

A situated political economy of knowledge: Critical social sciences in Tanzania and Ecuador

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This article focuses on the policies by which social sciences that analyse unequal international relations are both shaped and diminished in the provincial universities of two developing countries. We examine key moments in the development and limitation of critical social sciences in Tanzania and Ecuador. In both these places, important perspectives on international political and economic structures emerged that attended to their situated socio-cultural and epistemological dimensions. In the context of Tanzania's strong state-university relations, state policies of higher education limited critical political economic approaches through their market submission. Within Ecuador's historically antagonistic state-university relations, such limitations are enacted through homogenizing regulations. Based on archival research and interviews at each site, our comparison of the domestication of critical knowledge production in these two provincial universities in the global south allows us to understand how national policies limit possibilities for the social sciences to scrutinize the political economies that shape them.

Keywords: social science research, higher education, development, global south

INTRODUCTION

This study examines the political and economic factors that permitted, then limited, the generation of endogenous critical knowledge in peripheral sites of Africa and Latin America. While studies of neoliberalism and education have emphasized global market impacts on national university and research systems, we argue, in this article, that capital accumulation processes do not homogeneously shape scientific research in dependent countries. We employ a situated political economy of knowledge to show, instead, that social science analyses produced in the global south are configured by contingent political and economic relations at multiple scales. Research epistemologies are shaped in interactions among local, national, regional and international actors, and organizations.

We focus on the political economy of social sciences in the global south, because these include disciplines that reflexively examine the peripheral conditions of their own production; that is, the epistemological consequences of their unequal position in capital accumulation processes.

In Tanzania and Ecuador, critical perspectives on enduring post-colonial structures emerged at key moments in the development of their social sciences. Incisive analyses by both Tanzanian and Ecuadorian intellectuals attended to the situated socio-cultural and epistemological dimensions of unequal economic relations. Tanzanian universities were key sites for the “Africanization” of critical social sciences in the 1970s, while Ecuadorian universities highlighted, from an Andean perspective, the cultural and epistemological dimensions of unequal social relations in the 1990s. Academic studies were intellectually ground-breaking in this sense, and intensely political. They were also, importantly, constructed through significant regional exchanges. In each case, however, such critiques also experienced moments of domestication that depended not only on changing international contexts of national development projects but also on the dynamics of local and regional state university and class relations.

In order to develop this analysis, we first review three approaches to knowledge and unequal economies. Theories of the knowledge economy, cognitive capitalism and decolonial geopolitics each provide important elements for understanding unequal international relations of knowledge production. Yet, as we shall see below, each of these approaches is limited in helping us understand the conditions in which social sciences scrutinize the geopolitics that shape them. We suggest that a situated political economy of knowledge can better help us comprehend the role of local, national and regional histories in transforming analyses of international relations. The theoretical review ends with a description of our comparative methods and a justification of the compared case studies. The two sections that follow apply this situated political economy of knowledge to case studies in Tanzania and Ecuador and show the importance of local and regional dynamics in making critical social sciences possible.

TOWARDS A SITUATED POLITICAL ECONOMY OF KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

Recent studies of the relationships between global economies and national educational systems have largely focused on neoliberalism’s spread of dominant practices that support and strengthen free market principles (Abendroth & Porfilio, 2015; Torres & Schugurensky, 2002). Analysts have pointed to the decrease in funding of public education, particularly at a time of expanded access (Giroux, 2014), and the marketing, managerial and audit cultures which have become institutionalized in educational systems (Bagley & Beach, 2015; Kenny 2017). Yet we also know that neoliberalism is “variegated” (Brenner, Peck, & Theodore, 2010) and that its processes, particularly in education, are “messy, uneven, and contested” (Lave, 2012). Especially in developing nations, education serves contradictory roles, “support[ing] capital accumulation, reproduce[ing] citizens and workers, and legitimate[ing] existing social and economic structures” (Thiem, 2009, p. 166).

In this context, our study looks at political and economic conditions that shape local resolutions to the tensions between universities’ proclivity to reproduce unequal relations

and their critical and liberating impulses (Caffentzis & Federici, 2009). In this section, we examine the insights and limits of three approaches to understanding how economic structures and research analyses are mutually shaped: knowledge economy perspectives, theories of cognitive capitalism and decolonial analyses of the geopolitics of knowledge. We end the section describing characteristics of a situated political economy of knowledge that can help us better comprehend the relationship between critical social sciences and the conditions of their production.

