



## ***'Epistemic Coyotismo' and Transnational Collaboration Decolonizing the Danish University***

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**Abstract:** In the Danish university, outlooks on the countries of the South and issues of development are strongly conditioned by hegemonic perspectives marked by coloniality. Although, in an era of neoliberal university reform, decolonial critique of dominant forms and institutions of knowledge is a marginal pursuit, the author draws on the experience of the collective *Andar Descolonizando*, based at Roskilde University, to suggest some ways in which decolonizing critique can be trained on the university institution itself and its "position within global articulations of power." Such critical work, aiming in particular at epistemic racism, can be accomplished through what the author calls, with Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "epistemic coyotismo," that is, introducing into the discussion theories and perspectives that are generally excluded from academia—thereby causing them to be recognized at least, if not openly accepted, in pursuit of decolonizing forms of collaboration with social movements in the South.

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The point of departure in this paper is a project of North-South collaboration whose aim is to work towards the decolonization of knowledge. This includes the decolonization of education in general, and the university specifically. The project was initiated by the collective *Andar Descolonizando*, a loosely organized group of scholars and activists from Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Denmark, Palestine, Sweden, Uruguay and Chile.<sup>1</sup> Our work aims to consolidate a decolonizing form of cooper-

ation between institutions of higher education in the North as well as in the South.<sup>2</sup> In

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<sup>1</sup> The Collective *Andar Descolonizando* (CAD) came together in 2009 as an independent, non-profit and nongovernmental organization whose main activities involve transdisciplinary and intercultural research and practice aiming at decolonization. Its work includes holding seminars, workshops, colloquiums and exhibits and preparing publications, in collaboration with other groups with similar concerns internationally. Its members are researchers from different geographic, academic and activist backgrounds. The CAD currently works under the auspices of the Intercultural Studies Research School at the Department of Culture and Identity at Roskilde University in Denmark.

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this paper, I present my own theoretical and practical perspectives concerning the problems that this initiative addresses and the conditions it seeks to change. I do so from my position of being a Colombian-Danish scholar working at a Danish university. More specifically, I present my considerations concerning the ways in which North-South collaboration can contribute to decolonizing universities in the North, such as those of Denmark.

As I see it, the initiative of the *Collective Andar Descolonizando* is crucial for addressing the problems of intellectual and institutional colonialism (Fals-Borda, 1981) and coloniality (Quijano, 2000) both in the North and in the South. Given the different structural and historical positions of Northern and Southern countries, one could argue that addressing these problems in both geopolitical coordinates at the same time is impossible, and even undesirable. Contrary to these claims, however, mine is that such an approach is indispensable since the historical and structural positions of North and South are mutually constitutive. To substantiate this, I have structured the paper as follows: in the first section I provide a short introduction to the current state of affairs concerning the university in Denmark and examine the debates surrounding the recent Danish university reform, implemented in 2003. In the second section, I situate the Danish university within global articulations of power, which I describe as global apartheid. I criticise the Danish resistance to the new university reforms for being grounded on colonial premises, the same premises that make possible the existence of global apartheid. The third section deals with the relation-

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<sup>2</sup> In May 2009, the CAD held a seminar on “Transnational forms of cooperation and intercultural dialogue” in collaboration with the “Citizen Participation Section” of the office of the vice-president of Roskilde University. The next event planned involves work with indigenous movements of the Mapuche in Chile.

ship between the Danish university and Danish development initiatives that seek to provide ‘social capacity building’ and ‘help for self-help’ to developing countries. Opposing the idea that Denmark needs to help the developing countries to become *like* Denmark, I claim that the Danish universities are in urgent need of decolonization. It is on the basis of this realization that North-South collaboration can attain a vital and transformative dimension. In the fourth section, I argue for the need to consistently practice epistemic *coyotismo*, that is, to introduce theories and ontologies that are otherwise excluded from academia. In the concluding section I try to delineate some principles for decolonizing action following the analysis of crisis outlined in the paper. I argue that because of this complexity, we must find through practice the way to act to counter global apartheid, hence the name *Andar Descolonizando*.

