



## **INTELLECTUALS AND THE GLOBAL SOUTH**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper proposes a way of thinking about intellectuals that highlights intellectual labour, considers intellectuals as a workforce, and emphasises perspectives from the global South. The mainstream global economy of knowledge is outlined and alternative knowledge formations in the postcolonial world are identified. Principal groupings of intellectuals in the colonized and postcolonial world are indicated, and the new possibilities opened by Southern perspectives, especially in the Social Sciences, are explored.

**Keywords:** Global South, Intellectual Labour, Global Economy of Knowledge, Alternative Knowledge

### **INTRODUCTION: THINKING ABOUT INTELLECTUALS**

There is a tradition of thought that gives intellectuals a key role in social change, whether as prophets of moral regeneration or as a revolutionary vanguard. The most influential twentieth-century theorist of intellectuals, Antonio Gramsci (1957), saw different types of intellectuals as a key both to the stabilization of bourgeois class power, and to the emerging socialist challenge. Others saw intellectuals as the key to a scientific politics that would mediate class conflict and achieve reform, and that concept helped create the welfare state. More recently, the

large body of literature about the rise of a 'knowledge economy' or an 'information society' (Mattelart 2003) imagines a group who are the bearers of knowledge and who will play a strategic role in change. Sometimes this group is pictured as a 'new class', an emerging elite in modernity (Gouldner 1979).

These models of intellectuals as the bearers of social transformation have also been challenged, especially in Europe. A well-known argument by Bauman (1987) suggests a crisis in the role of cultural 'legislator' and counsels a more modest ambition as 'interpreter'.

These contending theories have one important thing in common: their arguments are focussed on the intellectuals of Western Europe and the United States. This is the global metropole, the centre of the old

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empires and the core region of the modern transnational economy. The metropole is the arena - usually unacknowledged - of the familiar debates in the Social Sciences about the new class, the intelligentsia, and the sociology of knowledge. But there is another story.

In 1977 Syed Hussein Alatas, a Malay sociologist at the University of Singapore, published a path breaking, polemical book called *Intellectuals in Developing Societies*. In 1976 Paulin J. Hountondji, a young philosopher from Benin in West Africa, published an even more controversial book about knowledge, translated into English as *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality*. Just a few years earlier, the sociologist and theologian Ali Shariati had delivered lectures at the reform institute Hosseiniyeh Ershad, later published as 'What Is to Be Done?', criticizing the major intellectual groups in Iranian society and proposing a radical agenda of higher education reform (Shariati 1986).

These very different texts, written in years when the 'Cultural Revolution' was still convulsing China and the first neoliberal regime in the world was being established through a bloody military coup in Chile, laid out issues that thinkers in a number of postcolonial societies had begun to debate. Among them were intellectuals' role in economic development and social transformation, their relations with postcolonial political elites, global differences among intelligentsias, the geopolitics of science, and the relationship between indigenous and 'Western' knowledge systems.

In this paper I hope to bring these streams of thought together, and reflect on the social conditions for de-colonial or post-colonial knowledges, emerging from the global South, to play a larger role in the global economy of knowledge.

## KNOWLEDGE WORK AND KNOWLEDGE WORKERS

The basis of this argument is that teaching, research, creative writing and so forth are all forms of *labour*. They can be understood in the same way as we understand other forms of labour - industrial, agricultural, managerial, etc. - in Industrial Sociology. Intellectual labour sustains an economy of knowledge, in which ideas and information circulate and knowledge is produced.

Those who produce this labour are part of a workforce of intellectual labourers, sometimes called knowledge workers, or intellectually-trained workers. They are engaged in specific labour processes, in which knowledge and other cultural materials are developed and transformed. These labour processes can be mapped empirically, as we showed in an Australian survey some years ago (Connell and Crawford 2007). There are debates about how they change: For instance, whether intellectual work is being automated, whether the workers are being deskilled, how they are controlled, etc.

