

**POSTCOLONIAL CRITIQUE OF KNOWLEDGE
RELATIONS IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

SPECIAL ISSUE EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

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Neo-colonial relations continue to influence contemporary social relations through which research is done, lived, and learned (Takayama et al., 2016; Breidlid, 2013; Mohanty, 2003). Universities in both the global north and global south where these relationships are played out are often the institutional evidence of previous colonial power structures (Adriansen et al., 2016) and as such, a postcolonial critique of western knowledge systems seems merited. Our understanding of postcolonialism *'accounts for processes of domination that have their origin in European colonisation. These processes extend beyond the period of direct colonisation to take on new forms, notably those of neo-colonialism, dependency and the intensification of globalisation'* (Hickling-Hudson & Mayo 2012:2). In light of this, it is important to explore how knowledge systems and practices can be challenged, making possible *'pedagogies of intellectual equality'* (Singh, 2011).

In the era after colonialism, research and teaching relations between the global north and the global south inherited various complexities and ambiguities which are the focus of this special issue. In particular, this special issue offers a postcolonial critique of the knowledge relations that construct and result from development aid funded research co-operation programs. It is important to expand knowledge about how these relationships are shaped within research and doctoral training, given the increased interest from states in the global north in helping to build research capacity through development aid funded research training and research in the global south (United Nations, 2015).

From this perspective, the articles in the special issue align with Homi Bhabha's understanding of postcolonial theory as "*an attempt to interrupt the Western discourses of modernity through ... displacing, interrogative subaltern or postslavery narratives and the critical - theoretical perspectives they engender*" (Bhabha, 1994:199). In her article Gurminder K. Bhambra (2014) shows the fruitfulness of bringing diverse postcolonial and decolonial scholarships into dialogue, in so called '*connected sociologies*' to explore '*their radical potential in unsettling and reconstituting standard processes of knowledge production*' (2014: 2). While using different vocabularies, the articles in this special issue provide a postcolonial critique on knowledge relations, as they seek to articulate the concerns and rethinking of those who criticise and resist the negative global legacies of colonialism. Focusing particularly on Swedish and Danish support to building research capacity in developing countries, the articles in this special issue probe the conditions, experiences and outcomes for researchers, students and supervisors participating in such initiatives and also offer some empirically driven recommendations for higher education institutions and development policies.

While not offering identical research support to building research capacity in developing countries, there are nevertheless several similarities between Sweden's and Denmark's support. For example, the countries have continuously for decades been funding capacity building in higher education in the global south – also in periods where other donors have focused on 'education for all' (Adriansen et al., 2016; Fellesson & Mählck, 2013). Furthermore, the involvement in higher education capacity building between Sweden and Denmark and the global south has often been based on long term academic and personal relationships (Whyte & Whyte, 2016; Zink 2016; Møller-Jensen & Madsen, 2015). Hence, the special issue presents a specific approach to understanding postcolonial knowledge relations between the global south and global north, as it is written by authors from Sweden and Denmark that investigate their countries' development aid-funded research and research and PhD training in the global south.

Our meeting in a symposium at the international and multidisciplinary conference on Postcolonial Concurrences at Kalmar University in 2015 inspired the work presented in

this special issue. At the symposium, we all presented various aspects of our research into postcolonial relations in higher education and realised a demand for a more in-depth analysis of the challenges of knowledge relations within capacity building funded higher education in the global south. The conference's theme was a particularly good starting point for developing our thoughts about the interlinkages between postcolonialism, development aid and knowledge relations taking place in an increasingly global, neo-liberal and competitive arena. These are interlinkages which so far have received surprisingly little attention from researchers in the field of higher education (Mählck, 2016). As the conference theme indicates, postcolonial relations are integral to projects of modernity, taking place at various sites in a variety of ways and influencing differently on people's lives in academic institutions and elsewhere. Our four articles pinpoint the variation of postcolonial research and knowledge relations, and decolonial agency that are produced within the framework of development aid to build research capacity in the global south. As such, there a number of theoretical and empirical linkages that connects the articles:

- The theme of translocality (Anthias, 2012) that underlines the importance of understanding the relationship between people and places at a global level and that these relationships are rooted in localities and temporalities that are essential to understand postcolonial and decolonial research and teaching relations.
- The entanglement of social and economic relations in the social production of science and research training as well as the role and functioning of development aid funded research and doctoral training in this context.
- The focus on trying to understand the complexities of the everyday and the dual and sometimes contradictory positionalities of students, supervisors and researchers through qualitative research practice.

