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The Global South as Subversive Practice: Challenges and Potentials of a Heuristic Concept

Sinah Theres Kloß

ABSTRACT

There exist various and often vague definitions of the Global South in contemporary public discourse and academic publications. The objective of this introduction is to assess the different definitions and to advance the current theoretical discourse. It argues that the "Global South," when not simplistically referred to in terms of geography, has great potential to consolidate and empower the various social actors that consider themselves to be in subaltern(ized) positionalities of global networks of power. The Global South is not an entity that exists *per se* but has to be understood as something that is created, imagined, invented, maintained, and recreated by the ever-changing and never fixed status positions of social actors and institutions. For the context of knowledge production in academic institutions, the idea of the Global South may be embraced as a process or practice through which new modes of knowledge production are created and learned and more balanced relationships in the global system of knowledge production are achieved.

As part of my new position at the University of Cologne in late 2015, I was asked to organize a workshop to examine and discuss what the "Global South" is. While excited at first, I soon realized the immanent challenges to this endeavour and found myself confronted with questions such as: How do I select and invite scholars to discuss the "Global South"? Who constitutes or represents the Global North and Global South? On top of these theoretical questions, budget restraints and the closely scheduled date of mid-2016 led to further challenges: I was facing a lack of time to submit an open call for papers and to invite representatives of all relevant disciplines, geographical regions

and academic positions. As it is certainly impossible—and undesirable—to judge from a name or through a person’s institutional affiliation who constitutes or represents Global North or Global South, I wondered how I—a postdoctoral, female, white social anthropologist in her early 30s from Germany—could facilitate a meaningful conversation which would enrich theoretical discussions. These challenges were a consequence of the various and often vague definitions of Global South and Global North that exist in contemporary public discourse and academic publications, a point I return to later in this introduction. Eventually I invited scholars who had published on the concept of Global South/Global North before, and additionally contacted scholars who I assumed would be interested in discussing this concept. At the time of invitation, the selection of scholars represented a diverse range of disciplines, geographical regions, career stages, races, and genders, even though I am certainly not making any holistic claims. However, as is usually the case when organizing an event, this selection had necessarily been adapted and reduced in terms of its diversity due to the various hindrances in the professional and private lives of the selected participants. Throughout the workshop I was deliberately forceful when discussing the administrative and conceptual challenges I had faced while organizing the event. The workshop, titled “Conceptual (Re)Locations of the ‘Global South,’” took place at the Global South Studies Center in Cologne in June 2016, consisting of ten talks and numerous discussions by contributors and guests.¹ Conceptual questions addressed were, amongst others: Who speaks about the Global South? When, where, and how is the concept appropriated in different regions, by different people, or in different cultural productions? What are the benefits and limitations of the concept? How has its meaning shifted and how has it transformed over time? This special issue is an outcome of this workshop, although it has to be noted that not all authors in this issue were present at the workshop. Its objective is to assess the different definitions and to advance the current theoretical discourse.

Definitions of the Global South

The use of the term and concept “Global South” has become *en vogue*. Over the past decades, the number of publications, journals, and institutions that refer to the Global South as a mode of framing and labelling has increased significantly. From its first recorded use in the Social Sciences and Humanities in 1996, it has been increasingly applied, from having been mentioned in 19 publications in 2004 to 248 in 2013 (Pagel et al. 2014). Although scholars have frequently pointed out that the concept needs further theoretical discussion and refinement, its general use often remains metaphorical. It is frequently applied as a substitute for the term and concept “Third World,” thereby

evoking, amongst other things, notions of poverty and (under-)development as inherently linked to the Global South (Pinheiro 2013). This problematic use of the concept unfortunately cannot be regarded as an exception but continues to be its most common use in academic publications and public discourse today. South and Global South are furthermore often used interchangeably, and at present the Global South seems to be regarded as the most politically correct term vis-à-vis Third World and Developing Countries, at least among those who fail to recognize the inherent biases reproduced by such a generalized use of the concept (Schneider, this issue).