This labour process is fundamentally collective. It is organized through institutions such as universities and research institutes, and informal collectivities such as networks and research teams. It is structured on a world scale, as I will show. It changes historically. Recently it has been changed by new technologies, especially digital technologies and the internet. Remote access to databases is changing the nature of scholarship, as we can recognize by noticing the way bibliographies are now compiled.

The intellectual workforce includes teachers and researchers, but it also includes a large number of 'support' workers - administrators, technicians, maintenance workers, clerical workers, etc. - who make the operations of universities and research centres possible.

Knowledge institutions are not static. They

have been undergoing political-economic changes which have accelerated as market mechanisms and neoliberal ideology have gained control over universities and colleges worldwide. In recent decades higher education has expanded dramatically. Experts speak of 'high participation' higher education systems (Marginson 2016), and there are now 200 million students in higher education globally. Governments have got this expansion on the cheap, through a process of privatization, both direct and indirect. There has been a huge growth of private colleges and universities, especially for-profit institutions, and most public universities too now charge heavy fees. This commodification of higher education has led directly to a huge growth of managerial power in universities and colleges.

This has changed the labour process for their workforce. A reliance on fee-paying students gradually shifts the curriculum towards vocational courses. Research increasingly depends on funding from business, and the potential to patent or otherwise market research discoveries. Managerial power has become embedded in computerized accounting systems that control personnel and manage performance. Corporate-style managements attempt to cheapen intellectual labour by wage cuts, casualization, and a large deterioration of staff/student ratios. In consequence there is a growth of distrust, and rising industrial conflict. The intellectual workforce in a number of countries has found it is capable of going on strike.

### **THE GLOBAL ECONOMY OF KNOWLEDGE AND THE RESEARCH-BASED KNOWLEDGE FORMATION**

In a process most clearly formulated in the later work of Hountondji (1997), the expansion of European empires generated a structural division of intellectual labor between periphery and metropole, a division that still operates. The colonized world was not only a source of material wealth for the metropole, but also

a source of *data*. Information of very diverse kinds was collected, often with the aid of indigenous knowledge workers, for shipment to the metropole.

The imperial centre aggregated data from different parts of the colonized world in libraries, scientific societies, universities, museums, botanic gardens, and research institutes—a process now automated in databanks. These institutions became the site of the *theoretical* moment in knowledge production. Here, research methods were formalized and routinized. Specialized workforces were created for producing and circulating empirical knowledge. Specialized means of communication, notably academic journals, were created. In the metropole, research was further transformed into applied sciences such as Engineering, Agronomy, and Medicine. In this applied form, knowledge was returned to the global periphery. Here it was used by colonial powers and, later, postcolonial states, in the mines, in agriculture, and in government.

In our time, this traffic continues. The global South is as vital a source of raw materials for the knowledge economy as it is for the material economy. It yields data for the new Biology, for Epidemiology, Pharmaceuticals, Astronomy, Social Science, Linguistics, Archaeology, and more. The South is, for instance, a key source of data for the giant quantitative models that are central to Climate Science, a relationship that can be seen in the famous reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

In this economy of knowledge, intellectual workers in the global periphery are pushed towards a particular cultural and intellectual stance. Hountondji calls this stance 'extraversion': Being oriented to authority external to your own society. It is reflected, in the simplest possible way, in citation patterns. Researchers in the global North usually cite other researchers in the global North,

often *only* researchers in the global North; researchers in the global South mainly cite researchers, and especially theorists, in the global North. But extraversion is expressed in many other ways, too: In academic travel, in appointments to jobs, in research practices, in publication preferences, and so on.

In this economy of knowledge, a central place is taken by a specific way of organizing knowledge that I call *the research-based knowledge formation*. By 'knowledge formation' I mean a socially organized body of information, concepts, methods, norms of truth, genres of communication, and applications; persisting through time, and capable of developing itself. A knowledge formation, in other words, is an episteme in its practical existence.

