

Debate

From Islandization to Joint Internationalization: A Conversation About a “Deep” Internationaliza- tion in Communication Studies Between Anne Grüne, Herman Wasserman, Afonso de Albuquerque and Marwan M. Kraidy¹

Abstract: This debate was part of the conference “Internationalizing German Communication Studies: Learning from the World” in Erfurt, Germany, in March 2024. It featured an in-depth dialogue with scholars from South Africa, Brazil and Qatar about approaches to internationalization in their respective academic communities. The aim was to learn about the current state of internationalization in communication studies around the world, particularly in places often termed the “Global South”, and to understand their discourses, respective challenges, and opportunities for internationalization. The comparative perspective applied here allows for a deeper understanding of power asymmetries, language and translation issues, and the pros and cons of intellectual autonomy. It also addresses how to overcome “islandization” on the path to a true and just, or a “deep” internationalization in communication studies.

Keywords: internationalization, Global South, power asymmetries, communication studies, Brazil, South Africa, Arab World

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Anne Grüne:

A group of German scholars working in the field of international and transcultural communication research has founded the network “Cosmopolitan Communication Studies”, funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG). The group has been working on an evaluation of internationalization and development of basic principles to improve the “deep” internationalization of communication studies in Germany, meaning both the academic structures as well as academic culture, practice and epistemologies.

As part of a dialogical endeavor, we want to ask today whether we share the same perspective on internationalization with other academic communities in our field. How can we achieve a mutual understanding of internationalization in academia? Thus, we are very interested in learning more about the respective debates in academic communities outside the US and Europe.

Hermann Wasserman, Afonso de Albuquerque, Marwan Kraidy: The three of you have a comprehensive overview of what is happening in your regions – in South Africa (or Africa more broadly), in Brazil (or Latin America), and in Qatar (or the Arab World) respectively. At the same time, you are also well-connected to colleagues in Europe and the US and are aware of international developments in communication studies.

First of all, I would like to ask for a general assessment: Is there a debate about internationalization in your academic communities, and if so, what does it look like?

Herman Wasserman:

I'll start with a very descriptive picture of the situation in South Africa, maybe a little bit broader in Africa as well. Internationalization is increasingly a high priority in South Africa. Major research universities like mine all have international offices dedicated to facilitating visiting scholars, setting up student and staff agreements. That happens usually on two fronts. There are teaching and learning exchanges where we welcome international students. We try to facilitate student mobility. And I think this is a good development, because from individual mobility may also result more longstanding organic collaboration, like joint degree programs, joint PhD supervision, joint courses and projects. It is sometimes difficult to arrange practically, our semesters work differently, our fee structure, and so on. So, there are practical challenges to it. But I think this represents a development that is more organic and more substantial. However, there is also an aspect of these internationalization efforts that could play into the neoliberal impulse of universities competing in an international ‘marketplace’ for students. Universities tend to become more neoliberal and they want to claim their stake in the world. They want to climb up the rankings and they want to expand their influence in the world, and South African universities also sometimes follow this path, with some exceptions.

In the area of research, we are also seeing increasing international cooperation. Nowadays, there is a strong push to apply for international grants, to work with international funders, to collaborate with colleagues. Conversely, I think, international grants now often require partners in the Global South. And here we see an internationalization in very utilitarian terms. So, when some researchers in Europe have to apply for a grant which requires them to include a partner from the Global South, this collaboration sometimes happens more for utilitarian than organic reasons. I might get a phone call or an email from someone I have never heard of before saying: “Oh, you do interesting work, can we include you in this grant application?” And that’s it. That’s often a pragmatic and utilitarian way that can become very tokenistic. Historically, these collaborations have been with Europe and North America, and they still continue to dominate, especially because they have the most money and resources. But I must add that this is not always the case, and I have had some very rewarding and mutually beneficial collaborations with counterparts in the North.

Anne Grüne:

Afonso, what is your observation regarding internationalization in the Brazilian and Latin American academic community and is it also characterized by utilitarian aspects?

