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Negotiating with the North: How Southern-tier intellectual workers deal with the global economy of knowledge

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Abstract

This article examines a group of intellectual workers who occupy a peripheral but not powerless position in the global economy of knowledge. How do they handle relations with the global metropole, especially in new fields of research where established hierarchies are in question? Three new domains of knowledge – climate change, HIV/AIDS and gender studies – are studied through interviews with 70 active researchers in Southern-tier countries Brazil, South Africa and Australia. A pattern of extraversion, involving active adoption of paradigms from the metropole, is widespread and institutionally supported. Major alternative knowledge formations have not emerged in these domains. However contestations of more specific kinds are frequent. Paradigms are adapted, criticism is offered, activism is engaged, capacities are developed and allegiances sometimes changed. The valorization of local knowledge, which goes beyond the abstractions

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of universalized paradigms, is particularly significant. Not stark subordination, but a complex collective negotiation characterizes the response of intellectual workers in the Southern tier.

Keywords
AIDS, climate change, gender, global South, intellectuals, labour process, postcolonial, sociology of knowledge

Introduction

It is a familiar fact that the production and circulation of organized knowledge is marked by global inequalities. Quantitative indicators of research output and citation show North America and Europe predominating, across fields ranging from natural science, technology and professional knowledge, to social science and the humanities (Corbera, Calvet-Mir, Hughes, & Paterson, 2015; UNESCO, 2010). It is not simply that universities and research centres in these regions produce more quantitatively. They have also provided paradigms for knowledge work in other regions, and receive data from those regions. The global North, more specifically the complex of its elite institutions, is the centre of a knowledge economy with global reach.

This situation is debated in a growing literature. Beyond the well-known postcolonial theory in the humanities, critiques of global-North hegemony have now emerged across the social sciences: in anthropology (Restrepo & Escobar, 2005), criminology (Carrington, Hogg, & Sozzo 2016), disability studies (Meekosha, 2011), education studies (Epstein & Morrell, 2012) and sociology (Bhambra, 2014; Go, 2016; Rosa, 2014).

The economy of knowledge is linked with geopolitical power, growing out of the deep history of imperialism. The link is illuminated by Aníbal Quijano's (2000) account of the 'coloniality of power', which names the way institutions and culture in the postcolonial world continue to be structured by relations with the metropole. Some scholarship now speaks, in a convenient shorthand, of the 'coloniality of knowledge' (e.g. Tlostanova, 2015). To *de*-colonize knowledge and methodology is now on the agenda (Smith, 2012). It is a live political issue, for instance, in the demand to decolonize the curriculum in South Africa made by the Rhodes Must Fall/Fees Must Fall movement (Nyamnjoh, 2016).

Much of this discussion rests on stark contrasts between Western and indigenous knowledge systems (Odora Hoppers, 2002), or civilizational polarities such as Walter Mignolo's (2011) invocation of the 'darker side of Western modernity', or Boaventura de Sousa Santos's (2014) stress on the 'abyssal' divide between metropole and colonized worlds and their epistemes.

But different epistemes, cultures and geopolitical regions are not silos sealed off from each other. As Paulin Hountondji (1997) observes, contemporary science is produced in an economy characterized by worldwide divisions of labour and patterns of trade. Information extracted from the colonized world was important historically for the growth of a research-based knowledge formation in Europe and North America. This trade fed data to specialized institutions of the imperial metropole, which became, and remain, the most powerful global sites of theory and methodology. The products of the processing, i.e. disciplinary knowledge and applied sciences, were disseminated in both metropole and periphery.

To call the institutional context of knowledge production an 'economy' is not a metaphor; it has a workforce, mechanisms of trade and a network of workplaces. Organized knowledge is made through the labour of intellectual workers. This is a group whose social character and political role has long been debated in sociological literature (Eyerman, 1994). More recently, research has accumulated about the labour of knowledge workers such as teachers (Reid, 2003), computer programmers (Barley & Kunda, 2004), research workers and other professionals (Connell & Crawford, 2007). This research has revealed the detail of labour processes, the complex connections within workforces, and the frequent contestations over control and autonomy. It has highlighted indirect means of control, and the significance of relationships that extend beyond local workplaces.

Most of this literature, however, is written in Europe and the United States, and is focused on Europe and the United States, understood as exemplars of modernity. To understand the dynamics of knowledge at a world level, and the practicality of the changes that postcolonial theorists seek, it is essential to consider the intellectual workforce in the global periphery. We need to study how this workforce is formed and funded, how its labour is shaped, and how it engages with the global knowledge economy.