## II. CONSERVATIVE RESISTANCE IN THE DANISH UNIVERSITY

Within the contemporary Danish university there is a strong discursive resistance<sup>3</sup> to neoliberal university reform measures. These demands concern the application of knowledge to corporate interests, the dissemination of research, increased cooperation with the private sector, and other initiatives aimed at homogenizing research and teaching prac-

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<sup>3</sup> By ‘discursive resistance,’ I mean to emphasise that resistance among the academic staff remains at the discursive level. Indeed, the most common expressions of this criticism are to be found in blogs, newspaper articles and op-eds, and sometimes in the recollection of signatures against some new development (laws, firings, financial cuts). This does not mean that resistance to the university reforms does not happen in practice—indeed it does, but to my knowledge only in the form of individual practices of resistance such as individual cases being brought to the unions, slowness in providing information required by the increased bureaucracy, and the like.

tices. Critics of the reform rightly claim that its aim is to insert the university in the global market and favors elitist forms of knowledge in conformity with the neoliberal agenda (Sørensen, 2007). The Danish reforms follow the general trend in Europe in the wake of the Bologna Convention by seeking to “renew” the university to face the “challenges” posed by “globalization” and the so-called information society (Lundvall, 2006). In the language of such university reform, globalisation encompasses only the hegemonic forms of production of globalisation: what Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2002) has termed *globalised localism*. This means that counter-hegemonic forms of globalization are made invisible from the outset and the hegemonic neoliberal form of globalization is regarded as the *natural* order (Lander, 2008).

Publicly, criticism of the Danish university reform centers for the most part on defending the university as a democratic site with a vast diversity of research expertise where scholars have until now enjoyed a high degree of freedom in their research.<sup>4</sup> According to one of the most outspoken critics of the reform, Professor of Nordic Studies Sune Auken, the university must return to its conservative values. As he declared in an interview:

When I use the expression ‘conservative,’ I do so because those were the values that had to be defended against the Marxism of the 70s—openness and loyalty to society, and the fact that criticism that comes from the university *is not* subversive nor revolutionary. It is criticism aimed at adjusting and correcting already existing flaws [in society].<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Most notable in this context is the conglomeration of critics to the university reforms in the blog: <http://professorvael-de.blogspot.com/>

Sune Auken’s position expresses a basic premise of many defenders of the Danish university against governmental “innovation” plans: that the university has traditionally been one of the most *independent, critical* and *scientific* in the world. This idea is one expression of a broader conception in the Danish imaginary according to which nothing is structurally wrong in Denmark and therefore radical changes make no sense. Thus, the crux of Auken’s remark is that the criticism that comes from the university does not need to aim for structural change (it is not subversive or revolutionary); rather, its aims are to provide knowledge to correct the flaws that might still exist in a society that is fundamentally good.

However, Auken’s point is not that there was nothing wrong with the Danish university prior to the reforms. In his recently published *Brain-dead: A Defence of the Conservative University* (Auken, 2010) he stresses the need for change in the Danish university. However, such changes must take into account the fact that the role of the university has traditionally been to *serve the interests of society* and *guaranteeing diversity* of research. Contrary to what the government seems to think, then, the university has traditionally worked according to conservative values. In many respects, Auken’s criticism is on target, and as mentioned before, it summarizes the main arguments to be found in the academic environment against the university reform.

Indeed, if we take the nation-state as the site for analysis of Denmark, the country appears to be (or to have been) the democratic welfare-paradise that critics like Auken refer to: high tax-rates provide a solid basis of state support to health care,

<sup>5</sup> My translation. Sune Auken, interviewed in the newspaper of the University of Copenhagen, *Universitetsavisen*, 24 February 2010. Retrieved from <http://uniavisen.dk/kultur/auken-overgaar-de-borgerlige-i-borgerlighed> in May 2010. Emphasis in original.

infrastructure and education. Danish universities have until recently enjoyed a real autonomy from the state despite state ownership, and the logic of authority within the universities has not been underscored by neoliberal logics of management and efficiency (Auken, 2010). Danish universities have been autonomous with regard to the private sector as well: according to OECD figures for 1999, Denmark was one of the OECD countries that received the least funding from corporations based in the country (OECD report cited in Lundvall, 2006:11).