The history of the concept Global South is commonly framed in narratives that trace their origin to the concept of the South. The South became an important category during the 1970s, influenced through different events and movements such as the Bandung Conference in 1955, the 1964 UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the Tricontinental Conference in 1966. During this period, two groupings developed: the Non-Aligned Movement, consisting of countries that did not align with the superpowers USA or USSR, and the Group of Seventy Seven (G77), which defined itself as a group of countries facing structural disadvantages in the international economic system (Freeman, this issue). In this context, “South” emerged as a label that sought to overcome pejorative references such as Third World and was linked to processes of decolonization and nation-building. For example, the South Commission, established in 1987, emphasized that North and South referred not only to economic labels of being “developed” or “undeveloped,” but that the terms also referred to the different levels of in- or exclusion in international decision-making (Freeman).

South was further popularized by the publications of the Brandt Commission, chaired by then German chancellor Willy Brandt (Rigg 2007, 2015; Dirlik 2015). These reports were published in 1980 and 1983 and addressed global economic and environmental transformations, drawing a line between and thus defining Northern and Southern countries on the basis of economic criteria—later known as the Brandt line. According to these reports, most countries defined as “developing countries” were to be found south of latitude 30° North, and henceforth labeled as being in the South. Countries such as Australia and New Zealand were highlighted as notable exceptions.

Other uses of the notion of the South have been recorded as early as the 1930s, for example by the literary magazine *Sur* in Argentina, founded and edited by Argentinian writer Victoria Ocampo (Pinheiro 2015). The magazine *Sur* was published in Buenos Aires between 1931 and 1991, highlighting especially Latin American arts and culture. Another example is Antonio Gramsci’s essay “The Southern Question,” first published in 1930, linking the North-South division with colonization (Dados and Connell 2012). These examples already indicate the transcultural history of the term and idea of

South, which has not developed distinctly in either the geographical North or South. The North-South distinction was however popularized at a time when the East-West political divide was still prominent and formed the main criteria on the basis of which the world was categorized and divided (Dirlik 2007, 2015). With the collapse of the Soviet Union—the demise of the so-called Second World—the Three Worlds model lost its capacity in categorizing the world order during the 1990s (Dirlik 2004).² Without the division of First and Second Worlds, no Third World—categorized as unaligned and uninvolved in the East-West conflict—could be defined.

Scholars also engaged with and appropriated the “South” to outline epistemic inequalities and to question universalist tendencies in social theory, an interpretation I return to later. Prominent works published at the time were, for example, Boaventura de Sousa Santos’ *Conocer desde el Sur* (2006), Raewyn Connell’s *Southern Theory* (2007), and Jean and John Comaroff’s *Theory from the South* (2012).³ From the early 2000s, the term and concept of the South began to be criticized. Critics argued that economic reforms transformed some countries into transition economies, particularly the BRICS states (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), which could no longer be categorized as part of either North or South. Additionally, the concept of the South was accused of hiding “from view the political and economic processes and historical inheritances that rendered these southern countries poor in the first place” (Rigg 2015, np). It was criticized as being a mere substitute term for Third World or Developing Countries. As a consequence, the “Global South” rose to prominence with the objective of moving beyond and drawing a line between the concept of the South and its often-related developmentalist discourse and biases. To mark this difference, “Global” was added to “South” to underline that the concept should not be understood as merely geographical classification of the world, but as a reference attending to unequal global power relations, imperialism, and neo-colonialism, as discussed by, for example, Sousa Santos and Connell (López 2007; Levander and Mignolo 2011).