The research-based knowledge formation has a long history, but it took its modern form in the 19<sup>th</sup> century CE, when it was mapped by the French philosopher Auguste Comte, and institutionalized in a new type of university, which emphasized research.

Comte laid out a hierarchy of sciences based on their objects of knowledge and on the dependence of one science on another. In his scheme, the 'positive' sciences were five. Astronomy, Physics, and Chemistry all dealt with the inorganic world at different levels of complexity. In the organic world there were two levels: Physiology (what we call Biological Science) and Social Physics or Sociology (what we call Social Science). Before this sequence came Mathematics, on which all the rest depended. The result was six grand domains of knowledge, making a coherent, beautifully ordered curriculum.

This conception, though it has been steadily modified, was very powerful. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the idea of an ordered realm of the research-based knowledge could be taken for granted in the global metropole, and this was the framework that universities

needed. The research-based knowledge formation and the research university now developed together.

The research-based knowledge formation is public, in principle. Lectures and conferences are public events (especially with the audience on Twitter). Concepts and findings are always open to debate, and 'publication' is considered a vital step in research. There are no facts or doctrines known only to initiates. Advanced levels of knowledge may be difficult, but are not secret.

The public character of knowledge is often under pressure. Corporate interests are now entrenched in research publishing, and there is a struggle for open access. Religious and political authorities have often used their power to protect orthodox beliefs and the regime in power. The United States in the 1940s tried to keep secret its research for the atomic bomb, as all regimes that own atomic weapons still try to do. Other military applications of knowledge also are kept secret.

The research-based knowledge formation is constantly changing. It exists in its endless re-creation, in the process we call 'research'. It draws its authority, not from elders, traditions or foundational texts, but precisely from its capacity for invention and re-making. It is not by chance that media reporting of research constantly trumpets 'breakthroughs', nor that modern epistemology has been so fascinated by scientific revolutions. Knowledge workers themselves have an acute awareness of change. In the survey of knowledge workers in Australia mentioned above, we asked their reaction to the statement *In my field of work, knowledge and methods are changing rapidly*. Some 83% agreed and only 15% disagreed.

But if knowledge formation is constantly in a state of change, what reliance can be placed in it? The answer has to do with the collective character of the labour process. It is not just

one researcher, one project or one finding that represents the state of knowledge. Rather, it is a growing mass of findings produced by a whole workforce of researchers, and especially the way the findings are linked up, as fields of knowledge unfold and influence each other. The collective labour of research brings a social reality – knowledge formation as a whole – into existence, through historical time.

Some studies of academic life portray different disciplinary cultures in fields like Literature, Mathematics, Engineering, and Sociology – perhaps even exaggerating the differences. In turn, the disciplines have sub-divided themselves. The American Sociological Association currently has 52 specialized sections, from ‘Aging and the Life Course’ via ‘Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis’ and ‘Global and Transnational Sociology’ all the way to ‘Theory’.

Funding agencies such as the European Union have tried to counter this fragmentation by rewarding interdisciplinary projects. But that is a rather artificial response and may not last. Some fusions have appeared more organically, such as Physical Chemistry, Molecular Biology, and Climate Change Science. What holds knowledge formation together is the collective, historically unfolding process itself, the social logic of the labour that we call research. The element of anarchy and instability is not a weakness. It is inherent in a creative, democratic process of making, testing, and circulating knowledge.

The collective character of knowledge production makes nonsense of the ‘ratings’ of individuals or single institutions. As I have suggested above, the internet and databanks between them change the meaning of scholarship, of claims to intellectual expertise. There is a democratic potential in this change. The Internet, Wikipedia, Google, Wikileaks, and remote access to libraries and databases, do make knowledge more

widely available. But the Internet, notoriously, does not discriminate between sense and nonsense. It is loaded with falsehoods and pornography. Its practices of debate are highly abusive. It carries a massive volume of commercial exploitation, and that load is growing as corporations try to take over the on-line world.