Notwithstanding, the analytical category of the nation-state, favored by Auken in his analysis, allows only for a partial view of the current crisis of the university. His book thus does not take into account or question the ways in which the university is inscribed in global articulations of power; it shows no concern for its exclusionary practices. Auken instead defends the importance of the conservative understanding of the university, an understanding that begins with the assumption that society (Danish society, though he does not make it explicit) is a collectivity and a social contract operating in the best of all parties. Interestingly, Auken does not include in his reflections the urgent question concerning the relationship between the Danish society and its immigrant population. Neither does he discuss how the 'conservative' values of the university that he is defending might have been complicit in the context of legitimating the racist legislative measures currently adopted by the Danish government. Instead, according to Auken, the idea is not to break down the "internal balance" (sic) of society. Rather, the university must "guarantee access to the best possible understanding of an array of issues that are relevant for the citizens, and it must guarantee *unbiased* and *objective* criticism of problems in society" (Auken, 2010:19). Criticism must, however, remain loyal to society. Aside from displaying great indif-

ference to excluded groups 'in society,' which cannot be accounted for within the frames of the 'conservative' university—here most notably the Muslim population who increasingly face structural and social harassment and racism both in the context of knowledge construction in the academic world, and in society in general. Auken confuses these conservative values with objectivity. In his view knowledge based on conservative values is not political, and racism and exclusion are apparently non-existent. The conservative values he describes are solidly rooted in an *a priori* rejection of the relevance of power relations *within* the University, *within* the nation-state, and in relation to global structures of power. As I will suggest in what follows, an effective resistance to the university reform must leave these premises aside. Besides being flawed in themselves, they are ultimately framed within the same reason that they seek to criticise (cf. Santos, 2007).

### III. THE DANISH COLONIAL MIND AND GLOBAL APARTHEID

As argued before, it is impossible to properly account for any nation-state without taking into account global articulations of power. Thus, the crisis of the Danish university cannot be completely understood, nor effectively criticised, if it continues to be conceptualised solely at the level of the nation-state. Indeed, one of the basic premises in studies of the nation is that nations cannot be studied without taking into account the (seemingly) 'external' factors at play. This has to do with the processes of interaction, conflict and exploitation, which are at the basis of the formation and perpetuation of any nation-state, as well as the processes of othering and identification attached to the construction of the imagined communities of the nation. In the case of the Americas, Aníbal Quijano has shown how colonialism and

coloniality are central elements in these processes of nation-making (2000a). Coherently, when looking at European nations, one must also take into account their participation in the "larger European enterprise of colonialism [...] and the extent to which colonial cultural priorities, necessitated by the execution of power in order to keep control, fed back into the nascent nationalism of late 18th and first half of 19th century European nation-states" (Jensen, 2010:14-15).

The Danish position within the global articulations of power has historically been marginal: as a country undoubtedly placed in the second modernity's centre of the world-system, Denmark, together with most of Scandinavia, has had a relatively marginal geopolitical position since the early 1800s (Jensen, 2010). This position in the periphery of the centre notwithstanding, Danish history and society are inseparable from that of the rest of Europe and its colonies. In cultural terms, and in terms of knowledge production, Denmark has imported and culturally translated the European system into itself (Jensen, 17). Among other things, this means that the global racial hierarchies that were constituted with the Spanish Catholic monarchy's destruction of Al-Andalus and the so-called discovery of America, and whose legacy are still with us today, were and are important in the Danish context too, in the society that Auken speaks of, including the university. In coherence with this history, epistemic racism, including epistemic Islamophobia, continue to be foundational and constitutive of the knowledge produced in the social sciences and the humanities in the Danish university (see also Grosfoguel, 2010).

The university has largely been constituted as a site of formation of elites—indeed transnational elites—who have for the most part justified and continuously elaborated coloniality as a global organizing principle. The university is, indeed,

inscribed in what Santiago Castro-Gómez has called "the triangular structure of coloniality: coloniality of being, coloniality of power, and coloniality of knowledge" (Castro-Gómez, 2007:79-80)<sup>6</sup>. It is beyond the scope of this paper to examine all the ways in which this takes place. I want to highlight, however, that this triple form of coloniality makes possible what I call global apartheid. Global apartheid is used in some branches of international relations and political theory to describe the current world-order, and to underscore the racist dimensions, which are fundamental to this world order (see, for example Kohler, 1995; Dalby, 1998; and Harrison, 2002). As I use it here, global apartheid is an effect of coloniality, dates back to the 16th century, and has an important element which regards the control by some (westernized) populations of the future of the majority of the world population (see Suárez-Krabbe, 2010; cf. Césaire, 2006; Kohler, 1995; and Quijano, 2000a; 2000b). In the following sections, I turn to highlighting the dimensions of bordering and control of global apartheid in the context of the university.