At present, the term Global South is used in various ways. In this issue Nina Schneider interprets three different readings of the concept: 1) as geographical reading, 2) as global subaltern reading, and 3) as flexible metaphor.⁴ The geographical interpretation remains the most popular use of the term in public discourse and academic publications, maintaining its link to specific geographical regions and countries. Global subaltern interpretations refer to the Global South to describe and challenge subaltern(ized) positionalities in global networks of power. Most prominently, Alfred López states:

What defines the global South is the recognition by peoples across the planet that globalization’s promised bounties have not materialized, that it has failed as a global master narrative. The global South also marks,

even celebrates, the mutual recognition among the world's subalterns of their shared condition at the margins of the brave new neoliberal world of globalization. (2007, 3)

Similarly, various other scholars highlight that the Global South “emphasize[s] a shared heritage of recent colonial histories in the global peripheries” and that as a “conceptual construct, [it] offers a useful frame of reference by acknowledging the colonial past and a more recent shared development history” (Miraftab and Kudva 2015, 4). From this vantage point, one may want to argue, the Global South seems to have become conflated with the concept of subalternity, addressing political, epistemic, cultural, and economic inequalities. If the concept mainly serves to challenge subaltern(ized) positionalities, the question has to be addressed whether it is necessary at all, and what the difference is between the Global South and subalternity. Is Global South simply another fashionable buzzword that legitimizes new research—and the acquisition of funding—in research institutions? Particularly in times in which universities are increasingly managed and organized as corporations and are “exposed to the pressure of so-called innovation,” the life cycles and fashionability of concepts must be critically reflected upon. Is the Global South, in the words of Roberto Dainotto, only “one more commodity in the serial production of innovative educational goods” (this issue)?

Indeed, the Global South has great potential in consolidating and empowering the various social actors that consider themselves to be in subaltern(ized) positionalities of global networks and in fostering South-South relations. I argue that the Global South exceeds subalternity's potential for “transcend[ing] geographical and ideological frontiers” (López 2007, 8), as subalternity is inherently linked to Postcolonial Theory and therefore frequently perceived and described to be a product of “Western” academic institutions (Bahri 1997; Chanady 2008; Moraña, Dussel, and Jáuregui 2008; Pratt 2008). Amaryll Chanady states that “critics outside the West sometimes see postcolonial theory as yet another paradigm imported from hegemonic centers of knowledge production that marginalizes local knowledges in a new avatar of epistemic violence” (2008, 418). Postcolonial Theory has never been appropriated to the same extent among Latin American scholars as it has among European, North American, Asian, or African scholars. According to Mary Louise Pratt, “postcolonial inquiry has been dominated by dialogues mainly among scholars from Britain and North America, India and parts of Africa and the Middle East—the former British and French empires,” who are predominantly based in European and North American universities (2008, 461). Latin Americanists often emphasize that Postcolonial Theory is biased and does not take into account Latin American intellectual traditions, epistemologies, and lived experiences (Coronil 2008; Chanady 2008;

La Campa 2008; Moraña, Dussel, and Jáuregui 2008; Pratt 2008). They seldom identify with Postcolonial Theory and regard it as another mode of epistemic imperialism.

The Global South is often criticized as being a “Northern” concept, developed in an Euro-American context and imposed on people who constitute or live in what may be defined as the (Global) South, as indicated earlier. For instance, Dorothy Figueira raises the question of whether the concept of the Global South is but a new alterity paradigm that is “yet another attempt to engage the Other” and that overcomes neither inherent processes of othering nor the recreation of Western/Northern hegemony (2007, 144). Indeed, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has played a key role in the popularization of the term Global South (Dirlik 2015). In a particularly problematic case, the UNDP program “Forging a Global South,” launched in the early 2000s, emphasized the need of South-South cooperation in order to achieve “development” in the South in a brochure published in 2004 (UNDP 2004). Throughout this brochure, the terms South and Global South are used interchangeably, referring to the concept as a geographic category and uncritically locating it almost exclusively at the macro level of nations. More broadly, imperial and Eurocentric connotations of oppositions such as East/West or North/South certainly cannot be denied, as these dualisms originate from the Western Renaissance and Enlightenment (Levander and Mignolo 2011, 9). From this perspective, the concept of Global South indicates a “conservative return to the older ‘classical’ geopolitical and civilization models,” neglecting regions and countries that do not neatly fit into either category (Tlostanova 2011, 69). In order to critically engage with the North/South differentiation, immanent to the concept of the Global South, and in order to highlight the “racist, cultural, and religious reductionist and deeply imperial sides of these concepts and divisions,” for example, Madina Tlostanova proposes that we pay particular attention to those areas and places that cannot easily be identified as either North or South but are seemingly in between, for instance post-Soviet states (69). In this context, the various Souths within the North—such as the US South (Smith 2007; Monteith 2007; Duck 2015), various European Souths (Dainotto 2011; Gržinić 2011), as well as the simultaneity of North and South in locations such as megacities (Trefzer et al. 2014)—have been discussed.

