (parentheses added)

Many Third World economies were indeed undergoing a surge of growth in the early 2000s, due in large part to the BRICS. But the positive framing precedes this, located in a historical-ideological framework rather than being contingent on the economic upturn. The result is the unsettling of long-standing imaginaries, identities and spatialities of "development". While there are growing examples of convergence and collaboration with western donors, Southern partners have been able to resist full scale "socialization" and assimilation within the institutions and narrative frameworks of the (western-dominated) "international" development regime, notwithstanding efforts to co-opt them (Abdenur and Da Fonseca 2013).

It is striking but not perhaps surprising that initial responses within the "mainstream" development community and western media, while varied, were very often distorted by intractable misunderstandings over terminology, typologies and definitions. Many commentators started with the premise that the "rising powers" (notably Brazil, China and India, plus South Africa, and then a suite of others – Turkey, Mexico and Indonesia to name just three) were becoming *new donors*, providing *aid* to poorer countries. Many western commentators had no other frame of reference than that of the hegemonic model of donorship, aid, and richer-to-poorer transfers. Particularly in the case of China, the mis-naming and thus mis-calculation of the blurred and blended flows of aid-like finances, investment and trade led to alarmist narratives of massive flows of Chinese aid, which in turn amplified concerns about it being used for devious purposes (Bräutigam 2009). Like other Southern partners, many of China's development cooperation activities and vectors quite explicitly blur and blend commercial and geostrategic logics, in what is known in China's case as the "Angola model" (Power 2015; Soares de Oliveira 2015). These flows of expertise, loans, technology, investment and so on, are not just intertwined, but are co-constituted – in diplomatic speeches and statements, in project praxis, in institutional embedding, and in the technocracies of accounting lines and financial monitoring. The conceptual framing of western "aid" as a distinctive category, supposedly insulated in form and purpose from other flows, fails to capture or define a set of principles and practices that emerge from the different historical and cultural trajectory of SSC. Similarly, China's (and other Southern states') claims to alternative ethical principles – respect for sovereignty, the dignity of mutual benefit and reciprocity, and so on – were unrecognised or disregarded by those who could not grasp a more heterotopic field of foreign policy ethics (Chan 2013; Mawdsley 2011).

Southern development cooperation and western aid certainly serve a similar suite of goals – soft power, global public goods, diplomatic friendships, commercial promotion, national security objectives – and they are both open to serious critical attention (e.g. Adhikari 2014; Rowden 2011; Sogge 2002; Taylor 2016). There are appropriate parallels and comparisons to make. But the conceptual and institutional apparatus of the hegemonic development system proved inadequate and inappropriate to naming, defining, understanding and comparing Southern development cooperation.

Britzman (1995: 154) argues that "queer theory offers methods of imagining difference on its own terms". Researching and explaining the differences of SSC on its own terms has been one role played by Southern scholars and interlocutors, as well as critical researchers within the West (e.g. Chaturvedi et al 2012; Cheru and Obi 2010; Constantine et al 2016; Gonzalez-Vicente 2017; Kim 2015; Kim and Lightfoot 2011; Mohan and Lampert 2013; Mohan and Power 2013; Shankland and Gonçalves 2016; Scoones et al 2016; Tang et al 2015; Xu et al 2016). Retaining a critical perspective, while resisting inappropriate parallels being drawn between "aid" and "development cooperation" has been one such task. Sometimes this has been in the face of simple ignorance and hostility, but perhaps more telling has been a pervasive inability to cede the tenacious normative assumptions that naturalise Western donors in the paternalistic role of provider, and Southern states in the position of grateful and/or unruly recipients.

Despite assumptions around and efforts towards cooption, over the last 10-15 years, Southern development partners have successfully resisted attempts to assimilate them within a normative ordering of North-South hierarchies of development knowledge and legitimacy to act (Abdenur and Da Fonseca 2013). Brazil, India, Turkey, Thailand and others are now recognised sites of development knowledge production. They are translating/transferring programmes, techniques and resources in fields as diverse as humanitarian response, energy infrastructure, agricultural modernization, security interventions, AIDS-HIV treatment programmes and so on, with varying degrees of success. Southern partners are increasingly collaborating and cooperating with the "established" donors (Constantine et al 2016), but for the most part on their own terms and while retaining ideational and ontological distinctiveness. If anything, it is the "North" that has shifted more in the direction of "Southern" narratives and approaches than the other way around (Janus et al 2014; Mawdsley 2018b). The growth and consolidation of SSC has meant that the spatialities, imaginaries and identities of international development have not just been

up-ended, but queered: unsettled by non-conforming definitions, and the hybridised flows that transgress established categories.