Certainly, when looked upon from the perspective of coloniality, the ways in which the Danish university works in the service of global apartheid are clear. It continues to be one of the core filters through which many of the potential members of the transnational elites—the experts—must pass. This is the case of university both in the North and the South, although in different ways, and from different hierarchical positions. It is crucial to take transnational elites into account in analysing global articulations of power and the university's role in these, since they are by and large the ones who define the terms upon which global society is organised (see Avilés, 2008; Fotopoulos, 2002; Robinson, 2007; 2010). These elites define and classify non-elites in terms of their commercial

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<sup>6</sup> My translation.



applicability for the global neoliberal market (Escobar, 1995; Lander, 2008). The major organisations within which the members of the transnational elites move are the UN, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the European Community, international or national development institutions, the mass media, multinational corporations, and the university. The university educates the vast majority of the members of these transnational elites, and in many cases it works in close cooperation with the other institutions mentioned.

In all these organisations, the expressions of global apartheid are visible; there are numerous means of border control, patrolling, surveillance, and care for ‘public relations’ at work in the interplay between them (Kohler, 1995; Dalby, 1998). As with most other universities, in the case of the Danish university, *border control* happens for instance through the definition of specific requirements for research projects in calls for funding that fit the overall project of the transnational elites (Rossiter, 2010:4). *Patrolling* occurs through the criteria established within the logo- and Eurocentric logic to determine what is scientific and useful knowledge (including so-called ‘indigenous knowledges’) and what is not, among others in the system of ranking of universities and journals that privilege “western knowledge traditions and the hegemony of global English” (Rossiter, 2010:6). *Surveillance* happens, for instance, through standards that require faculty to publish in specific journals, most of which are managed by border patrollers. Finally, the *public relations* aspect, which has to do with the university’s image to the outside and inside, is well illustrated by what Balibar has termed ‘racism without race’ (quoted in Rossiter, 2010), and in the incorporation of dissent; that is, the inclusion of ‘outsiders’ who are loyal to the colonial project and whose dissent is tolerated as long as it is not seen as a serious threat to

the status quo.

These mechanisms of patrolling and control in their current acute form have been a reality in countries in the South for a longer period of time than in the North. Additionally, conditions in the South are framed by “the dominance of foreign financial control, the role of aid donors and puppet regimes” (Dalby, 1998:138). In the case of the university in the South, the puppet regimes are constituted by university faculty who, despite finding themselves physically in the South, have practiced brain drain—that is, people who are intellectually dependent and uncritical of the excluding practices of the knowledge they have adopted from the North; they are intellectually colonized (Fals-Borda, 1981:79). The dependency upon funding from the North—often in the form of development aid—has served to manage research to fit the interests of the transnational elites. Southern elites have often been docile to these colonialist practices, and have instead aimed at being included in the transnational elites.

Fals-Borda (1981:80) has characterised the Southern intellectual elites’ docility to colonialist practices as ‘spiritual brain-drain’: Despite their physical presence in the South, scholars are not only intellectually colonised; they are complicit with ‘intellectual colonialism.’ Fals-Borda’s characterisation emphasises the fact that the filters of the university are constituted by epistemic violence, a violence that nevertheless remains ‘hidden’ due to the logocentric and Eurocentric character of the main part of the knowledge produced and taught in the universities around the world (Castro-Gómez, 2007; Lander, 2008). Significantly, an argument like Auken’s on the need to preserve the conservative values of the Danish university is a clear exercise of epistemic violence. It evades the ways in which Western knowledge construction and colonialist practices have violated and sought to exterminate other knowledges by

insisting on the universal validity of their own provincial criteria and on the 'natural' order of global capital (Lander, 2008, see also Grosfoguel, 2010). This is, indeed, a constitutive element of Western knowledge construction since the 15th and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries (Dussel, 1995; Castro-Gómez, 2007; Grosfoguel, 2010). Seen from this perspective, Auken's statement is an inherently reactionary defence of the global apartheid system, and should not be taken as valid. Besides reflecting a limited knowledge of the historical, social, political and economic contexts in which the university has played and continues to play an important role, the argument is unethical and epistemicidal. This is a serious problem, and there is thus an urgent need of raising the awareness of Danish scholars on these matters. Unfortunately, it is highly improbable that any funding agency or international development institution will finance such an awareness raising campaign just yet. For these reasons, other fields of action for the decolonization of knowledge need to be found. Before turning to these fields of action, I will in the next section make a brief detour into the relationship between the Danish university and development efforts in Denmark in order to exemplify the dominant ways in which North-South cooperation is envisioned.