There is a body of research about intellectuals in the periphery. Biographies document their productivity and creativity (e.g. Nandy, 1980). More collective studies such as Thandika Mkandawire's (2005) examination of intellectuals in Africa, and Leandro Rodriguez Medina's (2014) study of political scientists in Argentina, document international marginality. A growing literature emphasizes that intellectuals around the colonized and postcolonial world offer important alternatives for the social sciences (Alatas, 2006; Connell, 2007). Potentially, new domains of knowledge could develop in very different ways in the periphery. Yet these alternatives may also be sharply limited, for instance by a close relationship between researchers and the state (Cloete, Maassen, & Bailey, 2015).

The question of how knowledge formations change is taken up in Wiebke Keim's (2008) important study of industrial sociology in South Africa, showing how a counter-hegemonic potential was realized. Similarly, Travis Kong's (2016) recent study of sexuality research in China shows how a politically innocuous sexology is now challenged by more critical perspectives and more adventurous research methods.

These studies open up a wider terrain. Social conflicts, and the research process itself, unsettle orthodoxies and periodically force re-organizations of knowledge. They do this through paradigm changes within disciplines but also through the definition of whole new fields. How does this process play out in the global periphery? How do intellectual workers in Southern contexts deal with the global economy of knowledge, and metropolitan hegemony within it, as new domains of knowledge come into existence? That is the problem addressed in this article, in a specific part of the periphery and in three new domains of knowledge.

Method

Brazil, South Africa and Australia are the sites for this study, members of a geopolitical grouping we call the 'Southern tier' (Connell, 2013). These are countries in the Southern hemisphere, remote from the metropole, shaped by European sea-borne colonialism,

with histories of violent dispossession, institutionalized racism and economic dependence. None is a poor country. Australia is high-income in global terms, and all three have regional influence. All have indigenous populations with high levels of poverty. The three states attempted modernization by import replacement industrialization in the mid-twentieth century and all then shifted towards a neoliberal extractive economy.

The Southern tier is not homogeneous; as Cardoso and Faletto (1979) observed, shared structural dependency does not produce just one sociopolitical pattern. Brazil was colonized by the Portuguese and has a large Afro-American population as a result of the slave trade. South Africa was first colonized by the Dutch, and its indigenous people form a large majority today. Australia was colonized by the British, it became richer than the other two, and its settler population are today the large majority.

Yet when we consider position in the economy of knowledge, the common ground is significant. The three countries share dilemmas about cultural and political independence. In each, the state has invested in creating a knowledge workforce, a substantial university system and some other high-level research institutions. This situation makes them fruitful sites for exploring relations in the world economy of knowledge (Collyer, 2014; Maia, 2011; Morrell, 2016). Though we recognize national specificity, our argument is centrally concerned with the shared experience of researchers from across the Southern tier.

Our study examines three domains of knowledge: HIV/AIDS, gender studies and climate change. These are new or recently expanded fields, full of innovation and debate in the last generation. They all cross boundaries between natural and social science, and produce knowledge of practical importance for policy and social movements. In all three, knowledge from the global South has been significant. We examined knowledge making and circulation in these domains through a multi-method research programme that included focused interviewing, quantitative work on citation patterns, ethnographic and historical work (Collyer, 2016; Morrell, 2016).

The interviews with researchers are the primary source in this article. In semi-structured audio-recorded interviews, we asked for career narratives and discussed mentoring, the current labour process, publication practices and strategies, international experience and links, and accounts of the knowledge domain and its history. The interviews focused on actual practices in researchers' working lives, more than attitudes or identities. All authors of this article participated in the interviewing, together with other staff of the project. Interviews normally lasted about one hour, some up to two. Audio-recorded interviews with 70 researchers were completed, spread evenly across the three domains of knowledge though less evenly across countries: 20 in Brazil, 15 in South Africa and 35 in Australia. All were transcribed in full, and the 20 interviews conducted in Portuguese were translated into English for this analysis.

The women and men interviewed are leading practitioners in the three domains. They were selected from published sources (including formal classifications of researchers for grant purposes in South Africa and Brazil), and by reputation (including mentions in other interviews). A majority (45 of 70) hold tenured positions as Professors. The remainder hold other academic, research or policy positions in universities, non-government and government research organizations. Most though not all have middle-class family backgrounds. Forty are women and 30 are men, reflecting the concentration of women in

the gender research domain. The majority are White, reflecting the pattern in research universities in these countries. Five of 15 interviewees in South Africa and one of 20 interviewees in Brazil have Black African or other non-European heritage.