The internet is now interwoven with neoliberal capitalism. Neoliberalism has deliberately broken down previous boundaries between private profit-making and public institutions in many spheres, including the production of knowledge. Corporate agendas massively influence biomedical research, to the point of corruption. Climate scientists are persistently attacked and discredited by the agents of polluting industries, especially oil and coal interests. This has been happening on so vast a scale that it has damaged the cause of environmental reform worldwide.

## **MULTIPLE KNOWLEDGE FORMATIONS**

Other knowledge formations existed before colonization, and other knowledge formations still exist. It has been argued that there is an ‘African’ knowledge system - or perhaps, multiple systems - independent of the ‘Western’ knowledge system (Odora Hoppers 2002). This is one example of a widespread argument that indigenous cultures have their own ways of knowing, which are simply different from Western ways. They are very much alive in the Americas, in Africa, in some parts of Asia, and in the Pacific (e.g. Smith 2012).

In Australia, for instance, indigenous knowledge held by Aboriginal people generally involves a specific relationship to the land, so it is strongly based in specific places. The ‘de-colonial’ school of thought in Latin America takes the contrast to an extreme, seeing an absolute opposition, an abyss, between the perspectives of the colonizing culture and the colonized.

The model of an indigenous knowledge formation is frequently offered as a retort to the imperialism of Western culture and the inequalities of the global economy of knowledge. This move has had a political impact, for instance in justifying land rights claims by indigenous peoples. Its consequences have not always been so happy. The attempt in South Africa to combat the HIV epidemic by means of local healing practices rather than antiretroviral drugs failed (it would have been better to use both together.)

There are other knowledge formations in the contemporary world that provide alternatives to the mainstream. They include alternative universalisms, such as the intellectual traditions of Islam, revived in intense debates about Islamic sciences and new applications of Islamic social thought (e.g. S. F. Alatas 2014). They include, too, the knowledge formations I have called 'Southern theory', generated in the colonial encounter and from the experience of postcolonial societies (Connell 2007a).

The mainstream economy of knowledge works on the assumption that there is one and only one episteme. There may be sharp conflicts within it, for instance between quantitative and qualitative method or structuralist and post-structuralist theory; but it is generally assumed they are contesting the same ground. There is a certain grandeur in this conception, but there are serious difficulties too. It is inconsistent with the sociology of knowledge. It is inconsistent with the experience of cross-cultural encounter. And because there is really only one body of social thought in a position to act globally as *The One*, in practice this epistemology provides an alibi for Eurocentrism.

Many people, therefore, have opted for a mosaic epistemology. In this conception, separate knowledge systems sit beside each other like tiles in a mosaic, each based on

a specific culture or historical experience. Most indigenous knowledge projects seem to presume local, at most regional, validity (see the African examples in Odora Hoppers 2002). Mosaic epistemology offers a clear alternative to Northern hegemony and global inequality, replacing the priority of one knowledge system with respectful relations among many.

However, a mosaic approach also faces difficulties, pointed out by Bibi Bakare-Yusuf (2004). Cultures and societies are not fixed in one posture. Pre-colonial cultures were not silos, but interacted with each other over long periods of time, absorbed outside influences, and had internal diversity. These arguments are reinforced when we recognize the massive disruption caused by colonialism and postcolonial power. Much contemporary research, outside the metropole, is done in conditions where "relative chaos, gross economic disparities, displacement, uncertainty and surprise" are the *norm*, not the exception (Bennett 2008, p. 7).

If there is to be a third possibility, it must be some kind of solidarity-based epistemology. This looks for the connections between knowledge projects, as much as the differences between them: what Gurminder Bhambra (2014) calls 'connected sociologies.' It is early days yet, but I think this is the direction in which we must search.