#### IV. DEVELOPMENT AND DECOLONIZATION

Denmark has a long tradition of development work in the South. After World War II, the Scandinavian countries have led an interventionist policy of development aid based on the idea that their egalitarian welfare model was too good not to be shared—thus the need to export it through development aid (Jensen, 2010:19). In Denmark at least, this idea nevertheless changed with the rise of the European Union and the increasing dismantling of

the welfare-model (ibid). However, these recent changes in Danish development policies are but variations of the interventionist theme, and reflect the changing ways in which transnational elites legitimise the triangle of coloniality and re-organise accordingly.

In the context of the relationship between the Danish university and Danish development initiatives and policies, these colonial continuities are clear. The governments' new strategy for development, just like the university reforms, has met plenty of discursive resistance among intellectuals and practitioners. Indeed, the development strategy and the university reforms are both coherent with neoliberal ideology and are useful tools in strengthening global apartheid. However, as with the university, there seems to be a general consensus among Danes that Danish developmental efforts are positive from the outset (and might subsequently be corrupted, but only *after* leaving Danish hands). There is thus no need to question these fundamentally. This idea is an extension of the idea of Denmark as democratic, egalitarian welfare-paradise, as mentioned previously. Many of the people who work with development (as practitioners, analysers, fundraisers etc.) endorse the idea that, since Denmark enjoys such good conditions; it is the obligation of Danes to help out in other less fortunate places—a variation on the white man's burden.

Following this logic, many Danish development students and practitioners do acknowledge some of the structural flaws in development work—for example, the idea of transference of skills, by which the "underdeveloped others" are seen as a *tabula rasa* unable to produce knowledge on their own, has been largely abandoned. Also, approaches that do not take into account development's relationship with human rights and to economic, social and cultural rights are criticised (Sano, 2000). Additionally, the ideas of sustainable

development and development from below are strong among development experts in the country. It is thus impressive—and truly illustrative of the current state of affairs—that ‘Universities Denmark,’ a consortium made up of the existing total of eight Danish universities, recently published a document which does not take into account the knowledge and experience on development work produced *within* the Danish academic world—which, although it clearly falls short in its understanding of coloniality, at least considers some of the corrosive effects of development work<sup>7</sup>.

This publication by ‘Danish Universities’ illustrates how the relationship between the university and developmental work inserts itself into global apartheid today. It not only shows how Denmark is embedded in these articulations. It does so in the specific field into which the *Andar Descolonizando* seeks to project itself, and illustrates the problems it needs to address and change. The document, entitled *Building Stronger Universities in Developing Countries* (Universities Denmark, 2009), was written at the invitation of the then minister for Development Cooperation, Ulla Toornæs, who asked Universities Denmark to consider how they envision the role of the university in development cooperation. The working group appointed for this task was made up of three Deans, five Professors, three Associate Professors, an Associate Dean, and a Pro-Vice-Chancellor. Of the twelve persons involved, at least five could be expected: to display some awareness of the problems inherent to development work; to be critically aware of the social-evolutionary line that has been integral to modern thought which equates difference

with backwardness; and thus to be aware of how and why this schema has been invalidated in the various relevant scholarly fields (anthropology, international development studies, sociology, human rights studies, cultural studies etc.).

Nonetheless, the document coherently applies the notion of the backwardness of the South and the advancement of the North, thereby re-visiting the white man’s burden. For example, it states: “Well-managed local universities are essential if low-income countries are to *develop into* modern knowledge societies” (Universities Denmark, 2009:6). The colonial nature of this proposition becomes clear when Universities Denmark declare the need for Danish universities to *assist* the Southern universities in terms of *management*. The universities in the South must, in turn, strengthen the local “capacity to effectively implement international aid programmes,” and “contribute to the establishment of a larger and more professional private sector” (Universities Denmark, 2009:6). Needless to say, international aid programmes are often colonial endeavours, and strengthening the private sector means strengthening the capitalist economy.