There is great variety in disciplinary background, reflecting the composite character and recent creation of the three domains. The climate change researchers include experts in biological and atmospheric sciences, geography, engineering, maths, economics and law, as well as social and political sciences. The gender researchers interviewed are mostly specialists in social science and humanities, as well as psychology and public health. Interviewees in the HIV domain include epidemiologists, virologists, public health and family medicine specialists, social workers, anthropologists and sociologists. A notable fact is the mixture of metropolitan and local training. About one-third (24) of respondents have had higher degree training, usually at PhD level, in global-North universities.

Most participants are well known in their fields; therefore care has been taken with confidentiality, and pseudonyms are used throughout. Analysis of the data started with a close reading and indexing of transcripts. Half were developed into individual case studies or case notes, to get a fine-grained sense of career dynamics in a new domain. Tentative interpretations of cases and broader patterns were circulated for discussion within the research group; draft papers were treated the same way. Within limits of practicality, this report represents a consensus interpretation of the interview data.

In this article we present brief quotations from a range of interviews to give an overview of how the researchers deal with Northern hegemony. We also present two very condensed case studies, Peter and André, to illustrate how personal histories, labour processes and institutional situations interweave with the knowledge formation. Confidentiality guarantees prevent more specific presentation of cases. The two researchers chosen are particularly reflective about problems of knowledge. (To distinguish them from quotations we present these case notes in *italics*.)

Extraversion and the local expert

With a few exceptions our interviewees' work is the mixture of teaching, administration and research familiar in the global North. Their research labour usually centres on collecting and analysing data, preceded by grant applications and recruitment of colleagues and research staff, and followed by writing for journals, conferences and books, sometimes mass media or popular education. Our respondents have learnt to weave these jobs together, often running several agendas at a time and writing multiple papers every year.

How is this labour affected by their situation in the Southern tier? The postcolonial literature has identified a common pattern that Alatas (2003) calls 'academic dependency'. In an important statement Hountondji (1997) speaks of the difference in scientific work between metropole and periphery in 'fundamental attitudes and operational modes'. He uses the term 'extraversion' to name the practical ways knowledge workers in the periphery are oriented to, and dependent on, the institutions, concepts and techniques of the metropole. Our data confirm the importance of this pattern, but also allow us to reformulate the concept.

Our respondents frequently refer to Europe or the USA as the site of key ideas, accepted methods and the most advanced knowledge. That is where 'the big debates' are

happening, according to Anton (HIV, South Africa). ‘They are our fathers’, remarks André (HIV, Brazil) about the pioneering US researchers in his field. The global division of intellectual labour is noted by Gretta (climate change, South Africa) when discussing her own PhD and the papers published from it:

> Quite a few of the theoretical concepts for those kinds of papers came from the North, but a lot of the applied stuff on seasonal forecasts was from southern Africa.

This division is found in all three domains of knowledge. Climate researchers get their modelling frameworks from the metropole. The HIV researchers get their virology and their epidemiological techniques there too. In gender studies the influence is more diffuse but still pervasive, with ideas drawn from British, US or (especially for Brazilian respondents) French theorists.

With many respondents, the importation of theory and method from the metropole is a taken-for-granted intellectual practice. In the natural sciences it is supported by belief in the universal applicability of scientific laws, an assumption built into practices such as computer-based modelling. But we should not assume that this means a passive dependency, especially in a domain still under construction. The agency of the researchers can most directly be seen at the level of personal practice. Even an anonymized summary shows this point clearly:

> *Peter, a very senior researcher in a highly technical field, gave a long and thoughtful interview, over three cups of coffee as the sun sank, with a detailed narrative of his career and many reflections on his field. He grew up in a middle-class professional family in the Southern tier. He went as expected to the local university, was inspired by some of his teachers, did well, but was uncertain about his future.*
>
> *Happily he was recruited to a graduate programme in the global North, where he met and was mentored by ‘the leading [specialists] in the world of that era’. He rapidly built a career in an expanding field, gaining appointment at another elite global-North centre: ‘Again an amazing set of people coming through there. And it was a real hub, a wonderful place to work.’ Peter did extremely well, publishing in the very top journals and forming a strong network. But for family reasons he sought to return home, just at the time the new domain of knowledge was emerging.*
>
> *This involved an intellectual shift, applying his methodological expertise to a new set of problems. It also involved Peter in ‘trying to create a field’ in a material sense. Over the next two decades he won government funding, built a research agenda and team, recruited staff, and trained up graduate students to be the next generation of researchers. At the same time he kept publishing in global-North journals, going to international conferences and keeping his membership in the invisible college in his field, making easy informal connections with researchers who were ‘thinking in the same way in the US’.*
>
> *Through Peter’s efforts, then, techniques that had been developed in the global North became the paradigm for research in a new domain in the global South. This was a creative, energetic and sometimes stressful process, far from passive dependence. It produced feedback to the North, since Peter’s unit did pioneering work. The paradigm was also taken to poorer countries*

in the region, as Peter became an international research advisor, funded by development agencies. But that ran into difficulties – with consequences discussed below.