## **INTELLIGENTSIA OF THE SOUTH**

To make progress with the relationship between knowledge formations, we need to recall the argument made earlier in this paper. Producing knowledge is a form of labour, done by specific groups of workers in specific social contexts. Intellectual labour processes around the world were re-structured by colonialism, and are now being re-structured by neoliberal globalization. That re-structuring has marginalized the majority world, the global South, within a metropole-

dominated economy of knowledge. But it has not stopped the creativity of cultures and intellectuals across the global South.

The process of colonization creates different situations for intellectual work and different groups of intellectuals. Colonialism, though based on force, required an intellectual workforce to operate what Valentine Mudimbe in *The Invention of Africa* (1988) calls the 'colonizing structure' – controlling space, integrating the economy, and changing the natives' minds, tasks undertaken in all colonies across the world. This workforce was required to maintain solidarity among the settler population and to adapt metropolitan culture to colonial conditions.

These jobs were done by missionaries, teachers, surveyors, agronomists, engineers, geologists, ethnographers, poets, and journalists, often born in the colonies. To use the language of Spanish America, these are the *creole intelligentsia*, an interesting and varied group. Examples are Sor Juana, the great 17th century poet of Mexico; Thomas Jefferson, revolutionary and slave-owner of Virginia; Rudyard Kipling, story-teller and ideologue of British India; and Alfred Deakin, journalist, historian, and second Prime Minister of federated Australia.

Creole intellectuals apply the culture of the metropole in new lands, and often have an intense engagement with fine details of this culture. An example is the technical virtuosity of the Mexican poet Sor Juana. She was extremely skilful with abstruse literary knowledge and complex forms of baroque verse in Spanish – as Octavio Paz (1988) describes in his biography of her. But these intellectuals' relationship with the metropole is not a simple one. There is a pattern of dependence and a sense of inferiority. Yet it is possible for violence in the periphery, or tension with the metropole, to push part of the creole intelligentsia, like Thomas Jefferson, into outright opposition to the imperial centre.

A second group are the intellectuals of colonized societies whose position and influence was radically undermined by colonization and later by neo-colonial modernization. I will call these groups *indigenous intelligentsias*. The Muslim *ulama* of Arabic and Persianate societies, the Brahmin intellectuals of India, and the mandarin class of neo-Confucian China are the best known examples. The poets and technologists of sub-saharan Africa, the architects and scribes of Central America, the elders of Aboriginal communities in pre-colonial Australia are others.

Over long historical periods these intellectual workers had created the extraordinary wealth and diversity of cultures that European expansion encountered. These cultures became the subject-matter of the metropole's scholarship and cultural anthropology, the knowledge project criticized in Edward Said's famous book *Orientalism* (1978).

A search for 'tradition' or the 'wisdom of the ancestors' is an understandable reaction to colonialism's fierce denigration of the culture of the colonized. But as Hountondji shows in *African Philosophy*, such versions of indigenous knowledge reproduced the gaze of the colonizer on the colonized. They treated colonized cultures as traditional, fixed in the past, and marked by 'primitive unanimity', the assumption that all natives think the same way.

But the working of colonialism irreversibly reshaped the colonized society. With this, the conditions of intellectual work also changed. The patterns of knowledge and creativity had to change. Advantaged groups among the colonized moved into the institutions that delivered power and wealth – government, the military, business, and sometimes the church. Epeli Hau'ofa in *We Are the Ocean* (2008) notes how in Pacific island societies, indigenous language and culture have become the preserve of the poor and marginalized.

Meanwhile a new regional ruling class has formed around the post-colonial state and the aid agencies, banks, and other institutions of globalization.

Many intellectuals of colonized societies therefore turned to the task of re-forming their cultures, learning from the colonizers, and building new perspectives on the world. Mahatma Gandhi, famously, said that he discovered the principles of nonviolence in Christianity, not in Indian tradition. If that is true, it was an astonishing and perceptive reading of the society that, at the time, ruled India, and South Africa, by violence. Gandhi's principled opposition to racism and imperial power provided inspiration to anti-colonial struggles around the world, and as Vinay Lal (2002) argues, still provides bases for an alternative universalism.