A final element in the document elaborated by Universities Denmark worth highlighting here is the legacy of the Western notion concerning the *other* as *tabula rasa*, such as it is reflected in the following argument: “North-South and North-South-South networks have proven to be an effective way of *transferring* knowledge and good practices *to* and *between* universities in developing countries” (Universities Denmark, 2009:6, my emphasis). It is important to remember that the document is written in representation of a sector which, at least what the social sciences and humanities is concerned, by and large argues that the problems of eurocentrism, developmentalism and oppressive sciences have been overcome. However, the document itself points to the opposite conclu-

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<sup>7</sup> A good example of Danish critical posture is reflected in the latest policy brief made by the Danish Institute for International Studies in May 2010 as a comment to the Government’s draft concerning the new Danish development strategy (Engberg-Pedersen and Moe Fejerskov, 2010).



sion. In fact, if a student submitted a similar paper to an exam in any of the fields that deal with global relationships, development, rights and knowledge, he would most probably not pass. The document simply does not meet many of the basic conventional standards of rigor and theoretical coherence. Beyond this, it is complicit with global apartheid. Contrary to the idea expressed in the document that Denmark needs to help the developing countries, there is a strong and vital need for the decolonization of Danish universities. It is on the basis of this recognition that North-South collaboration gains a thoroughly transformative and vital dimension and not, as the document claims, through the transference of skills and knowledge to the South.

## V. EPISTEMIC RACISM

Although the mechanisms of naturalization of the Eurocentric perspective have been amply described and addressed<sup>8</sup>, this decolonizing knowledge continues to be marginal—and in many cases seen as irrelevant—in the North. It is true that the social sciences and the humanities have seen important changes with regards both to their self-perception and to their investigative practices. For example, we have today an ample field of social studies that centre on studying the ways in which scientific facts are socially constructed. However, many of these innovations within science have not succeeded in breaking the myth that dictates that science is a product of Western civilization (Dussel, 2008). Indeed, most histories of science reproduce this myth by making other scientific traditions invisible because they do not meet the criteria of scientificity established by Western science (Castro-Gómez, 2007; Grosfoguel,

<sup>8</sup> As for example in Castro-Gómez, 2007; Dussel, 1995; Grosfoguel, 2010; Lander, 2000; Fals-Borda, 1981; and Maldonado-Torres, 2006.

2010). The strategies of “invisibilization,” or epistemic racism, that I have encountered most often in the course of my work in Denmark are the following<sup>9</sup>:

1. Ontological, epistemological and theoretical priority is given to Eurocentric perspectives, researchers and theorists. As mentioned previously, the Eurocentric perspective is often an implicit requirement for funding, publishing, and achieving permanent positions.
2. Other theories (for example postcolonial, decolonial, Islamic, Indigenous and African/African descendent theories and to some extent white feminist theory) are silenced. The *silencing* of other theories happens by classifying them not as theory, but as lay criticism, political manifestos, ideology, polemics or empirical material.
3. Other theories are deprived of their originality. This is accomplished by locating these ideas within a Eurocentric genealogy of knowledge. In this conceptual and classificatory movement, these theories are *a priori* deprived of their validity, and instead classified as outdated. At best, they are classified as ‘heirs’ of European science and theory. In other cases, they become relevant in the moment they are taken up and elaborated/discussed through the Eurocentric epistemology. It is this movement of translation—a translation that subsumes the other into the same, as Dussel (1995) would say—that deprives them of their substance.

<sup>9</sup> Since the summer of 2006 I have systematically taken note of the instances where the coloniality of knowledge has an explicit expression in academic gatherings I have attended in Denmark (seminars, congresses, lectures, discussion forums and the like). The list I present here corresponds to a classification of these instances that I made in the context of a lecture for the course on ‘Theory of Science’ at Roskilde University in the Fall of 2007. I have revised this list a few times since.

4. Other cultures are studied from the perspective of *our* theory in order to meet *our* necessities. If the subjects of study start demanding commitment from the researcher, this becomes a big problem: the other is now seen as practicing censorship upon the researcher, and the objectivity and integrity of the researcher is in danger.
5. If recognised, thought that does not comply with Eurocentric criteria is regionalised; there are the 'universal' theories (read Eurocentric) and then there are the Latin American, Indian, Chinese, African, Islamic (etc.) theories. Being regional, the thought that comes from these other geopolitical places is not relevant for science in general.
6. Other knowledges are incorporated thanks to their instrumental value for Eurocentric knowledge, in particular their value in the global market—as in cases of the field of indigenous knowledge systems (Escobar, 1992) and intellectual property rights (Lander, 2008; Castro-Gómez, 2005). Although these fields to some extent recognize epistemic diversity, this recognition is seldom followed by transformation. As with the previous point, they are seen as 'partial' knowledges that may benefit 'science' (read western Eurocentric and colonial knowledge) *within* its own frames.