In Peter's case, like Gretta's, extraversion appears as a pattern of personal practice. But extraversion is also a matter of institutional practice. The current policy of many Southern-tier universities and research managers is to pressure researchers to publish in international 'top journals' so the institutions will climb the league tables. Indeed, this pressure is a major worry for our interviewees, especially in its impact on young researchers. Publishing in global-North journals has become practically a requirement for promotion and even for appointment. Many of our interviewees – who, it will be recalled, were chosen as leading researchers in their fields – have an impressive record with metropolitan journals. Nicole (HIV, Australia), for instance, can list *Science, Nature, New England Journal of Medicine* and *The Lancet* in her bibliography. Most of her work goes into 'middle-ranking specialist journals', which are also published in the metropole.

The climate domain provides a striking example of institutional extraversion. Bernardo, a leading climate scientist in Brazil, recalls how a framework was established there. The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), established in 1988 on the initiative of global-North scientists, created a three-fold framework of international working parties and reports for collating research findings. The Brazilians collectively applied this model, and Bernardo's account is an excellent summary of processes that appear in all domains:

> Thus, like the IPCC, we put together three teams. There are three volumes for a report, three working groups. Like the IPCC, one on atmospheric science, a second on vulnerabilities and the impacts and adaptations to climate change, and the third on mitigating change, in other words how to reduce emissions. … The idea is that with this we can also bring this discussion to Brazil, do a report in Portuguese on the question, calling attention to the particularities of Brazil and the implications for Brazil … of this research in the whole world, this field. And also generate material for us to contribute in a more robust and systematic manner, taking into account our particularities, for the IPCC reports.

Here, the framework provided by the international body is mirrored, but the content and the policy debates are local. This way of structuring the domain is used to address local agendas, and what Bernardo emphasizes as 'the particularities of Brazil'. At the same time, it allows the knowledge produced locally to be fed into the international assemblage of knowledge.

At both individual and institutional levels, extraversion constructs a specific and valued role for knowledge workers in the South. We may call this the *local expert*, in which researchers or research groups are recognized as having extensive knowledge of the local situation while using concepts and methodologies from the North. They are in a position to generate data from the periphery for both local and metropolitan audiences, and some follow a two-track publishing strategy. Work in this style is often welcomed by metropolitan journals. Such work is also welcomed by multinational agencies, and the local expert becomes the go-to person for setting up multi-country studies or intervention programmes. Many of our respondents have enacted this role for some part of their careers.

Participating at a distance

Australia, South Africa and Brazil are all geographically remote from the metropole, and workers in a metropole-centred economy of knowledge constantly face the problem of how to participate. They have developed a range of solutions.

One involves organizational linking. Various interviewees mentioned Southern-tier research groups signing up to multinational studies funded by the European Union, the National Institutes of Health in the USA, or a big multinational NGO such as the Center for Clean Air Policy – sometimes more than one. This is politely called 'partnering' with Northern institutions, though the partnership is generally asymmetrical.

The researcher in the periphery *may* have a role in study design, but the prospects for this are not necessarily improving. Respondents in the HIV domain describe the growing dominance of a biomedical research paradigm based on large-scale trials, rigidly designed and controlled. Such research is largely American-run because only the US government or big pharmaceutical corporations are able to fund it. Since the large infected populations required for such trials are in the global South, especially Southern and Central Africa, the model itself produces an international division of labour and authority. The growth of very large computer models of climate, beyond the technical capacity of any university in the Southern tier, plays a similar role in the climate domain. Even the gender studies domain is affected. Cheryl (gender, Australia) describes participating in a multi-country study funded by pharmaceutical industry money: 'in fact in this instance we're really acting as a recruitment agency'.

Researchers in the periphery frequently use digital technology to link to databases and virtual libraries in the metropole, and to interact via email and social media. Though not on the same scale as Europe and the USA, Southern-tier countries do have sophisticated hardware and technical support. Dave (HIV, Australia) accesses databases this way; he remarks there is so much US data in his field that he can't help but use it, though he knows it is culturally inappropriate to generalize the results. Maria (gender, Brazil) mentions Facebook, and notes that a great deal of the discussion in her field is now online. But she is one of our youngest interviewees, and the older generation usually do not attempt research work through social media. They certainly use email all the time. Among Australian intellectual workers, email was almost universal nearly 15 years earlier (Connell & Crawford, 2007).