Afonso de Albuquerque:

When we speak about internationalization in Latin American communication studies, we must consider how the Latin American perspective was forged by a mix of foreign influences and native resistance against them. I graduated in social sciences in 1988, and at that time in Brazil, internationalization mainly meant absorbing French ideas. If you were a philosophy student, then it was German ideas – not English at all at that time. In Latin America, there has been a kind of barrier against the expansion of anglophone knowledge. However, since then and increasingly in the 1990s, a more anglophone, unipolar model of knowledge has been imposed everywhere, including Latin America, though with some limits.

Latin America probably has a very specific position here as it was an early developer of communication studies *in opposition* to the anglophone world. This opposition came about because Latin America is geographically close to the United States and has been subject to strong attempts of cultural influence. For instance, during World War II, the United States developed a so-called “Good Neighborhood Policy” which was strongly criticized and opposed by many Latin American intellectuals who deemed it cultural imperialism. So, there is a strong tradition of criticism against cultural imperialism in Latin America, which relied mainly on critical European scholars like those from the Frankfurt School and French thinkers such as Bourdieu.

Then, during the Brazilian dictatorship era from 1964 to 1985, we have seen a strong attempt by US scholars to dominate the intellectual production in Latin America. The so-called Brazilianists, or Latin Americanists, had privileged access to Brazilian

documents and to Brazilian government officials. So, in a certain way, these institutions produced US-made knowledge about Latin America. For the rest of the world, this knowledge about Latin America has become more influential than Latin American knowledge itself.

Yet, Brazilian and Latin American scholars have also not made very strong efforts to take part in the anglophone-dominated academic world order. This happens for two main reasons: The first is the linguistic barrier. In Latin America, more than 500 million people speak Spanish or Portuguese. Although the languages are not exactly the same, we are able to understand and read each other. So, there is no major incentive to learn other languages, even English. I can travel thousands of kilometers and speak only Portuguese and Spanish. And the second reason is that Latin America has a well-established academic infrastructure, allowing us to internationalize without having to speak English. We have many journals, in particular open access journals, where you don't need to pay to publish or read it. Well, Brazilians feel a bit insulated, although we can understand Spanish. Yet, Brazil is a kind of island within an island, just like Latin America in the global order.

Anne Grüne:

In the Arab case, how is the question of language dealt with - as a possible barrier to or opportunity to strengthen internationalization?

Marwan M. Kraidy:

Regarding the Arab world, when one considers language, we face all kinds of challenges. Firstly, most of the research that we think about as Arab media research is not conducted in Arabic. We also have multiple research traditions that are national or indigenous, and on the other hand research traditions that are transnational and diasporic. And I think in the case of Arab media research, the diaspora is fundamental. And this is also connected to the colonial experience. This resulted in the Arab world having three major intellectual publics: you have an arabophone public that is somewhat connected, you have a francophone public that is mostly in places like Tunisia, Algeria and Lebanon, and then you have the anglophone public that is mostly a diasporic space by people who were born in the Arab World but now work at universities in the UK and in North America.

At the same time, knowledge production in media and communication research is connected to these linguistic clusters. In the Arab world, you actually have three traditions, two of them are dominant and they are all somewhat imported. One is the American social science research tradition. The second is the French philosophical tradition. And then you have some who do British-inspired cultural studies, which I would describe as sociologically inflected qualitative research. And those different traditions rarely talk to one another, and they mostly coexist in the diaspora.

Herman Wasserman:

I want to pick up on this point about language. South Africa has eleven languages. In our case, colonization and apartheid had the effect of elevating two of these languages, both with European roots, as the dominant ones, while the others never had the opportunity to develop as scientific languages in the same way. So, this reflects also internal power relations within South African languages. I feel always very conflicted about talking about Sub-Saharan Africa as a single entity, because it is such a heterogeneous place. But just in terms of the European languages, anglophone knowledge production is the dominant one, but there is also a lusophone tradition, which is much smaller, and then francophone, which is quite big. And the question of language actually means that we do not always communicate with one another within Africa. There has been interesting media research done in francophone Africa. For instance, the late Marie-Soleil Frère, was a very prominent scholar of francophone media in Africa. But anglophone researchers never really engage with their work until it gets translated.

Anne Grüne:

A common language on the one hand can foster a community reference system, on the other hand the problem of language-islands also hinders a more meaningful exchange of ideas across borders. Given this situation, what are the consequences regarding an internationalization in these particular scientific communities?