Around the turn of the century, international organizations such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank emphasized that “the production, diffusion and use of technology and information are key to economic activity and sustainable growth” (OECD, 1999 in Molla, 2018, p. 35). This represented a significant shift from the World Bank’s previous programmatic focus on expanding primary education in developing countries (St George, 2006) and a global shift in national policies to develop research and higher education links with industry and business (Romanowski, 2017). The triple helix model represented this new approach, in which university, industry, and government capitalize on knowledge to dynamically grow and advance together (Abrahams & Fitzgerald, 2015). This and other perspectives promoting knowledge-based economies clearly instrumentalize research (Connell, Pearse, Collyer, Maia, & Morrell, 2018), “treat[ing] knowledge as a target of appropriation, an undercapitalized realm that can restart the process of capital accumulation” (Tyfield cited in Lave, 2012, p.24).

Thus, while knowledge economy approaches have made important contributions to our analysis of the role of higher education in contemporary economic structures, they have little to say about the importance of education in critiquing those structures. Shrivastava and Shrivastava (2014) reproach the knowledge-based economies perspective:

In the context of an era of knowledge-based economies and societies, universities have to have a more complex and wider social character, which is compromised by the short-term priorities of dominant industry. Most importantly, as the institutional location of a large number of intellectuals, and as part of their knowledge dissemination function, universities need to serve as catalysts of public intellectual debate and engage vocally and critically with vital questions related to the nature and trajectory of the contemporary political economy, domestically and internationally. (p. 810)

A second theoretical approach to economy and science is the Marxist critique of cognitive capitalism (Fumagalli, 2010; Moulier-Boutang, & Emery, 2011; Vercellone, 2013), in which the transformation of the contemporary conditions of capital accumulation has made “immaterial work” (Pasquinelli, 2015) as important, if not more so, than material and productive work. While similar to knowledge economy analysts in their evaluation of the importance of education and research in today’s economy, theorists of cognitive capitalism emphasize the exploitation inherent in the valorization of knowledge. Skordoulis (2016) writes that the “exploitation of invention power” represents a shift from “the ‘traditional’ exploitation of labour power of industrial capitalism” (p. 292). Just as industrial capitalism carried the source of its own instability in the production of a proletarian class, say these theorists, so does cognitive capitalism show the contradictions of capital in the possibilities of socially produced knowledge to redirect its productivity to the common (rather than private) wealth (Hardt & Negri, 2009). The hopefulness of this political economic approach, however, elides the historically and culturally constituted inequalities, limits, and possibilities specific to particular places, populations

and world views (Federici, 2012). In other words, this structuralist approach makes it difficult to understand the situated development of diverse critiques found in non-Western epistemologies and ontologies.

In contrast to a structural perspective, decolonial studies take seriously alternative positionalities and world views. Studies that analyse the geopolitics of knowledge (Dussel, 1993; Santos, 2014) take into account how development came to the global south through two parallel processes: modern science wedded to evolutionary theories of progress, and modern colonialism in search of legitimacy with a new, civilizing mission (Nandy, 2011). The effect of such a “civilizing process” legitimates forms of science that marginalize other forms of knowledge production (Wallerstein, 1996). One of the most important contributions of these geopolitical and decolonial perspectives is its linking of histories of colonialism and domination to hierarchies in forms of knowing (Quijano, 2000), emphasizing the analysis of regional roles in the global geopolitics of dependent economies (Walsh, 2007). Such vindications of alternative epistemologies (e.g., Santos, 2007), however, would benefit from a situated and institutional political economic perspective that more clearly links forms of knowing to capitalist modes of production (Azeri, 2016), showing the historical development of global power relations through non-market social and cultural institutions.

Rosemary Coombe (2016) argues, in her analysis of neoliberalism and science, that in order to consider the establishment of neoliberalism in specific settings, we must pay attention to existing cultural and institutional systems. In this sense, Moore, Kleinman, Hess, & Frickel (2011) note the importance of studying “what the changing relationship between industry and scientific research means and how scientific research has changed as a result” (p. 510). They note that “[a]lthough neoliberal globalization has entailed the reformulation of policies and markets that favor new political economic arrangements dominated by global capital, we believe such analyses must recognize the relative autonomy of the scientific field” (p. 527). From a theoretical perspective situated in the global south (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2012; Go, 2016), we would add the need to take into account educational development in peripheral societies within the historical conditions of capitalist expansion.