The linking practices that stick in our respondents' memories are travel and journal publication. Erica (gender, Australia), focused strongly on local problems and networks early in her career, but has tried increasingly to connect with researchers in Europe and North America by personal travel:

> Much more consciously taking up [visiting scholar] positions, or visiting things overseas, or going to conferences. … Despite everything, academic life is still very face-to-face, I think. There is nothing like face-to-face contact, that is how you really find out what is going on, and who you should know about.

Those who went to the North for advanced training, like Peter, usually have vivid memories of the experience. It could lead to continuing relationships with a Northern guru, or entry to a network centred in the North. Researchers in the Southern tier may also bring

leading researchers from the metropole on visits; Brazil, South Africa and Australia can afford to do this more easily than low-income developing countries. More often it is a matter of going to the metropole for conferences, to visit centres or laboratories, or for sabbatical or study leave. When established in the local-expert role, a researcher from the Southern tier can be drawn into international circuits and become part of an intense round of conferences, consultations and funding negotiations. Igor (climate change, Brazil) notes of one of his colleagues: ‘He is on all the international commissions and this sort of thing. In other words he has a brutal level of internationalization.’

Publishing in the North is a fundamental way to participate at a distance, and almost all our respondents do it. Problems arise in this strategy, however, as it depends on extraversion. If the research does not fit current metropolitan frameworks and concerns, the high-prestige journals are unlikely to publish it. Heather (gender, Australia) ran into this problem:

> We have found it very difficult to get any of our work published in American journals. … I have experienced them as not being interested in world-views that are different from their world-view. … I really am not an advocate of theories that position women as biologically inferior and therefore vulnerable. So I am taking a much more social perspective, that runs counter to a lot of the mainstream views in America. And others working here have actually had some comparable experiences, sending off work that might be theoretically challenging, and getting it knocked back.

Following an autonomous intellectual path, then, has risks for Southern-tier workers in a global economy of knowledge.

How these different practices fit together in a career may be seen from a second condensed case study:

> *André trained for a profession, and began professional practice, before getting into research. He was involved in launching the new domain in the Southern tier, being picked by his head of department to respond to a request for collaboration by a UN agency. The request ‘came with a script’ for research, and the project was headed by a researcher from the North, who sent a ‘tutor’ to André’s country to teach the relevant skills of analysis and writing in the new field – ‘a true scientific father’.*
>
> *This launched André as the local expert, and he soon developed other contacts with the metropole – the US, Britain, Canada and Germany are mentioned in the interview. André won a fellowship to do a PhD in the North. As in Peter’s case, developing the new domain was a highly active process. André won grants, built a career, and negotiated with policymakers to get the research applied. He has become a central figure in his country’s effort in the new domain, and a well-known researcher internationally. He was assiduous in travelling to the international conferences, ‘in a ping pong, there and back, there were times when I couldn’t even change clothes, I had to unpack and already pack again’. Eventually this became exhausting, and he is now getting off the conference treadmill.*
>
> *André has a two-track publication strategy. ‘Very technical stuff’ from the ‘cutting-edge research’ goes to the international journals. ‘More generic articles and books’ are published locally, to keep a local focus and make a local contribution. But André is wary of becoming too*

political or involved in 'show business' through media. What really matters to him is the knowledge formation itself, its practical applications, and developing the next generation of researchers within it.

André's story illustrates the capacity of many Southern-tier researchers, while accepting a Northern episteme, to balance demands and produce both for the metropole and for local needs. It also shows the hard work required to do so, and the tension resulting.

Emerging contestations and local knowledge

The problems André and Heather face are not unique. Since the conditions of nature and society in fact differ between Southern-tier countries and the metropole, research may be pushed in new directions. For instance, research on carbon exchange in a tropical country needs to deal with the biochemistry of rainforests. Felipe (climate change, Brazil) shares an interest in sea-level changes with climate scientists elsewhere, but is able to develop a distinctive model using data from coastal environments of a kind that are rare in Europe or North America.

The local social environment can also impact on researchers' agendas. Gretta (climate change, South Africa), puts an argument we heard from others too:

> It's hard for me not to, from my context … because I live in South Africa, and I can see the inequalities and differences. It is so important to address those first. … And then we can look at how we integrate climate change into those.