Afonso de Albuquerque:

The consequences of this situation are mixed. On the one hand, Latin American scholars aim to preserve a certain degree of intellectual autonomy within the global order. But on the other hand, this means that the impact of Latin American scholarship on knowledge about the region is very limited. And this leads to the situation that US scholars tend to define what Latin America is, overshadowing the perspectives and contributions of Latin American scholars themselves.

In Brazil, very few scholars have attempted to publish outside Latin America. This is partly because such efforts have not been acknowledged by their colleagues. The papers and articles I publish in English are never cited by my Brazilian colleagues. This also happens because older scholars built their careers within a very local system of rewards: you publish in Portuguese, and you know the rules of these journals. So, they are not very enthusiastic about changing the rules of the system that have benefited them so far. The younger scholars, however, increasingly also publish in English, reflecting a shift towards greater international engagement beyond Latin America.

Currently, I am leading a major research group in Brazil called National Institute for Science and Technology – Informational Disputes and Sovereignty. This is a prestigious project funded by the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico, or CNPq). Our group aims to create an international research center based in Brazil.

We believe that this would contribute to fostering a more multipolar intellectual world. We also believe that we don't need to embrace anglophone perspectives to be international. Yet, this group includes most of the Brazilian scholars who publish in English and are connected to colleagues abroad in the US and Europe. We want to be in dialogue with scholars both in the anglophone-and non-anglophone West.

Herman Wasserman:

Regarding internationalization, we need to engage into more inter-African and inter-Global South knowledge exchanges. It's not only an affirmation of our solidarity, pretending as if we are all friends in the Global South. That is part of it though, I think, when we position ourselves up against the North and try to rectify the imbalance in international knowledge exchange. But if we want to take on the knowledge hegemony of the North, it also demands of us in the South to find out more about each other. And this demand includes, for us anglophone researchers in Africa, to learn more about the francophone and lusophone parts. Where I'm sitting in South Africa, we are a British post colony. That also means the epistemology that we mostly use is largely British. In the field of media studies, we draw a lot on British cultural studies, to some extent also on critical theory from the Frankfurt School and so on. My own work has benefited a great deal from for instance Stuart Hall's approach to cultural studies. His encoding/decoding model, for instance, is a standard item in curricula. But I am curious to find out more about what traditions are used elsewhere in the South, for instance Brazil, about Latin America, about the so-called Arab world. I think, the demand of internationalization is that we first should find out more about the diversity within our own contexts – as the ones from the Global South. Otherwise, that conversation remains the sort of old colonial axis of Europe and a homogenized Global South.

Afonso de Albuquerque:

I have a problem with the terms "Global South" and "Global North", because North is not just a direction; North is a magnetic pole. This means that all the other directions are defined in relation to the North. Instead of referring to the North as being the leading direction, I prefer to use the term "the majority world" to describe where I am geographically situated.

Anne Grüne:

Are there actually specific developments in the so-called Global South that you would consider important regarding internationalization?

Marwan M. Kraidy:

We also have to acknowledge that the centers of gravity in geo-linguistic world regions are changing. In the Arabic-speaking world, we have a very dynamic situation when it comes to the development of media as influential institutions, or the development of research about media and communication. So, even within this region, the center of gravity has shifted tremendously. Egypt used to be at the center of knowledge production in the Arab World, and so was the Levant, particularly

Lebanon in publishing. Now, both are becoming peripheral to the Gulf, which has emerged as a new center of gravity. Whether in terms of media development or media research, there is an incredible concentration of financial resources, of institutional resources, and of human resources in the Gulf. I am acutely aware that, as the dean of an institution located in the Gulf, I'm hiring people, for example, from Lebanon, from Egypt, and therefore, we are contributing from within the region to a brain drain. We tend to think of brain drain as people moving to the West, and that is not always the case. There is a major movement of people from the Maghreb and the Levant to the Gulf.

Herman Wasserman:

Yet, as politics are shifting, there are also increasingly international collaborations that you would not have thought of before. For example, the IBSA partnership between India, Brazil, South Africa, and then more recently, the intergovernmental organization BRICS, consisting of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. This organization is also currently being extended to include other countries. There have been attempts to facilitate inter-BRICS collaborations. So, internationalization here is not necessarily only with the Global North. And then there are others, for instance, China, who has embarked on exchanges and collaborations with African countries. We have now Confucius centers, for instance, exchanges and grants and training programs with China. So, as the geopolitics shift, these agreements, grant making, teaching and learning exchanges also shift.