An example of the complex possibilities offered by queer theory in theorising and analysing SSC is provided by Sebastian Haug (forthcoming). He draws on queer IR, and specifically Cynthia Weber's analysis of being "one thing *and* another" (Weber 2014, 596). Haug suggests that countries like Mexico can be framed as quintessentially queer in how they assert their identities in international development. Mexico's narrative approach is reminiscent of phenomena related to the "third gender". Like individuals that can be seen as combining both male and female characteristics,[viii] Mexico is portrayed as a non-binary entity[ix] that combines features of both recipients and donors. On the one hand, the very existence of Mexico's narrative positioning as a dual non-binary provides a challenge for the increasingly porous donor-recipient divide. On the other hand, the duality plot in this case also "support[s] assumptions, orders, and institutions" (Weber 2014, 598) associated with the status quo. It draws on the traditional donor-recipient binary promoted through the OECD-DAC by accepting the difference between providing and receiving in the first place (instead of, say, putting forward the notion of co-creation); and it is easily integrated into notions of South-South cooperation that, based on the North-South binary, have become a more recent status-quo like reference. Haug suggests that Mexico's "both-and" approach is thus a narrative engagement with in-between positionalities that is both conservative and innovative. It draws on notions that are at the core of queer positionalities, but in this case (unlike some others) without fundamentally challenging binaries that structure the spaces of international development. A queer critique opens up the complex, malleable, and heterogeneous ways in which different partners transgress, bolster and (re)invent categories, identities and hierarchies.

Race, Gender and Sexuality in Language and Practice

If deconstructing hegemonic definitions, geographies and hierarchies constitutes one way in which SSC has queered development geographies, a second can be found in how it unsettles the gendered and sexualised framings associated with North-South relations (McClintock 1995; Said 1979), while (re)inscribing others. Kapoor (2008) argues that the "gift" of foreign aid confers "virility" on (western) donor nations, and by extension, underscores the construct of a passive, needy, feminised South. If we extend this sexualised allusion, we can say that the North "tops" (inserts, penetrates) and the South "bottoms" (receives, is penetrated). As SSC has become more

potent (so to speak), its advocates have nonetheless insisted that they reject the gendered and sexualised ordering of donor-recipient identities, tutelage and hierarchy (e.g. Chaturvedi 2015). SSC is instead reflective, they argue (and we will address critically these claims below), of "genuine" partnership, arranged around relationships of mutual respect, reciprocity, horizontality and sovereign equality. Some, like India, reject the term "donor" altogether, given it associations with violation of the sovereign body politic, and an unwanted exercise of external power. A queer reading of this is suggestive. Rather than top or bottom, the "Third World-ist" narrative invokes a third queer term, versatile (*versátil* in Latin America). Southern partners both give and receive, and are insistent on that dual identity. China insists that it too is a "developing country", while in Latin America there is a phrase that "no country is too poor not to give, and no country is too rich not to receive". This narrative framing actively seeks to deny top/bottom hierarchies through claims to shared identity, exchange and "mutual benefit", something that invokes a very different image to the masculinised penetrative donor. Brazil refers to "horizontal cooperation", while the principle of "non-interference" distinguishes Southern approaches from the creeping predations of busy-handed western donors. Following the identification of other Third World countries of sites of opportunity rather than in need of disciplining or rescue, Southern partners come "courting" or "wooing" (e.g. Bracho and Grimm, 2016: 129). Even the language of "partners", now common parlance in international development, has its origins in the explicit principle SSC not to talk of donors and recipients (Bracho 2015).

The realities of power and partnership have, of course, always been more complex. The Third-World-ist framing has long been in tension with geopolitical rifts (e.g. India-China, Iran-Iraq, oil importers and exporters), and with less progressive readings of nation, ethnicity and development, including in gendered and sexualised ways. In Mawdsley (2019) I argue that Southern narrative framings are currently moving towards more masculinist and virile assertions of national superiority and prowess. Aneja and Ngangom (2017), for example, argue for a more robust Indian development cooperation policy, which ought to more effectively support India's wider foreign policy ambitions of taking on a leading global role. This aligns with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's commitments to a more "muscular" foreign policy (Ganguly 2015), and reflects in part the long-standing anxieties of the Hindu Right about colonial/postcolonial discourses of Indian femininity (Banerjee 2005). They argue that the "lofty principles" of the Nehruvian era are no longer the appropriate mooring for an emerging superpower: in a conversation on this subject with a leading figure in a Delhi think tank, I was told (with pleasurable provocation), "South-South is a club for losers".[x] For this leading interlocutor, India could and should now

abandon this "Third World-ist" collectivity, a strategic response to weakness, in his view, and claim its individual status and power. A similarly robust and "pragmatic" language has coloured the development cooperation statements of both Dilma Rouseff and Michel Temer, as respective post-Lula presidents of Brazil. The high-level language and national policy debates over SSC still invoke the attractive and strategic earlier tropes of mutuality, respect and exchange, but there is evidence of a shift towards a more nationally assertive language and approach to development cooperation. For example, after a few months in office, Rousseff told her Foreign Minister, Patriota, that she was interested in "results orientated diplomacy", with more concrete achievements and less "symbolism" (see Marcondes and Mawdsley 2017).