Such shifts can produce distinctive agendas for whole research groups or centres, and can motivate drawing people from local communities into the knowledge production process.

Such projects remain within the domain of knowledge as understood in the metropole, but represent distinctive foci within it. This allows Southern-tier researchers to dialogue on more even terms with colleagues in the global North. Wesley (HIV, South Africa) tells of a moment when a call for collaboration from a famous institution in the metropole, offering a lot of money, was met with a demand for parity:

> We insisted that we would only participate, and there were a couple of us in South Africa who agreed, that we would only participate if we were co-PIs [Principal Investigators] and could host the data centre in South Africa. … We wanted the money so that we could hire our own statisticians and staff … [The data centre was established.] It's part of the global executive committee of these collaborations.

Some of our respondents had been involved in North/South collaborations on the conventional model which turned out badly. A very senior Brazilian researcher recalls collaborating with a US institution:

> … which in practice left me and many other people in Brazil with a bitter feeling … that we were working way too much and we were getting little in return. We also had an experience with the Germans which left me – hell, I will never cooperate with these guys again … I started

> and immediately felt it was to do the donkey work for the Germans, so I gave up. A colleague of mine remained involved and regretted it afterwards.

There are, then, frictions and contestations within the mainstream economy of knowledge. These can lead in new directions. On this point, we return to the case of Peter:

> *Peter's career began, and flourished, with the mainstream knowledge formation unquestioned. Several experiences contributed to change this. As an international research advisor, Peter helped set up a research and intervention programme in a very poor country in the region – and was badly burned by local politics, to which the research design had been insensitive. As his local-expert work with communities in his home country deepened, he became more aware of alternative forms of expertise, and the role of communities as producers of knowledge. He became increasingly involved in projects with indigenous communities, where: 'You might approach with some notion, but you may well leave with a very different notion!' You could not just walk in with a research design.*

By the end of the interview, Peter was propounding a multiple-perspective view of knowledge:

> You can't just interpret what you are seeing from your own perspective. You have to see how that might look, and the understandings of that knowledge, from a number of different perspectives. And obviously you can't be those perspectives, but you have to indicate an awareness of those perspectives.

He has made a dramatic change from his starting-point; and when he goes back into that professional world, and hears the unreconstructed language:

> I feel shocked. It is like where I was, 25 years ago.

Peter is unusual in his clarity about epistemological change, but not alone. Other participants speak about knowledge, experience and wisdom that exist outside, or on the margins of, the mainstream economy of knowledge. A considerable number, especially in the gender domain, have themselves been in social movements such as union or gay community organizing, feminist anti-violence or education work. Some still see themselves as activists. Jennifer (HIV, South Africa), a health researcher with a background in political struggle of the Apartheid era, says 'I have always considered myself as a practitioner activist, not as an academic.' She stresses that her starting-point is not universal research questions but 'a set of practical commentaries and engagements'.

These forms of activism are not necessarily opposed to mainstream research. The Treatment Action Campaign in South Africa, like much environmental activism, depended on conventional science. Yet in the early days of the HIV epidemic, before anti-retroviral drugs were available, community activism was in fact dominant. Grass-roots mobilizations pressed for government intervention, legislation and funding for social research. Jean (HIV, Australia) argues strongly that the whole AIDS research and prevention enterprise rests on this activism. The social networks with which activism is connected *are* the data, and researchers cannot get their blood samples, clinical trialists or interviewees without them.

Peter, Jennifer and Jean are appealing to forms of expertise and knowledge that are distinctively local. This is not the same as the local-expert role within the mainstream knowledge formation described above; rather it is a question of another way of knowing.

Camille (gender, South Africa) puts this most eloquently. Starting by doing a type of intellectual work that was really 'about other places', she began to think harder about where she was, i.e. South Africa, which was 'beginning to emerge as a second layer of thinking for me'. She has not abandoned international networks and their agendas, but sees them differently, 'because you feel like you're speaking from a position of deep knowledge about the local'.

We may call this, quite simply, a concern with *local knowledge*. It grows from interaction with local communities and movements, experience of conditions in the local environment, and the know-how involved in dealing with them. Knowledge of this kind appears in all three domains in this study. It may concern local customs and history, local geography and vegetation, or local conditions of poverty. It may be developed over time by a researcher, or it may be brought to a research project by hiring local people to work in a clinic or to run an action programme. Undramatic as it is, local knowledge is highly valued by those researchers who want to correct the abstractions and preconceptions of the mainstream knowledge formation.