I call these groups the *intelligentsias of change*. Their strategies were bound to be contested. A notable example is the bitter controversies in which Sayyid Jamal ud-Din al-Afghani was involved, as a modernizer of Islamic thought in the second half of the 19th century CE. Al-Afghani (1968) developed a powerful Islamic critique of imperialism. He also urged Muslims to take up modern science, advising the *ulama* to study electricity, steam power, the phonograph, and the camera. This was not universally welcomed!

A more tragic example was the fate of another notable writer, Kartini in Java. At the turn of the 20th century CE, she too hoped to modernize a Muslim society, changing women's situation by means of education. Her project was blocked both by the colonial state and by local traditionalism, including family pressures that unintentionally led to her death in childbirth. But her work became famous after her death (Kartini 2014).

The *intelligentsias of change* became vital to colonial liberation movements. With leadership and inspiration from intellectuals

like Gandhi, Rizal, and Nkrumah, resistance movements shattered the French, Dutch, Spanish, and British empires in Africa and Asia, as the creole leaders of the late 18th and early 19th century – Jefferson, Washington, Bolivar, San Martín - had shattered the English and Spanish empires in the Americas.

But after independence, intellectuals had to imagine and build a post-colonial social order. The creole intellectuals of settler colonies were strikingly unable to fashion inclusive societies with a respected place for indigenous peoples and cultures. The results, at their worst, were new imperialism and Apartheid. Indigenous societies in settler-colonial states such as Australia and Argentina have never had even temporary relief from the pressure of the colonizing structure.

The modernizing intellectuals of indigenous-majority countries also had to imagine new social orders, including new educational and cultural projects. This proved difficult in the face of poverty, global capitalism, and neo-colonial violence. Moeletsi Mbeki's *Architects of Poverty* (2009) is one of a number of studies that trace how the hopeful independence-era projects of social and cultural development in Africa ran into a morass of military coups, cold-war subversion by the United States, exploitation by transnational corporations, and entrenched corruption of governing elites. Hussein Alatas' picture of post-colonial political elites in South-East Asia, in *Intellectuals in Developing Societies*, is no more flattering.

A special group among the intellectuals of change are the expatriate intellectuals, who have travelled to the global North and now live and work there. The growth of such a group is a necessary consequence of the global economy of knowledge, and is one of the ways this economy prepares its own transformation. Expatriate intellectuals often keep an active connection with their country of origin, and have a consciousness of the inequalities and



exclusions, as well as the connections, in the global system. It is not surprising that some important critics of Northern dominance in the global knowledge system have emerged among expatriate intellectuals. They play a linking role that points to new possibilities in the way knowledge is organized on a world scale.

This sketch of intellectual groups in the postcolonial world is only an outline. The realities are complex, and intellectual workers take many different paths, as can be seen in close-focus studies (e.g. Connell 2007b). For all of them, however, the global structures of knowledge matter, and shape the situations they face.

### NEW POSSIBILITIES FOR KNOWLEDGE

Broadly it is the intelligentsias of change who have been producing, around the majority world, new knowledge and new ways of thinking. These provide the bases for reform of the global economy of knowledge. The amazing fertility of Southern thought is what we now have to understand, and build on. In the Social Sciences, it is documented in texts like Farid Alatas' *Alternative Discourses in Asian Social Science* (2006), my book *Southern Theory*, Sujata Patel's *International Handbook of Diverse Sociological Traditions* (2010), and more.

Let me illustrate this briefly from two fields of knowledge. Gender Studies is thought of as a European and US creation. There is in fact a rich body of ideas about gender relations and social change from feminists in the colonized world, for more than a 100 years. Pioneers such as Aisha Taymour in Egypt, Kartini in Java, and He-Yin Zhen in China, were contemporary with the woman suffrage movement in the metropole.