Racialised hierarchies are far from new, but as SSC has grown and consolidated they are deepening and becoming more visible. Gudynas (2016) observes casual assumptions around "stages of development" in Chinese discourses of SSC in Latin America, in which African backwardness is racialized as well as framed in terms of political economy. This is explored in detail in Nyíri's (2006, 2013) analysis of China's "civilising mission", in which a growing sense of China's development role is framed by strong (if in still in some ways ambivalent) ideas about its cultural and national superiority, which calls into question the diplomatic South-South language of equality (see also Callahan 2012). Nyíri argues that:

> … the Chinese discourse of modernization is an intensely comparative and competitive one, reflecting the continued influence of Morganian ideas of a quasi-biological competition for survival between races and nations. While Anglo-American and Western European countries provide the upper benchmark in this contest, no less attention is paid to the lower benchmarks: China's southern neighbors (except Thailand), African and some Latin American countries … [China] can transmit its own "advanced experience" to those less fortunate. (Nyíri 2006: 93-94)

In 2017, a museum in Wuhan sparked outrage when it put on an exhibition pairing up pictures of African subjects next to African animals with "similar" facial expressions.[xi] More subtle but still revealing motifs of family, gender, race and sexuality are common. For instance, in 2012, South Korean President Lee Myung-bak delivered a speech in which he reflected:

> When I was a primary school kid, there was an American missionary, who used to clean old clothes and bring them in a large box to distribute to us. I would also queue up to receive a pair of used trousers. The small boy that queued up for the used

trousers became a president. And he wants to offer aid to the countries where poor boys and girls like him are many, and declare his country has transformed from an aid recipient into a donor. This is not only a meaningful reward for me personally but I think it is the pride of all our [Korean] people, who had to undergo such difficult times in the past … As we know better than any others how aid-receiving people feel, we want to help them out in earnest. (President Lee, 17 October 2012)[xii]

This "sibling" narrative of shared suffering is implicitly (and elsewhere, explicitly) contrasted with western paternalism and de-historication of its own trajectory. But President Lee's speech still enrols classic tropes of infantilising and rendering child-like Third World peoples and countries. Although he invokes a recent history of Korean poverty and remembered "childhood", clearly the Korean "girls and boys" have grown up, and are in the position of older brothers and sisters able to help their younger siblings. The language may be that of "mutual benefit", but these are unevenly and hierarchically distributed – resources, consumer markets and investment opportunities for the more advanced partners; in exchange for (superior) finances, technology, expertise and capacity for the less advanced partners. South-South spatio-temporal geographies of "development", inflected by theories of race, are deepening in their visibility and impacts, alongside expanding resources, programmes, interventions and investments. Mutual benefit does not mean equal exchange, or equality of "civilisations". As Bayly (2007) brilliantly unpicks, South-South insistence on horizontality cannot evade the multiple ways in which individuals and countries (re)produce discourses and practices of inferiority/superiority. In her study of Vietnamese development professionals in the 1970s, who worked in Yemen, Mongolia and other parts of the "socialist ecumene", Bayly (2007, 2009) examines the complex and nuanced tensions between the language of equality on the one hand, and the Vietnamese view that they were bringing more advanced technologies, but also cultures and knowledge to backward nations. But here too, we find gendered intersections that differ from the dominant masculinist ones described by Kapoor and others in relation to North-South development. Bayly notes that many older Vietnamese respondents talked about their politically active *mothers* as the figures who represented the earlier generation's gifts of care and knowledge during the revolution. She observes that, "the imparting of both learning and revolutionary exemplarship are manifestations of their mothers', aunts' and sisters' devotion and selflessness ... These are very similar visions of disinterested generosity pervading present-day official writings about Vietnam as munificent giver of development aid to other lands and peoples" (p.130).[xiii]