Departing from these common starting points of the articles together offers a nuanced analysis of the multiplicity

and entanglement of postcolonial research relations, rather than giving broad-brush strokes. From this, policy development from below becomes possible: a policy development from the everyday experiences of 'the colonial difference' (Mignolo, 2002).

The individual articles

The special issue consists of four articles that all examine knowledge relations by zooming in on capacity building through Swedish and Danish funding of PhD-students and research collaborations. However, the four articles each bring in different perspectives. The issue includes both empirical and reflective articles, discussing capacity building and collaboration at different levels within higher education (PhD-students, young and more mature academics), and covers a wide range of Scandinavian cooperation countries in the global south: Lao People's Democratic Republic, Uganda, Tanzania, Mozambique and Ghana.

The first article by Paula Mählck: *Racism, Precariousness and Resistance: Development-aid-funded PhD training in Sweden* focuses on how Tanzanian and Mozambican PhD students and supervisors participating in Swedish development-aid-funded programmes for building research capacity through postgraduate training make representations of academic work relations, compared to other students and supervisors in Sweden. In particular, Mählck addresses the complex, shifting and sometimes dual layers of precariousness and resistance that are (re)produced through these work relations and the lessons that can be learned from the perspective of policy development. Through the analysis of 91 qualitative interviews, where interviews with development-aid-funded students are contrasted with other international students and Swedish PhD students, Mählck shows that the positionalities made available to Tanzanian and Mozambican PhD students in Swedish academia are constructed at the complex intersection between predefined parameters. Examples of these parameters include contractual agreements and how supervisors and departmental colleagues in Sweden manage and negotiate intersectional, translocational and postcolonial knowledge relations. For the Tanzanian and Mozambican PhD students, this means that their precariousness is constructed along a lack of recognition of their work as academic work and their resistance is articulated

through opposing the subject position of a passive object of capacity building. Mählck uses these insights to argue for a focus on ‘situated policy development’, ‘policy development from below’ and ‘policy development through institutional responsibility’.

The second article by Ann-Louise Silfver: *Supervision in the contact zone revisited: Critical reflections on supervisory practices through the lenses of time, place and knowledge* is a contribution to the understanding and reflections within the field of the knowledge relations established and negotiated within intercultural doctoral supervision. It presents one supervisor’s reflexive analysis of how supervisory practices played out in a development cooperation funded capacity-building project, which took place in the Lao PDR and Sweden during 2005-2011. Using the concepts of time, place and knowledge (Manathunga, 2014), Silfver reflects on her own practices and actions as a supervisor to four doctoral students from Lao PDR. She uses the possibilities and challenges she encountered as a supervisor to critically reflect on how postcolonial theory and the concepts of time, place and knowledge can contribute to discussing how hegemonic patterns of knowledge production in doctoral training can be disrupted. The analysis shows how supervision in the contact zone risks supporting strategies of assimilation at the expense of transculturation. Silfver argues for a third path, that of accommodation, where the needs and strategies of doctoral students and supervisors affect and change doctoral training. She recommends that analyses of colonial patterns of power and hierarchy operating in the present should more actively be incorporated into doctoral training curricula in order to bring about profound change and altered relations and practices of knowledge production.

The third article by Lene Møller Madsen, *Producing supervisors in the global south: Reflections on academic training abroad*, utilises a postcolonial perspective to reflect on the production of Ghanaian supervisors. Being abroad is a result of physical movement between places; however, it is also a construction of social spaces produced through interaction and reproduced through the participants’ relations, interwoven with historical power relations. Based on seven personal narratives of Ghanaian academics Madsen analyses the meaning and implications of Ghanaian academics’ experiences of supervision

as PhD-students in the global north, and explores consequences for their own supervision practice at Ghanaian Universities. Madsen shows how the academic practices of Ghanaian academics are influenced by and related to their experiences abroad as well as mobility between the global north and global south. In conclusion, Madsen discusses how educational practices operate beyond the immediate supervisory context both in terms of supervision practice and in the wider cultural setting of supervision. She further argues that including the notion of the 'production of an educated person' adds to our understanding of knowledge relations and supervision practice in the post-colonial contact zone.