In more recent times, superb work has been produced by thinkers such as Heleieth Saffioti in Brasil, whose powerful book *Women in Class Society*, written in the 1960s, was

published *before* the main texts of the Women's Liberation movement in the global North. Equally remarkable is the work of Bina Agarwal in India, whose key text *A Field of One's Own* appeared in 1994. This book is an amazing synthesis of Economics, Sociology, and Development Studies, opening up issues about gender and land rights, the environment, and the role of the state. It is one of the great classics of modern feminist thought.

In light of what I have said about the global economy of knowledge, it will not surprise readers that these intellectuals of change are almost never discussed as important theorists in accounts of Gender Studies written in the global North.

My second example concerns neoliberalism, i.e. free-market fundamentalism, currently the world's dominant political-economic ideology. The usual story of neoliberalism gives a central place to Northern right-wing intellectuals such as Friedrich von Hayek and Milton Friedman, and sees the key issue as their attack on government regulation and the growth of the welfare state in the global North.

In fact, the first thoroughly neoliberal regime in the world was in the far South, the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile. Neoliberalism's rise in the world actually had a great deal to do with the re-shaping of global trade, and new development strategies in the South. It is thinkers from Africa, such as the Egyptian Marxist economist Samir Amin, and from Latin America, such as the 'structuralist' school of Political Economy, who have shown how neoliberalism operates as a distinctive re-making of *global* capitalism. It produces a new pattern of dependency for most of the global South (Dados and Connell 2018).

In his famous essay *The Modern Prince*, Antonio Gramsci argued that in modern politics the protagonist is not 'the individual hero' but has to be 'the political party', a collective organ of ideas and action. The

principle applies to intellectual work. The intellectual as individual hero is to a great extent a myth, the reality – in all knowledge formations – is an extended, collective social process of knowledge production.

In developing countries, most social research is dependent on NGOs, a point strongly made by Thandika Mkandawire in his book *African Intellectuals* (2005). This means, generally, under-funded research on immediate practical problems. A decline of theoretical imagination is likely, in an environment that values short-term 'solutions' that do not challenge the wealthy and powerful.

The rise of neoliberalism has finally refuted the idea, current in the global North from the 1930s to the 1970s, that intellectuals were becoming a new dominant class. Clearly, contemporary global capitalism is not controlled by intellectuals! It is controlled by owners of great wealth, and managers ambitious for great wealth, who rub shoulders with neoliberal state managers, and authoritarian political leaders, at the pinnacles of global power.

Yet the bases for existence of intelligentsias continue to grow. The percentage of literate people in the world has never been higher. That has been UNESCO's strategy for half a century, and developing countries and donors have invested massively in basic education. In particular, girls' educational participation and women's literacy have risen across the world, and women intellectuals have become more numerous and more famous.

We must also recognize that striking cultural movements have emerged, which challenge the Northern-dominated politics of knowledge. The Muslim revival is perhaps the most globally influential, from the time of al-Afghani to the present. It has both revived old traditions of Islamic scholarship and created new forms of modernity. Other examples are the 'African Renaissance' project, the 'de-colonial'

critique in Latin America, the 'Kaupapa Maori' indigenous knowledge movement in Aotearoa New Zealand, and the Aboriginal art and land rights movements in Australia.

There are also new kinds of countervailing networks, among social movement activists and intellectual workers outside the mainstream economy of knowledge. These can generate radical knowledge projects from the global South. A notable example comes from South Africa, described by the German sociologist Wiebke Keim (2009): The growth of radical Industrial Sociology. This intellectual movement was linked with anti-Apartheid social movements that provided key audiences beyond academia. Internationally, the World Social Forum brought some of these movements together. Others overlap with United Nations activities, e.g. in anti-violence work and HIV/AIDS work. There is another set of international networks embodying feminist knowledge projects.