Queer theory helps make visible and problematizes the complex family tropes that intertwine in generational, gendered and sexualised hierarchies and imaginaries in relation to historical and contemporary SSC. To take another example, Marsha Henry (2012) explores the deployment of an all-women contingent of Indian peacekeepers to Liberia in 2007. She analyses the complacent expectation that the Indian women would have a natural affinity with the Liberian women they were intended to protect. Henry brings the intersectionalities of gender, class and professionalised military identities into wider debates around the legacies and reproduction of race, empire and colonialism through contemporary South-South peacekeeping. She observes that one of a number of ways in which a supposed "natural" affinity was undermined was the Indian women's disdain for (in their view) the looser sexual morals of Liberian men and women, such as more open physical interactions like holding hands. These sexualised and gendered hierarchies can run in different (and indeed, simultaneously opposing) directions. Taela (2016) reports that, as well as developing convivial friendships, Mozambican NGO workers were sometimes discomfited by more open displays of sexuality, social informality and the dress of Brazilian co-workers.

Importantly, in the light of the following arguments, Paul Amar (2013) argues that across the South, increasingly morally conservative regimes are shaping a new humanitarian-security governance regime, intent on suppressing cultural, gender and sexual rights. From new security formations "pacifying" Brazilian favelas to the Muslim brotherhood's violence against gender and sexuality "transgressions" in Egypt, Amar proposes that across the "semi-periphery" is rising a "new transregional family of racialized, sexualised, and moralized subjects that populate the emerging global order of human-security governmentality" (2013:42). Writing years in advance of Jair Bolsonaro's alarming rise to power, Correa and Khanna (2015) presciently cite Amar's hypothesis that the transformation of Brazil into a global player required the construction of a new image of rectitude and respectability that was at odds with the widespread imagery of Brazilian sexuality. This is a complex thesis, and it is not possible to do it justice here, but we can draw out a couple of relevant points. The first is scale – Amar is insistent that these deepening solidarities and ties across the "semi-periphery" (rather than the "Washington Consensus", or even the "Beijing Consensus") are no longer "local", but translating up into global regimes. For example, the UN's MINUSTAH mission in Haiti is, for the first time, led by a state from the global South, Brazil. As well as heading security and peacekeeping, Brazil is also a provider of a range of development initiatives, including in relation to urban gangs and violence, HIV-AIDs, health and education. Brazilian approaches to rights, a muscular humanitarianism, and its very

specific cultures and histories of race and sexuality, are all playing out in Haiti: something yet to be fully reflected in some critical analyses of contemporary geopolitics, humanitarian and developmental politics. Second, is Amar's recognition of the importance of gendered, racialized and sexualised tropes. He notes that:

> Orientalism and tropicalism have been analysed in the United States and Europe as forms of colonial cultural power and as disciplines of racialized and sexualised knowledge/power, but much less work has been done on the role that orientalism and tropicalism have played when appropriated by nationalist, state-building, modernizing, and counterhegemonic projects in the post-colonial world (p.59)

Amar cites President Cardoso's former Chief of Staff opening a conference in 2000 that was to lay the groundwork for the creation of the first Summit of Latin American-Arab Countries in 2005:

> The first centuries of our national formation – ethno-racial and cultural – as well underlined by Gilberto Freyre, reveal the mark of Moorish influence in various dimensions: in values and customs of the patriarchal family; in architecture with internal courtyards and fountains … in techniques of irrigation; and, in a very special way, in the very physiognomy of so many Brazilians (cited in Amar 2013: 62).

This diplomatic event, characteristic of President Lula's outward looking, Southern-oriented foreign policy, was framed by (implicit and explicit) references to conservative families, sexual intimacies, and racialized conviviality. These images and discourses, which foreground Southern flows and histories, are being pressed into the service of an emerging geopolitical formation in which the old order, if far from completely overturned, is being challenged as never before. But as Amar goes on to note, sexuality and gender issues are also a point of tension within the South – Brazilian efforts at the UN to lead a ban on discrimination based on sexual orientation was aggressively contested by an unlikely coalition of actors, including George W. Bush, the Vatican and Saudi Arabia, and was eventually dropped. Amar suggests that at that moment the "Moorish transnational" had conquered the "gay international", as Brazil strategically prioritised its relations with Arab and other partners.[xiv]

Conclusions

In this paper I have argued that queer theory provides a valuable intellectual route into critically understanding and appraising the complex and freighted phenomenon of SSC. SSC has profoundly disrupted deeply entrenched identities, spatialities and hierarchies of international development. Southern partners have vocally and influentially contested their purported "deviancy" as Third World recipients, and the "South" is now recognised and validated as a source of resources, knowledge and alternative development practices and approaches. Southern states, large and small, have claimed legitimacy and credibility as agents of "development", formerly presumed to be the privilege of the advanced North. Critically, Southern partners (to different degrees and in different ways) are doing so not (only) through techniques or tactics of cooperation, but (also) difference. Southern partners have, historically and over much of the recent period of expansion, insisted on different histories, positionalities, ethics, modalities and so on, and in contrast to earlier decades of marginalisation they have been able to defend and project this within the formal realms of international development. This shouldn't be taken at face value, with some of this insistence having more strategic purpose than correspondence to the realpolitik, but it must still be taken seriously.