The Global South, although partly a product of the dominant centers of knowledge production, is said to create a space and possibility of identification for the various social actors and scholars around the globe, including those who have felt excluded in postcolonial concepts and theory. For example, African American scholars and their intellectual traditions have often been “marginalized in postcolonial studies,” but may feel included in the concept of the Global South as an approach that theorizes and challenges existing global

power relations, inequalities, and hegemony, and further enables resistance (Mahler 2015, 113).⁵ The Global South may accordingly be regarded as a “political consciousness resulting from the recognition by diverse peoples of their shared experience of the negative effects of globalization” (95). While it serves “as a signifier of oppositional subaltern cultures ranging from Africa, Central and Latin America, much of Asia, and even those ‘Souths’ within a larger perceived North, such as the U.S. South and Mediterranean and Eastern Europe” (8), one has to be cautious not to generalize the Global South and consider it as a homogeneous entity with a homogeneous history (Prashad 2008, 2014).

The Global South is thus not an entity that exists *per se* and is waiting to be identified, but has to be understood as something that is created, imagined, invented, maintained, and recreated “in the struggle and conflicts between imperial global domination and emancipatory and decolonial forces that do not acquiesce with global designs” (Levander and Mignolo 2011, 3). Keeping in mind the transcultural history of concepts and movements such as the South, hence also Global South, Lisandro Claudio’s contribution in this issue highlights the transcultural origins of liberalism, reminding us of the dangers of theorizing North and South as simplified oppositions and homogeneous entities whose histories are assumed to be distinct when they are indeed deeply entangled. Indeed, the Global South has to be understood as an orientation, as an “*antonomasia* of a universal reality” (Dainotto, this issue) that highlights how the (Global) South refers to the *most* exploited and *especially* oppressed in neoliberal globalization processes. From this perspective the Global South has the capacity to form a new alliance between different social actors and “can help us to objectivize a pervasive reality of exploitation that concerns different subjectivities” (*ibid.*).

But can the Global South serve as a successful term or concept for such an endeavor? In her contribution to this issue, Nina Schneider cautions that the Global South necessarily remains a “utopian category” that reifies the problematic North-South dichotomy instead of overcoming political, socio-economic, and epistemic domination. Raising the question of whether “real change” would require us “to step outside this dichotomist vocabulary still based on ‘Western’ epistemic traditions,” she compares the current use of *Global South* with previous terminology by drawing on the work of Arturo Escobar (1995). Schneider proposes that *Global South*, like its predecessor *Third World*, “falls prey to ... a ‘colonization of reality’” as it “becomes a dominant category imbued with a meaning that is only imagined (yet overdetermined, simplistic, and stereotypical), but still powerfully frames or even reifies how we conceive of our social reality.” According to her, the concept cannot overcome the geographical dimension, and those who use it make themselves “complicit in heuristic categories that ultimately perpetuate a deep-seated Eurocentrism.” She thus

calls for the invention of an entirely novel expression. Although I agree with Schneider that the geographical and simplistic uses are highly problematical, I believe that inventing a new expression would still not overcome the dichotomy of North and South, First and Third World. A new term would also be defined in relation to the previous terms, which would again necessitate an elaboration on their emergence. The invention of a new term would further run the risk of silencing and glossing over the historical implications of global hierarchy, domination, and conditions of subalternity. As Ipek Demir argues in her contribution to this issue, the Global South has a temporal dimension, and erasing this dimension would silence the subversive potential of the term. This would particularly be dangerous at a time in which there exist various tendencies of “backlash against the removal of injustices faced by previously subjugated groups.”