Alternative allegiances

The career path for successful researchers from the Southern tier leads upwards to international recognition and closer integration into the global economy of knowledge – collaborations and grants, publication in top Northern journals, invitations to conferences, even job offers in the metropole. Allegiance to the mainstream knowledge formation is normally undisturbed, though one's role in it may change, as Nicole (HIV, Australia), explains:

> As you get on in laboratory science, most people don't stay in the lab. … I think in the end for a laboratory-based scientist that leads a research group, your role is the ideas, and knowing what's important and what's not. And knowing when you've invested enough time in something. … Finding opportunities, finding collaborators.

For a significant minority of our participants, however, something did happen to challenge their allegiance to the dominant knowledge formation. For Peter, it was the accumulation of experiences described above. Anton (HIV, South Africa), who was quoted earlier in the article observing that the 'big debates' happen in the global North, also registered the different environment he was working in:

> I'm also interested in social contacts, and how the particular spaces of South Africa – whether it's rural communities or informal settlements – shape people's lives and how they interact with [AIDS] interventions.

The main result of this shift of attention and concern is the valorization of local knowledge. Camille called this a 'second layer of thinking', Peter described it in terms of

'different perspectives'. This language suggests an alternative episteme; but most of our respondents do not go so far. Even with Camille and Peter the idea remains uncrystallized, not a well-formed alternative paradigm so much as a bundle of ideas about differences of place, experience, social need and research agenda.

Yet even in this state, the emphasis on local knowledge can be powerful. It motivates one of our respondents, who is an editor of an influential Northern journal, to use that position to urge change in research agendas to address the health impacts of climate change in the global South. It motivates another, who is active in international forums, to emphasize the urgency of sea level change for small island states. We have argued that extraverted knowledge practice is active, not passive, and the same is true for concern with local knowledge. Harold (climate change, South Africa) has tried to build an institutional base for new thinking oriented to African perspectives and needs:

> I felt we couldn't really start to try and develop international southern-African or African relationships until we had a critical mass at [the institution] itself. So the focus has been very much about starting at home, then building relationships in and around [the city] and [the region], and at the national government scale, and then expanding out after that.

Felipe (climate change, Brazil), whose interest in distinctive local environments was mentioned earlier, looks beyond his specialty to the state of science and public policy in Brazil. He criticizes the narrowness of contemporary science, and the institutional pressure for productivity; he worries that natural scientists are no longer 'social thinkers'.

Compared with the number who express some form of local-knowledge perspective, only a few of our respondents mention the clear-cut alternatives that are found in the postcolonial literature. Two of the gender studies scholars from Australia mention postcolonial theory. Ironically, Cath seems to have learned about this trend via the metropole, as it appeared in the journals she follows. She is now well versed in postcolonial feminism and applies the approach herself. Pat also became aware of postcolonial perspectives at a later stage of her career, and with her students formed a learning collective focused on Asian perspectives.

Indigenous knowledge, as a framework, was mentioned by very few. There was a famous episode when it was asserted in the AIDS domain. The South African government under Thabo Mbeki controversially supported an attack on the viral explanation of AIDS and promoted indigenous healing practices instead (Green, 2012). This was of course known to our South African interviewees; but even Jennifer, no friend of Northern biomedical dominance, interpreted that episode mainly as a political manoeuvre not an epistemological issue. In the construction of these three domains of knowledge in the Southern tier, indigenous knowledge simply did not appear as a significant alternative episteme. Rather, the knowledge that indigenous people have was subsumed in the looser local-knowledge approach.

But a related issue does appear more widely in the interviews, the question of South–South connections (Cooper & Morrell, 2014; Tamale, 2011). Bernardo (climate change, Brazil), though still well connected in the metropole, has given more attention in the last 10 years to research connections across South America and with South Africa. Lais (HIV, Brazil) has developed regular links with Mozambique. An African gender studies

network was established with its headquarters in South Africa; their journal *Feminist Africa* launched in 2002. A number of the Australian researchers take an interest in Asia because of aid programmes, the rising numbers of Asian students in Australian universities, and visiting academics from Asia. External funders have sometimes supported a regional approach, in all three of our domains.

When Jennifer referred to herself as a 'practitioner activist', she was close to another potential episteme. Activist knowledge (Maddison & Scalmer, 2005) has its own logic and forms of communication. Jennifer sees this mainly as an alternative practice; Jean, as mentioned above, sees social activism as a basis for mainstream knowledge. Violeta (gender, Brazil) takes a long step further:

> If gender studies are revolutionary in themselves, why can the way they are produced not be revolutionary? What can these studies give, other than the product? Can the process not be an intervention?