The last article by Eren Zink: *Ugandan Scientists, Scandinavian Collaborations, and the Cultural Economy of Science* uses economic anthropology to explore tensions and misunderstandings that arise within Ugandan-Scandinavian partnerships in research and research training. Drawing upon anthropological fieldwork amongst medical and agricultural scientists in Uganda during 2013-2016, Zink offers a description and analysis of the overlapping and sometimes contradictory cultural economies of Ugandan scientific work from the situated perspectives of Ugandan scientists themselves. The article highlights how scientists' social and physical mobility within Uganda and abroad shapes understandings of the meaning of their scientific labors amongst lay publics, scientific collaborators, foreign funders, and Ugandan scientists. The use of a cultural economy approach together with elements of actor-network theory makes visible the overlapping and sometimes incompatible logics and patterns of economic organization in research and research training that fosters frictions and misunderstandings both at home and in international scientific research collaborations. Going beyond laboratory work and publication practices, Zink illustrates the importance of holding scientific workshops in hotels, salary top-ups, and social and material obligations to kin and colleagues for facilitating (and sometimes undermining) North-South science collaborations. Zink concludes that greater recognition of the patterns of cultural economy shape the meanings of money and scientific work are necessary for mitigating mistrust and misunderstanding across South-North scientific partnerships, and achieving greater equity and transparency in contemporary collaborations.

The articles' combined contribution to the field

In the context of a global and increasingly competitive knowledge economy where nation states, institutions and individuals are competing for the best researchers, ideas and research grants, there is a need for situating development aid funded support to building research capacity in developing countries in this context. Development aid funded research and research training in both Sweden and Denmark receive earmarked state funding. However, this does not mean that researchers participating in these collaborations or training programs are unaffected by the pressures from a global and neo-liberal knowledge economy. Here the two articles by Mählck and Zink explicitly focus on the social and economic aspects of research collaborations and research training. More specifically, Mählck unfolds how Tanzanian and Mozambican PhD students and Swedish supervisors manage and negotiate precariousness in academic work relations in Swedish higher education. The article by Zink shows how researchers in Uganda manage and negotiate their social and economic livelihoods given their dependence on foreign funding. These articles bring new insights into how the entanglement of economic and social relations are lived and managed in the everyday lives of researchers, supervisors and PhD students participating in development aid funded support within an already post-colonial and increasingly competitive and neo-liberal knowledge economy.

By addressing the use of established concepts to understand supervision in a postcolonial perspective, the special issue makes important contributions to further development of the research field. Silfver in her reflective article on being a supervisor found that understanding pedagogies from the viewpoints of assimilation and transculturation was not enough to understand the processes she as a supervisor had experienced in the global north. She argues for a more nuanced pedagogy of accommodation, as the layered effects of a colonial past and present affect those of us who inhabit academia very differently. In the article on understanding the meaning and negotiations of academic training abroad for Ghanaian supervisors, Madsen also finds that the pedagogies of assimilation and transculturation fall somewhat short. She shows how the concept of cultural production of an educated person adds to our understanding of how experiences abroad are negotiated in the later supervision practices of academics in the global south.

Despite applying different vocabularies, the four articles emphasise the need for understanding the relationship between people and places at a global level but at the same time stress that these relationships are rooted in particular academic localities. The research presented in this special issue implies engaging in a critique of development perspectives which reproduce dominant representations of the global north and south, and draw attention to the lack of perspectives which focus on the variety of relations between them (McEwan, 2009). Integral to this is an analytical focus on the various shifting and sometimes dual 'intersectional and translocational subject positionalities' of both privilege and disadvantage (Anthias, 2012) that evolve in development aid funded research and PhD training. In that respect, the articles make valuable additions to broad-brush research perspectives by focusing on the particularities of how students, supervisors and researchers manage and negotiate the everyday in Swedish and Danish development aid funded research and PhD training. In the articles by Mählck and Silfver the everyday experiences of supervisors and PhD students in Sweden are theorised through the lenses of translocal intersectionality, whereas the articles by Madsen and Zink conceptualise how supervisors' and researchers' experiences are layered and occupy multiple positionalities in academic work life in Ghana and Uganda respectively.

Broad policy initiatives from donors are the starting points for the development cooperation on research investigated in this special issue. The articles analyse what happens when policy moves to concrete practice and localities and the knowledge relations that construct and result from these development cooperations. This investigative focus on lived experiences in particular locations offer additional knowledge that points both to particularities and to similarities across contexts. The research suggests that neo-colonial legacies continue to operate on multiple levels with concrete effects on research practices. These must be researched, analysed and critically discussed beyond this special issue so that we can continue to create strategies for decolonization in our respective research communities.

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