In line with these elaborations and definitions, I propose to nuance the idea of the Global South as a process that reflects, highlights, and potentially transforms dominant and subalternized positionalities. The Global South should be understood as a process and practice, created and influenced by the ever-changing and never fixed status positions of persons and institutions. In the context of academic institutions, we may want to embrace the idea of the Global South as a process or practice through which new modes of knowledge production are created and established modes of reproducing inequalities, “epistemicide” (Sousa Santos 2014), and “epistemic racism” (Mignolo 2015, xv) are unlearned. I thus propose to consider the idea of the Global South as an active practice that restructures global networks of power. The Global South may even be considered as a practice that facilitates liminality—a liminal space of transition in which a phase of anti-structure enables the re-organization of, for example, social and epistemological power relations, and which creates a new model of social, economic, and political interactions that relies on egalitarian principles. As academic scholarship is part of the construction of the Global South, inasmuch as it is constructed by social movements, we should consider the Global South as a “normative conceptualization” with which we actively question our solidarities as well as our modes of reading, translating, writing, quoting, and publishing (Demir, this issue). To understand the relevance of the Global South as transitional practice in global knowledge production, it is necessary to briefly outline what has already been discussed as epistemicide.

The Global South and Academic Knowledge Production

Academic knowledge production is deeply influenced by unequal opportunities for and restrictions on researchers who are embedded in different networks, localities, and institutions around the globe (Alatas 2003; Mignolo

2010, 2013). There exist multiple centers of theorizing, or more specifically local nodes in global knowledge production, of which some—predominantly Euro-American—dominate others. These continue to be considered as the primary and most important nodes of intellectual work, often labeled as global or universal while indeed representing “Western knowledge”—sciences, concepts, and theories. Marginalized and subalternized nodes are often referred to as “Southern” or as located “in the Global South.” Such understandings continue modernist thinking despite discussions and reflections of multiple modernities and alternative modes of thought. Various scholars have answered this false sense of universality (Connell 2007; Sousa Santos 2009) with calls for provincializing Western sciences to end epistemicide and “learned ignorance” (Sousa Santos 2009, 2014; Taiwo 1999; Nyamnjoh 2012; Patel 2014). In this context it is necessary to point out that even the notion of “the global” came into existence through European colonial expansion and that so-called global processes have European origins (Bhambra 2014). Dena Freeman, in this issue, addresses this biased notion of the global by highlighting how different ideas of world order collide at United Nations conferences on Financing for Development. She argues that countries acting together as G77 call for an alternative world order by changing “the very nature of the global”—hence creating an “alternative global” other than what is proposed as the global from a Northern perspective.

Particularly from the second half of twentieth century, academic discussions on the topic of, for example, the indigenization of the social sciences have focused on transforming epistemological inequalities (Pathy 1988; Akiwowo 1988, 1999; Alatas 1993; Chatterjee 1997; Sinha 1997). As early as the 1980s, various sociologists called for resistance against and liberation from hegemonic Western discourses. For instance, Syed Farid Alatas calls for the need of indigenization in marginalized nodes of knowledge production by pointing out the consequences of the “captive mind,” a state of mind that is “uncritical and imitative in its approach to ideas and concepts from the West” (1993, 307), as it is “trained almost entirely in the Western sciences, reads the works of Western authors, and is taught predominantly by Western teachers, either directly or through their works” (308). Alatas emphasizes that mental captivity is linked to dependency, amongst other things generating the problematic “tendency to imitate what is not being done” (323) and hence the imitation of specific actions as well as the imitation of inaction. According to sociologist Vineeta Sinha, calls for the indigenization of the social sciences are implicitly “a desire to reclaim agency, to redefine the ‘self,’ the ‘other’ and more importantly, the relations between the two, in an effort to craft a new agenda for the present and future of the discipline in question” (1997, 174). Sinha argues that differences in the various nodes of knowledge production have to be acknowledged, but at the same time cautions that indigenous social

sciences should not be essentialized by implying, for instance, the idea of a theory's Indianness or Chineseness. The subversive practice of indigenization, instead of fostering nativism or reverse orientalism, of which it has been accused (Alatas 1993; Abaza and Stauth 2016; Amin 2010; Mazrui 2005), emphasizes the cultural and contextual specificity of theories, concepts, and methodologies.