Many who have written about intellectuals assume there must be a certain oppositional quality in intellectual work. They associate intellectuals with critique, whether of ruling classes or ruling ideas. The growth of the knowledge economy in one sense undermines critique, when organized knowledge is integrated into the power structure and profit-making of the capitalist order. But it also creates new possibilities and means of critique, such as the international networks just mentioned. And Gramsci's argument applies forcibly here. It is not the heroic individual intellectual who counts for most. Rather it is the network, the milieu, the 'invisible college', the intellectual movement, the connection with movements and counter-publics.

A striking example is provided by the UN Economic Commission for Latin America, known in Spanish and Portuguese by the famous acronym CEPAL. In the 1950s and 1960s, led by Raúl Prebisch with contributors

like the development economist Celso Furtado and Fernando Cardoso (later president of Brazil), CEPAL became the base for a new development strategy, almost a new kind of Social Science. Its influence is still felt in Latin American debates, half a century later (Kay 1989).

The collective character of intellectual labour defines a vital element in the modern work of critique. To be effective, critical intellectuals must put in effort to sustain the network or the collective, to foster the intellectual work of others. There is an educational, nurturing and supportive role which is at odds with the ego-centrism implied in older models of the intellectual.

Recognizing the intellectual work of the global South, moving beyond the Northern-centred economy of knowledge, requires a relation between knowledge systems that is neither resentful subordination nor icy, distant co-existence. As Hountondji puts it, the new relationship involves critical validation of endogenous knowledge as well as critique of the dominant knowledge system.

I would put it another way. As I have argued in *Southern Theory*, and as Colin McFarlane (2006) also argues in a valuable paper called 'Crossing Borders', there has to be a mutual learning process. Gurminder Bhambra (2014) speaks of 'connected sociologies'. Chilla Bulbeck's *Re-Orienting Western Feminisms* (1998) thinking about the relationship between feminist thought in different parts of the world, speaks of 'braiding at the borders'.

Crucially, this means a collective learning that happens at the level of knowledge systems, not just individuals. A necessary condition is a relationship of recognition. Noel Pearson (1997), a prominent indigenous intellectual in Australia, has observed that 'Native Title' is not a concept in Aboriginal law, nor is it a concept in European law. It is, rather, a recognition concept, which arises in the

space between the two systems and allows them to interact. Specifically, this concept allows a settler society's law to recognize a certain kind of rights.

Lack of recognition has been normal in the ideologies of colonialism and in the sciences produced in the metropole. However, recognition of the multiple forms of knowledge is growing. Sometimes it takes toxic forms, as when transnational pharmaceutical companies trawl indigenous botanical knowledge looking for drugs they can patent. But there are also more positive forms, including cross-cultural discussions, and sometimes courses, in universities; the growing literature of post-colonial studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences; and the complex knowledge projects of transnational social movements such as feminism.

These are still limited changes. Whether they will find counter-publics on a large scale is still to be seen. About 40 years ago, the Iranian radical sociologist and theologian Ali Shariati, an important figure in opposition to the Shah's authoritarian regime, developed not only an agenda for a new centre of Islamic science, but also a novel theory of intellectuals (Shariati 1986). One of his most interesting ideas was the concept of *rushanfekr*. This meant a type of intellectual who remained connected with a popular audience, and who took responsibility for articulating possible futures for the society, but who (unlike 'vanguard' models of intellectuals) was not in search of political power. Shariati pictured the *rushanfekr* as an individual. But given the way most intellectual labour is socially organized today, it is possible that this function too has to be performed collectively.

Intellectuals are not a new ruling class, not the prophets of a new world, not the mainspring of a new economy, and not eternal and ineffectual critics. But perhaps intellectual workers as a group have a little of all those possibilities. Intellectuals are important in

the contemporary world, but intellectuals and intellectual work have changed. The old stories are not adequate. New understandings and new possibilities are emerging, and those too are contradictory. If the world destroys itself by nuclear war or catastrophic climate change, intellectuals will have had a hand in it. It is up to us to see that the more humane and democratic possibilities prevail.

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