These mechanisms of epistemic racism perpetuate the inability of the South to name its cultural, political and economic practices and knowledges and, in the end, to name itself (Santos, 1998). Here, it is important to highlight that whereas the difficulties that the South has in naming itself are enormous, the epistemic racism practised by the westernized intellectuals has also negative effects *inside* the North: inasmuch the validity of Western knowledge is, in itself, uncriticisable, no effective

critique can ever be launched at it *from within*. This means, by default, that the criticism that Sune Auken defends is, indeed, a criticism that does not challenge the system. The same people who defend the critical value of Western knowledge construction then neutralize criticism a priori, delinking criticism from the needs of transformation. And, if we follow the reasoning of Auken's defence of the conservative university, global apartheid at the same time, does not warrant criticism because there is *nothing structurally wrong with it*.

The idea of Western knowledge as an all-encompassing and universally valid system of knowledge is an imaginary. As I have suggested above, this is far from an obvious fact to the majority of the people in the Danish university. Hence, there is a need to bring the particularity and parochial nature of Western knowledge to attention. This can be done in various ways: by forcing this Eurocentric imaginary into encounters with other knowledges, by systematically recording and addressing the instances of epistemic racism that are launched as arguments to invalidate these knowledges, and by taking advantage of the few cases in which openness towards these other knowledges is shown. This would imply that North-South collaboration is indeed an indispensable weapon in this endeavour, as long as it is framed by the recognition of global apartheid and of the need for working towards decolonization.

## VI. EPISTEMIC *COYOTISMO*

One of the most effective ways to work against epistemic racism is through what Nelson Maldonado-Torres has called 'epistemic *coyotismo*.' Epistemic *coyotismo* consists of introducing "theories and ideas that are banned or excluded from the halls of academia into the universities and

formal centers of learning" (2006:16). In my experience, the introduction of theories and ideas otherwise banned is especially fruitful for students who, at the same time, often take those theories beyond the specific class or project in which they have learned about them. This means that the theories and ideas can to some extent infiltrate academia from below: the students will for example present an essay on another issue, which brings to the fore some of these otherwise excluded theories. In this manner other faculty will start recognizing, if not necessarily *acknowledging*, them. When introducing such theories to students, I have found it useful to add to the introduction a word of warning: they must know what kind of invalidating strategies they will encounter when using these *other* theories, such as the strategies of epistemic racism that I listed previously. This helps to prepare the students for countering these strategies by addressing them in advance. In my experience, the fact that the list of strategies of "invisibilization," or epistemic racism, presented in the previous section, is not an expression of the teacher's paranoia, but a realistic description of some of the mechanisms at work today in their own university, often surprises them.

However, epistemic *coyotismo* pursued only at this level does not suffice. There is a need to promote destabilising spaces of debate that move beyond the classroom level and are aimed at unsettling the mechanisms of epistemic racism. At the same time, there is a strong need to address the ways in which the coloniality of knowledge manifests itself. By mapping and addressing the global articulations of power, the dismantling of the same becomes a realistic possibility. We know that there is a strong resistance towards these hegemonic articulations of power—most powerfully among social and ethnic movements in the South. To some extent, this resistance is also at play within the university sector in the South. In the North, it is still very weak.<sup>10</sup>

As mentioned, the university in the North is strongly attached to the triangle of coloniality and, indeed, works as a powerful weapon of global apartheid. As such, that is, as a weapon, it needs to be dismantled.