Epistemological and academic hierarchy cannot simply be considered in terms of a "the West and the rest" differentiation, but may be found also among and within Western nations and institutions. I recall an exchange with a colleague during a 2015 international conference in Germany. Small-talking during a break, I asked this usually very reflective and considerate anthropologist based in the US about his impression of the conference, as he had explained that it was the first conference he had ever attended in Germany. He commented that it was an interesting experience, but that the discussions and topics were not really of much use to him as they were "nothing new," stating that "We had that [discussion] years ago." His remarks indicated an unconscious, linear idea of knowledge production, an understanding that I have encountered in several other discussions and that is not a notable exception. According to such statements, US and Anglophone discourse are regarded as "the latest" and most "up-to-date," hence "leading" in global knowledge production, with other scholars "following behind" or possibly even remaining in lower states of a supposed global, universal enlightenment—an understanding reminiscent of developmentalist discourse. Language is a key factor in this (re)creation of epistemological hierarchy and inequality. English is often considered to be the ultimate language of knowledge production, claiming a dominant position, which scholars in both Western academia and in more marginalized nodes of knowledge production are confronted with. Calling for scientific multilingualism to overcome this power imbalance, A. Suresh Canagarajah proposes that if "multilingualism is too much to ask for, mainstream journals should at least accept divergent English dialects as suitable for academic communication," as an "insistence on English is complicated for many periphery scholars not simply because English is a second or foreign language to them but because they widely use other (nativized) variants of English for their purposes" (2002, 301). I personally recall attending "Writing Academic English" courses during my graduate studies, being told to avoid "the common mistake of German scholars who write in English" by excessive use of the passive voice and writing overlong and complex sentences. Cutting long, German-style sentences apart by replacing commas with periods was, for example, part of the exercise. It is certainly beyond the scope of this article to discuss the influence of (writing in) English on the recreation of global academic hierarchy and knowledge production; however, its relevance cannot be neglected. Choices of language not only influence the way in which something

is written, but certainly also what conclusions are reached and which theories and concepts are relied on. Ipek Demir addresses the dominance of English and its implication for reproducing inequalities in this issue. Stating that the “globalization of English and the dominance of English-language cultural and literary products reproduce inequalities and asymmetries,” Demir discusses the “trade deficit” that exists in terms of the amount of literature that is (not) translated into English. Through one-way translation, she argues, asymmetries and modes of domination are exposed and reproduced. As there exist various modes of translating, this may even be the case when something is translated into English: for example, in “domesticating translation,” which refers to a process in which translated, marginalized languages and cultures “end up being made to be intelligible in the language of the culture of the dominant, namely the North.” This mode of translation hinders disruptions and suppresses differences. Through the example of the Kurdish diaspora and their translation of Kurdish struggles and history to “Northern” audiences, Demir emphasizes the relevance of “foreignizing translation,” a mode of translation that challenges hierarchical relationships and seeks epistemological change by not erasing and not smoothing over texts and values.

Making the effort to read “the latest,” often meaning Anglophone publications, is often expected of non-native English speakers, while it seems less commonly expected that Anglophone scholars know non-English publications. While there certainly exist notable exceptions, there remains the idea that anyone who wants to know “the latest” should read English publications as well as the few translated publications that have been accepted in the dominant canon. Despite all criticism and the “datedness of this theme ... the critique of Eurocentrism has not meaningfully reshaped or restructured the ways in which we theorize” (Alatas and Sinha 2017, 5) and shape canons (Dabashi 2015). Dominance in academic knowledge production is created through linearity and erasure, as Maria Lugones has discussed with regard to readings of history (2003, 45). Erasure and the non-recognition of the variety of knowledges produced in multiple nodes of the global academic network are not only troublesome for subalternized scholars, but also reduce the quality and potential of knowledge production around the globe. A. Suresh Canagarajah cautions:

Without the publishing industry opening up to off-networked scholars, the production of knowledge in the center will be narcissistic. The activity of center scholars will take place within narrow thought paradigms, nurturing discourses that are self-confirming and self-congratulatory ... Paradoxically, therefore, center academic institutions are themselves impoverished by their hegemony. It is important to realize that the damages in knowledge production are not limited to periphery communities. (2002, 254)

An awareness of this problem often leads to calls to integrate subalternized knowledges, nodes, and scholars into the dominant canon and to provide a plurality of selection. Highlighting the relevance of being able to choose, for example, Lugones calls for “ontological pluralism,” through which alternatives to dominant knowledge are provided (2003, 44). Similarly, Alatas requests “conscious attempts to engage in social scientific activity with a view to taking into account the world views” represented (1993, 333). In this context Gurminder Bhambra rightly cautions, however, that we should avoid generalizing the subalternized and that “engaging with different voices must move us beyond simple pluralism to make a difference to what was initially thought; not so that we come to think the same, but that we think differently from how we had previously thought” (2014, np).

To further the processes and practices of the Global South, inclusion and plurality of choice are necessary. This leads back to my initial question: How do you decide whom to include when publishing an edited volume, a special issue, or a conference when you cannot know the individual positionality of scholars through the unreliable system of judging by name or institution? Referring once more to the challenge of hosting the Global South workshop at my university and editing this special issue, I would like to stress that I sought to provide as much diversity as possible in the selection of articles, and hence to represent different positionalities. It proved almost impossible to facilitate the diversity I had hoped for. I constantly felt a lack of contributions from scholars based outside the dominant Euro-American node. I reminded myself that I should not commit the mistake of essentializing the Global South yet again in geographic terms.

I thought too of frustrations aired by colleagues in rather dominant positionalities, who had been in editing positions and had been “trying to include the Global South.” Commentary on how many hours one has invested in editing articles accepted for publication in order to include subalternized scholars can frequently be heard. I would like to emphasize that I am not devaluing or belittling this work; however, I would like to address how such discourse is often framed in narratives of effort and hardship, used as a means of creating personal symbolic capital. For example, in a recent informal conversation with a professor who serves as a book series editor for a renowned British publishing house, he expressed fatigue about his editing of “those” non-Euro-American submissions, stating that this extra work is unfair, as “we do not have anybody to re-write our papers for us.” Scholars and publishers alike reproduce this standard of the dominant publishing industry and reinforce views on “good writing” vs. “bad writing,” thereby reconstructing unequal publishing opportunities. The standard is based on a Northern, usually Anglophone academic habitus, which is falsely interpreted as universal and ignores the various academic cultures around the world. Any kind of scholarship that does not seem to be

in line with this particular way of writing, presenting, or hosting of academic events is considered as not “up to the standard.” Such views not only label different knowledge systems, practices, and actors of knowledge production as other, but also devalue and inferiorize them. Specific writing styles, such as personal essayist, are commonly dismissed as “typical” for a specific region and are often immediately deemed unpublishable in dominant academic journals or edited volumes. In this context, the system of refereeing, usually considered as a mode of ensuring the quality of publications, becomes a mode of normative gatekeeping, of rejecting standards and styles of writing that are considered “different” and “other.”⁶

Such evaluations lead to well-meaning educational measures, which always should be critically and carefully reflected and revised in order to not reproduce academic imperialism and academic dependency (Alatas 2003). For example, some Euro-American institutions organize and host “Academic Writing” workshops, to which—sometimes exclusively—scholars from subalternized nodes are invited to learn writing styles deemed “publishable.” Such approaches of inclusive scholarship may be valuable when they facilitate mutual learning. However, they tend to be framed in paternalistic discourse and practices, which only serve to generate symbolic capital for hegemonic institutions. Mere inclusion cannot be considered the solution through which multiple epistemologies are embraced and more balanced relationships in the global system of knowledge production are achieved (Alatas 1993). Inclusion always runs the risk of remaining selective, and selective inclusion becomes a means of retaining unequal power structures:

The political economy of literacy is such that the disadvantaged are not totally excluded from literate activity altogether. They are allowed to participate selectively. This way the center maintains a market for its literate products but does not let its monopoly get challenged by new written products from the periphery. (Canagarajah 2002, 211)

The process of “selectively publishing periphery writers and writing” has even shaped the allegedly postcolonial discourse in a version “tamed of its radicalism” (248). Diversification exceeds the mere inclusion of marginalized writers into already established modes of publication by for example, establishing independent journals or providing translations. Such diversification as well as an engagement with the existing diversity are inevitable necessities for more balanced relationships in global knowledge production.⁷

Conclusion

“If oppression theory is not liberatory, it is useless from the point of view of the oppressed person,” Lugones states (2003, 44), hence raising the question: What

is the use of the idea of the Global South, if all discussion and theorizing about it does not lead to change? In order to avoid becoming complicit in using the Global South as a label and means to maintain dominance in global networks of (academic) power, it is first necessary especially for scholars to refrain from its convenient, simplified use as a geographical metaphor or as a substitute for “Third World” or “Developing Countries.” Instead, the Global South should be considered a political consciousness, an engaged and possibly liminal practice through which global unequal power structures are actively restructured. For scholars in dominant nodes it is important to reflect on tendencies to universalize Western knowledge and knowledge practices, such as when organizing an academic event or publishing edited volumes. A diversified use of quotations in writing, including the works of non-canonized scholars, visualizes the collective practice of writing, hence the cumulative and transcultural modes of knowledge production. We should carefully reflect upon whose words we use in integral citations and how we construct our authorial selves in general. Must it always be the works of established scholars that are referred to in this way? Would it be possible to seek out non-canonized literature that could—at least additionally—be referred to? Citations, be they integral or non-integral, with an emphasis on either author or reported message, are never passive and insignificant acts. Particularly in the context of the neoliberalization of publishing industries and universities, citations are active choices, a means through which scholars are “able to display an allegiance to a particular community or orientation” (Hyland 1999, 342ff). Although certainly citations cannot be considered as sufficient as a means to subvert established hierarchies, they may form a starting point in forging the Global South as subversive practice.

Notes

1. The list of speakers can be found following this link: <http://gssc.uni-koeln.de/24395.html> (accessed January 12, 2018). Academic disciplines represented were, amongst others, Social Anthropology, Sociology, Political Geography, Romance Studies, History, Gender Studies, Linguistic and Literary Studies, and Art History.
2. Alfred Sauvy first referred to the term Third World in a French newspaper article titled “Trois Mondes, Une Planète” (April 14, 1952). In the Anglophone world, the concept of Third World was first promoted by Peter Worsley in the 1960s (1967, 1984).
3. See, for example, Marcelo C. Rosa’s “Theories of the South: Limits and Perspectives of an Emergent Movement in Social Sciences” (2014).
4. For the definition and analysis of these readings, see Schneider in this issue.
5. Anne Garland Mahler points out that when applying the concept of Global South, its “tricontinental roots” have to be kept in mind, which indicate the “enormous potential for opening communication between intellectual traditions that has often been stymied under the rubric of postcolonialism.” The Tricontinental Conference, which took place in 1966 in Cuba, united delegates from anti-colonial

liberation movements from eighty-two African, Asian, and Latin American nations, consolidating into an alliance called the “Organization of Solidarity with the People of Africa, Asia, and Latin America” (2015, 114). This political movement became highly influential in international political radicalism and may be regarded as forming “the ideological backbone of current conceptualizations of global subalterity such as the increasingly circulating notion of the Global South” (95).

6. This is not a novel aspect, as, for example, twenty-five years ago Alatas raised the question: “How and to what extent is indigenous creativity stifled by the standards, prerequisites, and valuations involved in international journal refereeing?” (1993, 333).

7. Writing cannot be considered the only mode of knowledge production, and such a claim would give way to a Eurocentric bias and a limited view of what may generally be understood as knowledge (Hountondji 1995, 1996 [1976]). As writing remains a primary means in the construction of inequalities in the current geopolitical reality of scholarship (Canagarajah 2002, 230), it is therefore focused upon in this introduction.

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