Anne Grüne:

What do you think scientific communities in the Global North could learn from your experiences? Are there any formative moments we can use in order to engage in different paths with one another?

Afonso de Albuquerque:

My personal interest has been in comparative studies which also means to present views that challenge ideas that are taken for granted in international scholarship. I have published an article in 2023 (de Albuquerque, 2023), which discusses the manner of how international scholars use concepts of democracy, including established democracy, transitional democracy and authoritarianism. And here I noticed specific geographic-cultural denominations. For instance, Germany or Italy are considered to have jumped from the state of authoritarianism to democracy. Latin American countries, however, seem to be in a kind of Peter-Pan-experience. We are frozen in a transitional democracy status. And there are very concrete political and academic consequences emanating from the use of such terms, because the labelled democracies take this as a starting point to lecture the other countries. But remember: these others are the global majority! And when January 6, 2021, happened in the United States with the attack on the Capitol, everyone in Latin America thought: "I know that, I know how this works". So, in the rest of the world – the global majority – everyone had experienced similar situations. Still, according to the rules of the international academic milieu, scholars from these global majority countries cannot

exchange ideas based directly on their concrete experiences. They must relate their experiences to western-based norms. Even worse, they must depict themselves negatively in relation to these norms, as “transitional” or “immature” democracies or, even authoritarian countries. They are supposed to learn lessons from the “established democracies”. The opposite never occurs. And this is funny, because Western democracies too are experiencing a very serious crisis, and they could have learned from us, if they had listened.

Herman Wasserman:

Indeed, if I published an article or a book on, let’s say, tabloidization in South Africa, I always have to add “in South Africa”, I always have to have that geographical designated qualifier. But if somebody in, say, Loughborough in the UK did a study somewhere in northern England on local digital journalism: that’s just “digital journalism”. I work with a much bigger geography, but I have to constantly define it. That’s the problem, I think internationalization brings to bear the question of power relations.

Marwan M. Kraidy:

Why is it that when you had Trump and equivalents in Europe, suddenly populism became a subject of study? Well, Latin Americans have had 50 years of assorted populisms, and the only people who focused on it were Latin American thinkers and Latin Americanists in Western academia. When does something become an important topic at a certain time and in a certain place as opposed to other times and places? When does a hitherto nationally studied phenomenon become a global object of research? I think these questions are fundamental.

And I loved what Afonso said about transition. Transition is the only stable condition we have. The problem is, how do you frame transition? Is transition defined by the people who see themselves at the conclusion of the transition and define everybody as backwards because they are not there yet? Or is the transition a state of transition and acknowledgement of the fundamental instability of knowledge production because it is linked to geopolitics, because it is affected by public opinion, because it is affected by economic imperatives, and so on and so forth. If we think of media and communication studies as a balancing act or a dual focus on technological mediation on the one hand, and social relations on the other hand, what are the different models that we can think through. For example, a lot of people think of German media and communication research as this Habermasian, rational, deliberative model. And clearly that is what it partly is. But that’s not all that is. At conferences, I often show interest in affect theory. In my view, feelings are at least as important as reason in the way that people interact with the media. But people immediately say, yeah, it’s because you’re from the Arab world, you guys are always very emotional. Clearly, that is factually and ethically wrong, but it still happens.

Herman Wasserman:

What is very interesting to me is the question of what is the sort of basis upon which we can interact? And that is a political-economic question, because the bulk of the funding for scholarship is located in the North that often means that the thinking and the theory is also located from a perspective in the North. So, it's like mining, you extract the commodities and use them to build this big, beautiful machine, but the actual design and building is done somewhere else than where the raw materials come from. It's like the diamonds in the British Queen's crown, which were extracted from a South African mine... I think if the Global South only becomes a site where you extract knowledge in the form of case studies, where you find more shiny objects to decorate a theory that was developed somewhere else, instead of allowing your shiny, beautiful theory to be disrupted, then I think we are off on the wrong footing. Referring to Marwan's point about, for instance, rationality and emotionality, we also have to remind the Global North to avoid essentialism, even if this is well-meant as a way to understand difference. So, stop saying: Well, oh, the Arabs are so emotional and the Africans are so communal... all these sorts of clichés, which we in the South sometimes also buy into. And I think that point about looking at experience, everyday life, looking at the textures of how societies change, all of these things are important for us to upset and undermine static power relations where you work with pieces like on a chessboard where you say: this is Africa, that is Latin America, that is the Arab world.