Here a whole alternative methodology is implied. So Violeta designed her graduate teaching in the form of participatory workshops, using techniques she had learnt in a feminist NGO, 'very advanced in terms of intervention techniques, including the participation of women'. She became interested in the action research literature, especially the work of the great Colombian sociologist Orlando Fals Borda, and her students began using those methods.

None of these alternative allegiances offers a major challenge to the mainstream knowledge economy in these domains. Yet it is significant that three alternatives are present on a small scale – activist knowledge, postcolonial thought and South–South connection – and another, the local-knowledge agenda, on a substantial scale. We must take these into account in understanding the global economy of knowledge and its future.

Conclusion: A collective negotiation

In the lives of Southern-tier researchers, a global economy of knowledge centred on the elite institutions of the metropole is a massive fact. It shapes both established disciplines and new domains. It affects training, funding, research methods, publication, prestige and recognition. And as our evidence shows, it evokes a range of responses among active researchers.

Most powerfully, the global economy evokes extraversion – even in new fields of knowledge. Our interviews allow us to reformulate this concept. Extraversion is a pattern of agency, a way of dealing with a collective situation in the global economy of knowledge. This is not a position of powerlessness. The economy of knowledge needs a workforce in the periphery, given the global circulation of data, debate and applied science.

Extraversion, to make the concept more precise, means structuring the intellectual labour process in the periphery around relationships in which the knowledge institutions of the metropole have predominant authority. This authority may be exercised directly, for instance when Northern funders define the problems for researchers in the South. More generally, it is a form of indirect control, occurring through such practices as

researching within an established methodological framework, or teaching curricula modelled on those of Northern institutions.

Doing those things requires active work. It is a serious conceptual mistake to equate global marginality with passivity. Far from it. Our respondents are busy, creative people who have built institutions, careers and research agendas. The agency of intellectual workers in the Southern tier is demonstrated, among other things, by the range of devices they have developed for participating from a distance, including strategic travel, partnerships, creative use of electronic media and tactical publication practices.

The global economy offers researchers in the periphery partnerships of various kinds, and the specific role of local expert in a knowledge domain of both local and international importance. In this role one generates, and exports to Northern journals and databanks, the flow of information needed, and sometimes new interpretations of it. Some Southern-tier researchers travelling this route do achieve prominence in the international field.

However relationships built around extraversion have difficulties. The partnerships may be exploitative and arouse anger. Metropolitan paradigms, such as the current biomedical model for HIV research, may be seen as a damaging constraint on knowledge and action. There is, accordingly, contestation as well as accommodation. The paradigms may be modified. Equal authority may be demanded in collaborative projects. Some research groups in the Southern tier develop distinctive agendas. Local journals are founded, though they rarely score well in the international league tables.

In these new domains of knowledge we do not find full-blown alternative epistemes, in the sense of the decolonial and indigenous-knowledge approaches mentioned in the introduction (Mignolo, 2011; Odora Hoppers, 2002). What we do find is divergent practices around the mainstream economy and its institutions, offering several alternative possibilities for knowledge. The most common is the ‘local knowledge’ focus, found in all three domains. This is epistemologically loose, but strongly tied to local needs and local communities. It sometimes supports and sometimes challenges the mainstream knowledge formation. On a smaller scale, we also find traces of more radical alternatives – activist knowledge, South–South linkages and postcolonial perspectives.

In the relationship of Southern-tier researchers to the global economy of knowledge, the broad pattern of practice in these three new domains of knowledge is neither subordination nor separation but a collective *negotiation* with the power and resources of the global North. The global economy of knowledge depends on inputs from the majority world, and there are bases for negotiation at many levels. In this negotiation Southern-tier researchers put forward claims, express discontents, challenge priorities, create resources and frame new problems.

Such collective negotiation may not be possible for all parts of the global periphery. Authoritarian states, repressive religious cultures, poverty and war might all prevent that. Our study does not describe the global South in general. Nor do we assume this negotiation will remain always in the same state. As managerial power in university systems grows, a tighter integration into the Northern-centred knowledge economy is likely.

Yet postcolonial ideas continue to be disseminated, challenges from social movements erupt, the demand for local knowledge continues, and more people realize the wealth of knowledge in the postcolonial world. The need to re-think knowledge

frameworks remains. We can confidently say that metropolitan power and authority are not passively accepted by the workforce we have studied. Where metropolitan paradigms are accepted, it is through active practices of accommodation and participation. And though there is not a widely articulated alternative, there is plenty of criticism, inventiveness, agenda-setting, assertion of difference, and search for new connections, around the Southern tier. This allows some optimism about the future growth of new knowledge formations.

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