Therefore, epistemic *coyotismo* in the North must necessarily be articulated with the epistemic resistance (and *coyotismo*) in the South. To start dissolving the power of the transnational elites, they need to be countered transnationally. Indeed, whether we like it or not, epistemic coyotes are, leaving aside our very different geo-body-politics, very often members of the transnational elites. We might find ourselves in precarious conditions and marginal positions within the university, and probably most of us embody that 'incorporated dissent' that is tolerated as long as it does not constitute a serious threat. Nevertheless, we are (peripherally) part of the global elites. This means that however negative the picture of coloniality is, and however persistent global apartheid remains, we have some margin for manoeuvre that must be exploited to the greatest extent. As Castro-Gómez (2007:80) has argued,

... even within the University new paradigms of thought and organization are being incorporated, [paradigms] that could help break the trap of [the] modern/colonial triangle, though still very precariously. I refer specifically to transdisciplinarity and complex thought as emerging models from which we could begin to build bridges towards a transcultural dialogue of knowledges (my translation).

In this respect, strategic alliances between 'epistemic coyotes' and critical

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<sup>10</sup> For more info on the different decolonial projects in North and South see Maldonado-Torres (2008).

members of the transnational elites (potential epistemic coyotes) must not be discarded insofar as they provide important fields of action and improve the possibilities of achieving access to funding. In any case, efforts at decolonizing the university in Denmark must necessarily aim to foster ‘encounters’ between different epistemologies. Furthermore, as we know, decolonization requires a change in the subject (Maldonado-Torres, 2008; Gordon, 2004). My bet is that, at this initial point, in Denmark this change must be fomented through these encounters—hopefully direct ones, as in seminars, courses, and other such forums.

## VII. SOME CONCLUDING PRACTICAL REMARKS

In this paper I have shown the ways in which the Danish universities are intrinsically connected with global articulations of power, contributing in different ways to the perpetuation of the global elites and the legitimation and justification of global apartheid. I have also shown ways in which the Danish university reforms are criticised and how this critique *a priori* invalidates itself through its lack of any perspectives regarding the transformation of society. I have also mentioned some of the actual spaces of action that we have in the decolonizing endeavour. The interaction with students is a valuable field of action, as well as strategic alliances with those colleagues who show a potential decolonizing attitude (Maldonado-Torres, 2008; Fals-Borda, 1981). The strategic alliances that one might make must, of course, not mean putting the basic decolonizing principles aside. If however alliance does not leave room for epistemic *coyotismo* and decolonization, it is of no use at all.

Beyond the previously outlined fields of action connected to epistemic *coyotismo*, it is difficult to lay out a more concrete strat-

egy of work. This is true for two reasons. First, the practical frames within which we move change all the time. For example, in the spring of 2010, the Danish government decided to make severe cuts in the universities’ research budget: -328 million Euros within the next three years, which amounts to 10% of the total budget for universities. In Denmark, we have already seen the economic crisis reflected in layoffs at some universities and with these projected cutbacks, new hiring will be at risk. Second, collaboration towards decolonization at a global level must in any case necessarily remain flexible.

Few, I believe, would disagree with a characterization of today’s global society as a society in crisis. According to Fals Borda, the role of sociology—and, I would say, of the university in general—in times of crisis must be connected to the recognition that “the real facts will determine whether the interpretations and hypotheses regarding the crisis are correct or not” and that “sociology in time of crisis is only justified if it reveals the mechanisms that sharpen or mediate the crisis” (1981, 34; my translation). Indeed, in concordance with philosophy of liberation, the guiding principle and principle of validation of the sociology of liberation is its fundamental ethical and political concern with the excluded.

By drawing on Fals Borda, I am making the case that it is impossible to determine in advance any method of participative action research. The global crisis that we have—global apartheid rooted in the triangle of coloniality—takes place in different ways in different places. Accounting for this complexity requires a methodological flexibility that follows no specific guidelines of action but rather an *ethical* principle of decolonization. For this reason, in Denmark, for example, the decolonizing endeavor must now be concerned with bringing that which has been occluded to the light, to demonstrate that the Western idea of objectivity is an illusion, and that

indeed Denmark's strong connection with the global transnational elites contributes in the maintenance of global apartheid. In this context, as I have argued, we need more mappings of these global articulations of power. Such mappings allow us to effectively infiltrate the global articulations of power and dismantle them from within (Fals Borda, 40). That the crisis is global and complex means, as I have argued, that these processes of dismantling can only occur in cooperation—cooperation between the peripheries within the transnational elites (among epistemic *coyotes* in the North), between epistemic *coyotes* in the South, and between North and South in close collaboration with social and ethnic movements. Such enormous tasks of collaboration can only reasonably happen through “making the road by walking,” that is, asking questions and learning along the way.

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