So, we have to be open for ongoing change and difference. And I think there is a demand also for us in the South to not fall into that trap of selling ourselves as a sort of curiosity and attribute this sort of essentialism to ourselves. Instead, I demand that we consider the changing nature of these societies and, as geopolitics shift, the need for us to have more of these conversations in between us. So those are the two things, I think, that we need to keep on the table when we talk about internationalization. The one is not to homogenize, keep the heterogeneity going and the fluidity. And the second one is the political economy and the power relations of it. Then maybe we'll get away from this constant genuflection towards the North.

Anne Grüne:

How do you get out of this essentializing framework? The Global North has to reconsider its role – it might not always and no longer serve as a role model. Given, for example, the regressive processes in Western democracies perhaps the Global North itself might need some role models of how to reclaim democratic development, which could also stem from transitional contexts in the Global South. But how can a new Southern academic role model be empowered and how can academic power structures be redefined in a way to enhance a more meaningful dialogue? So, can you see a tendency within the academic communities suggesting where and how such a role shift could happen?

Herman Wasserman:

For me, the question is to start with where things are now, in terms of lived experience. The lived experience of somebody in a city like Cape Town or Johannesburg or Lagos, whose experience of media, for instance, is highly globalized, but at the same time also highly local in the way that they interact with it. In addition, they have this sort of experience of being subjected to a history of colonialism and of global neoliberalism. So, try and get an idea of the multiplicity of identities, multiplicity of engagement with media, so that you have a much more complex picture. And once you have the complex picture of what's happening there, then you can find links and you can say, well, only that might be the same for somebody in the diaspora, sitting somewhere in Texas or wherever else, who also engages. And that opens up, I think, new ways for international comparisons in the sense that we don't have to think about what nation states are we including in this, which is a very artificial construct, or which regions are we looking at, or which languages. But rather: what sort of experiences can we compare? So, when in 2016 Trump was on the rise as a populist leader, all of a sudden, the whole world started to be interested in disinformation studies, but in fact, it is something that we scholars from the Global South have recognized a long time ago. So, we say, okay, here's such a moment: Where can we go to find out who has experiences and done research on this already, instead of remaining in the static boxes of language, region, country?

Marwan M. Kraidy:

There's no escaping language. We cannot have a truly cosmopolitan, global, multipolar field if we think of it only in English or in German or in French. And that is a problem that cannot be solved in PhD programs. That is a problem that needs to be solved in kindergarten already. I spent 13 years at the Annenberg School for Communication in Pennsylvania, and my late friend Klaus Krippendorf, he would lament the moment when the School decided to cancel the requirement of taking language courses, along with many other graduate schools in the United States. We got rid of all this at some point in the 1970s. We decided that if you learn computer "languages", then that's a language equivalent. So, I think there's no escaping the power of language in knowledge production.

I think the second thing is categories. When I was working on my PhD, I was interested in media and change—social, cultural, political—in the Arab world. Everybody sent me to the transition model of the post-Soviet states, and I would read and read and read, and nothing resonated. It was all very interesting, but nothing resonated with what I was seeing on the ground in the Arab world, until I found the Latin American scholars for whom the focus was not on institution, but the focus was on the local. Popular culture as a political space, not as an entertainment space. Then I wrote a PhD dissertation on the Arab world using Latin American theory. Why not?

There is another funny thing about German media theory, about kicking Heidegger out of the equation, kicking the "Geist", the ghost out of the machine. In global media studies, as practiced in general, the ghost in the machine is the US, whether we

like it or not. That is where so many powerful institutions exist, where the field developed. And what I love about being in Qatar now at an institute that we call the Institute for Advanced Study in the Global South, is that there is no ghost in the machine. That when you go into a room with 15 scholars, there is no perspective that is presumed to be dominant. I think that's a way to equalizing the playing ground in ways that there's no dominant language and no dominant perspective. And to do this is incredibly hard work, of course. I want to acknowledge the irony. I am in Qatar, but I am at a US university. And perhaps it is this unique form of internationalization that has its constraints, but it also has its potential.