Queer theory reveals the gendered and sexualised imageries that in some cases (and certainly in earlier years) frame projections of horizontality, fluidity and reciprocity, rather than the fixed, masculinised tropes associated with Northern donors. Rejecting the language and (in theory) the interfering presumptions of penetrative donors who show little respect for the (sovereign) body of the recipient, the invocation of an earlier Third World-ist geopolitics projects greater respect between newly independent polities. The affective register is of empathy and attraction, rather than the sympathy/exasperation of the paternalistic donor. Southern partners court and woo, and emphasise their similarities and mutual benefits, in a versatile positioning of horizontality rather than hierarchy. However, there are signs of change amongst the larger Southern powers in particular, and a queer perspective alerts us to increasingly masculinised discourses of development prowess: some Southern partners are increasingly projecting individualist national virility (Kapoor 2008) over collective strength in their development cooperation narratives. Furthermore, a queer reading shows how always woven through SSC are (re-)inscriptions of other hierarchies, conservatism, patriarchies and exoticisation. A queer eye on SSC reminds us that ideas of sexuality and gender (intersected with race, class and more) are not confined to a North-South axis. The rich work that has been done on Orientalist, colonial and postcolonial/developmental constructs of gender and sexuality, and the work this performs in

powerfully shaping imaginative geographies and material outcomes, has very little yet by way of corresponding South-South studies.

The aim of the paper has been to deploy the insights and provocations of queer theory to understand the ways in which SSC is both transgressing normative social orders that have been historically produced through the colonial/post-colonial enterprise of international development; while also (re)inscribing alternative ones. Queer theory augments other critical social theories in resisting simplistic accounts of co-option or convergence on the one hand, or by the same token, of an idealised subaltern revolt. Oswin (2006) proposes that the task of queer theorists is not just to de-privilege normative social orderings (in this case, "traditional" North-South development), but to decentre them. A queer epistemology helps reveal the complex ambiguities of SSC in this regard, and in its focus on gender and sexuality in various registers, it opens up novel sites, routes and perspectives for critical scholars.

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i See also a selection of essays on *Un Cuento Chino,* curated by Sexuality Policy Watch in 2019. https://sxpolitics.org/cuento-chino-gender-sexual-politics/19349. Last accessed 26 April 2019.

ii Toby Carroll uses this term to describe the drive by development institutions to work ever more closely through, with and around the state, to create enabling environments for access to, circulation and accumulation of financial capital. Actors like the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the World Bank's private sector arm, are crucial protagonists in this latest iteration of neoliberal capitalism, notably in (so-called) 'frontier' economies (see also Mawdsley 2018a).

iii https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/may/13/erdogan-says-west-cares-more-about-gay-and-animal-rights-than-syria. Last accessed 25 June 2018. I am grateful to Ayden Greatrick for drawing this to my attention.

iv Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. The original designation was the BRICs, with South Africa adding the "S" in 2010.

v Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer/Questioning, Intersex (although there are other possibilities and additions).

vi Put in a different way, Fanon wrote in The Wretched of the Earth that the Third World should 'not want to catch up with anyone'. I am grateful to Cheryl McEwan for this observation.

vii Space unfortunately precludes a third register, which was mentioned briefly in the introduction. This is whether and how SSC might be said to be queer(y)ing capitalism, or not. I would agree with Kapoor that it is not, but this requires a more extended argument to be properly discussed.

viii In Mexico, the *muxes* in southern Oaxaca are said to be a traditional expression of combining male and female elements, see The Guardian 2017.

ix On non-binary see LGBT Foundation 2017.

x Conversation in Delhi, October 2016.

xi https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/oct/14/chinese-museum-accused-of-racism-over-photos-pairing-africans-with-animals

xii The speech is available in Korean at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=141zJSFEyYU (accessed 18 September 2014). It was translated by Sung-Mi Kim, co-author of the paper.

xiii I am grateful to Rohan Last for this observation, observed while discussing his dissertation on contemporary Vietnamese development cooperation.

xiv It should be noted, however, that Brazil championed another UNHCR SOGI resolution to create an expert mandate, which was approved in June 2016. I am grateful to Laura Trajber Waisbich for pointing this out to me.