Afonso de Albuquerque:

In my group we are now trying to take a hacking approach against what we perceive as a homogenizing US-centric system. In the international publishing system, there is a strong and silent, but powerful pressure to quote anglophone scholars. If you don't use anglophone scholars, your paper can be rejected. Now our hacking: We learned this from the Koreans. If you read the journal *Media, Culture & Society*, in almost every issue, you have a Korean scholar and Korean scholars quote Korean scholars. And this is not a spontaneous incident, this is a politically organized movement. So, now in Brazil, we are trying to push Brazilian perspectives in the international arena, to have Brazilian scholars in the editorial boards of international journals with that kind of mindset. When I am a reviewer and I read a paper that does not quote Brazilian or Latin American scholars on Latin American issues, I reject it, because it is ignoring the native perspectives. For sure, Brazil is not the center of the world. But my argument here is about multipolarity. When talking about Sub-Saharan Africa we have to include their perspective. If I supervise a student who will study Turkish serials they will have to learn from Turkish authors. This is to understand that the native scholars are often more qualified for discussing distinctive problems than the anglophone scholarship.

Anne Grüne:

At this point, I would like to integrate a few questions from our audience. Please let me share the first one with you: "Including native perspectives and to overcome power asymmetries is a somewhat postcolonial and emancipatory argument to internationalize. On the other hand, all of you mentioned earlier that sharing experience is a good thing, meaning what is good for your own society can also benefit other societies. So, this is a functional argument for internationalization. But besides these postcolonial and functional lines of argumentation, isn't there something deeper that should drive us to internationalize, something, probably, "civilizational"? So, in the sense that internationalization is also important to get away from the idea of creating national identities, racist identities, etc. Would you agree that there is a deeper sense of a civilizational message that we might share or have?"

Marwan M. Kraidy:

My answer to your question is, yes, absolutely. I think of civilization in terms of civilizing as a verb in a civic sense, as opposed to: here is the Muslim and here is the

Christian “civilization”. The capacity of the human imagination to create others and demonize them is truly astounding. A few years ago, I was doing some fieldwork in Argentina about Turkish television drama. Argentinians wouldn’t be able to tell the difference between Turkish and Brazilian telenovelas but they knew they were not Argentinian ones, and that’s all they cared about—what mattered is that they were foreign, but what kind of foreign did not matter. That’s a very small example. The capacity to say, there’s me and there’s the other, and the other can be anything, I don’t care. So that’s why it’s absolutely worth it. Subverting the system or hacking the system to move this realization to the normative center is absolutely worth it. Otherwise, we may as well all be investment bankers and make a lot more money.

Afonso de Albuquerque:

I agree with this idea of a civilizational approach. There is an interesting thing about being Latin American: as Brazilians, for instance, we speak Portuguese, our religion is mostly Catholic, and Brazilian elites define themselves as “displaced Europeans.” Accordingly, they consider any attempt to establish closer ties with non-Western countries a civilizational backlash. From 2003 to 2014, and again from 2023 on, the Lula da Silva and Rousseff governments tried to change their foreign policy strategy by building closer ties with countries located outside the West, such as other Latin American countries, Africa, and the BRICS. The legacy media condemned this step by arguing that Brazil was building “exotic alliances” with uncivilized countries (Gagliardi & de Albuquerque, 2021). This said, there is a challenge for Brazilians to build a new international order, establishing more direct dialogue with people from around the world.

Herman Wasserman:

There’s so much to be said about this. Immediately what came to my mind is Gandhi, who answered when he was asked about Christian civilization: “I think it would be a good idea”. Civilization, of course, is a very problematic notion. But for me, what is so adventurous about why I like working in South Africa or in the Global South is that there’s always an urgency around our research questions. We are mostly acutely aware that our research has to find its way back to the real world and solve problems, whether these are problems to do with policy, freedom of speech, racism, whatever. To quote Marx: “it’s not only to understand the world, but to change it”. Stuart Hall also made a similar point, that when people are dying in the street, you have to use theory and knowledge production to try and make the world a better place. But I think the point that has to be brought home to the policymakers and the funders and so on is to say that we can make the world a better place but you have to then understand that maybe the answers to these questions might be somewhere else and you might have to open your minds, too. I remember so vividly 2008, the economic crisis. All of a sudden, everybody was talking about the global economic crisis. And Africa has never *not* been in economic crisis. So, this was the time when you could say to people from the Global North: “come and see how we dealt with our economic crisis”. I think there’s a pragmatism for us to say, well, okay, we can maybe get some money and we can do some work because now you are also interested in these

questions. But I think if we're really interested in the question of civilization or making the world a better place, I think there's a fundamental realization that still has to dawn on many people in the Global North that you have to find the answers somewhere else. And I think that's the work, that this sort of internationalization has to do: to shift that perception.

Anne Grüne:

Another question from the audience relates to knowledge exchange at the level of students: "Nowadays, there are many scholars who physically bridge between the Global South and the North. There are in particular young scholars from the South who study or do their PhD in institutions of the North. And then they are often confronted with different terminologies, concepts, theories and rather adapt them than feeling confident enough to use native knowledge. How can an empowerment of Southern students and scholars look like?"

Herman Wasserman:

I think the question of empowerment is one of those loaded terms. And I think we have to recognize the reason why scholars from the South often go to North America because they feel that it is connected to social capital. There's a social capital in having a degree from Simon Fraser or Harvard or wherever, as opposed to my PhD, which is a South African PhD. But the attitude we have to foster is not the one that says, "we in the Global North have something to teach you and we can empower you because you don't have power or you don't have a voice". And, actually, this attitude is often internalized by scholars in Africa themselves, by saying for instance: "Oh, here are these big famous scholars coming from America. Let's listen to them and let them teach us." In fact, we have to really overturn the notion that one person has the knowledge and the other person is the recipient. That sort of disparity and that asymmetry is often deeply embedded in the way that the global economic publishing works.

The idea of knowledge exchange is, for me, a useful one. So, when we hosted ICA in Africa's Cape Town in November 2023, we tried to break away from that idea of a pre-conference of emerging scholars, which previously had been framed as a mentorship and that meant that scholars from North America come with literally sometimes a suitcase of books that they hand over to people top down, and to say, well, this is an exchange. Under the leadership of my colleague Brian Ekdale from Iowa, we decided to instead match an established scholar from Africa and an emerging scholar from Africa, and then an emerging scholar with an established scholar from elsewhere. And so that exchange happens on a more flattened place. I think we can't get away from differentiating between the power relations dependent upon social capital, publishing and so on. That is part of the game, and we have to empower people to participate in it. At the same time, as we recognize that as far as knowledge is concerned, as far as epistemology is concerned, that relationship should be flattened and overturned in some way.

Afonso de Albuquerque:

In Brazil, most people in social sciences and communication studies do not study abroad. And this creates problems, but it allows also some intellectual independence. But in order to surpass the island logic, I guess, it would be necessary to make some institutional investment, for example an international journal. An international journal created with the purpose of allowing people to exchange ideas. And there is not so much of this yet. International journals located in different places of the world, not necessarily in the anglophone world. And again, thinking about project collaborations uniting people from different parts of the world: We should establish more regular contact. So, creating forums, maybe events to challenge the anglophone dominance. Institutional investments are deeply necessary for allowing to make real international connections among scholars from various places.

Marwan M. Kraidy:

Empowerment can be a dubious discourse when it is not backed by concrete action, but if there's a good way of doing it, it's to send very strong signals and support and encourage people—and most importantly, to set up spaces and institutions – to embrace other ways of doing things. If you have a PhD student coming to you, you should say: it's absolutely fine if you do things completely differently than the way I do them. And finally: If it's true that we live in islands, I think of Marshall Sahlins, the US anthropologist, who wrote a book with Patrick Kirch about Hawaii and how the British came to dominate Hawaii. His central argument was that the way Captain Cook managed to dominate the Hawaiian Islands was by severing contacts between them. So, if we all live on islands, we have a moral imperative to teach everybody how to swim to cross the divide. I think that maintaining connections between islands of experience and knowledge is absolutely central.

Anne Grüne:

I would like to thank all participants a lot for this inspiring panel.

Suggested readings

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