Such a situated political economy of knowledge would look at the ways that specific forms of knowledge are legitimized and valued (Dzvimbo & Moilo, 2013; Samuels, 2017). Glenna Shortall, & Brandl (2014), in a study of this type, show how funding regimes increase research on private goods, decreasing what we know and how we act regarding public goods. In this sense, “Research makes the world intelligible in specific ways and contributes to the foreclosure of other patterns of intelligibility” (Morley, 2016, p. 40) Also, in this line, Bagley and Beach (2015) study the forms of knowledge that are legitimated in teacher education in neoliberal England:

Under new managerial regimes the forms of knowledge which are emphasised and valued focus on the instrumental and performative. As a consequence, critical and vertical forms of knowledge associated with social justice in teacher education are either absent or marginalised and reframed away from an appreciation and awareness of the structural and economic causes of inequality. (p.424)

Our study explores the utility of a situated political economy of knowledge in explaining social science production in peripheral countries in the post-colonial regions of Africa and Latin America. Because we seek to understand the impacts of dominant economic

processes in sites that are particularly vulnerable to them, we examine provincial universities in Tanzania and Ecuador.

The choice of these sites responds to a critical case purposive sampling design, as the two sites are similar in their development of critical social sciences focusing on the historical, cultural, and epistemological dimensions of structural inequalities. African-based socialism and Indigenous Andean conceptions of development were elaborated in articulation with Tanzanian and Ecuadorian intellectuals and universities, respectively. Similarities in higher education and university policies in the periods examined included the importance of extending teaching to popular sectors, gearing research towards national development, and linking university activity with social sectors in fields such as health, education, housing, and human rights. Yet, Tanzanian and Ecuadorian universities also differ greatly in terms of the historical conditions that shaped their social sciences. This is particularly evident in rural universities, where specific relationships to political actors and state institutions were fundamental to the critical potentials of the social sciences. The comparative examination of provincial universities in these two countries allows us to better specify the political and economic conditions that spurred, then limited, forms of conceiving and implementing development adapted to African and Latin American societies and cultures.

Specifically, we studied the historical and contemporary development of social sciences in Mzumbe University in Tanzania and at the State University of Bolivar in Ecuador. Mzumbe University is one of the few provincial universities in the country to offer degrees in social sciences, while the State University of Bolivar offers such degrees in an area with a significant Indigenous population. In each of these sites, we conducted over two dozen interviews with students, authorities, and university personnel. We also collected and reviewed university documents and publications to analyse each university's establishment and mission, as well as the development and justification of its social science faculties and research programs. We compared these local processes to national higher education and economic policies to show two different ways in which peripheral critical knowledge can be produced given cultural, institutional, and political conditions, and also how such social sciences can be suppressed.

In Tanzania, close ties between the national government and its universities allowed for an intellectual and political synergy that produced significant works of African thought with international influence, such as *How Europe underdeveloped Africa* (Rodney, 1972). In Ecuador, public universities were characterized by robust student movements and maintained strong ties with collective actors like trade unions and leftist parties. Endogenous critical social sciences emerged in these conditions. Yet both sites also show how critical analyses are limited in varied ways by national incorporation into globally competitive knowledge economies. In this context, historically strong state-university relations in Tanzania led to state policies that diminish critical political economic approaches through market submission of academic projects. In Ecuador, by contrast, where state-university relations were historically antagonistic, critical social sciences were curbed by homogenizing educational policies designed to make its national economy competitive. These analyses are developed in the following two sections through the application of a situated political economy of knowledge that aims to identify the conflicts and conditions that shape social science analyses.

UJAMAA AND HIGHER EDUCATION IN TANZANIA

Universities created around the period of African independence relied heavily on the return of expatriate academics trained in metropolitan universities (Saint, 1992). In this sense, European frames of reference and networks remained strong in African universities, and their interactions with other sectors of society were accordingly limited: “The roles of higher education institutions in Africa after independence were not constructed out of social interaction among the society, the state and the academic oligarchy” (Tadesse & Doevenspeck, 2013, p.38). Instead, their role was defined by the new states that sought to make the emerging universities relevant to their context. In the 1960s and 1970s, several African states defined the missions of their higher education systems according to their countries’ development strategies (Altbach & Peterson, 1999). It was in this context that the majority of public university institutions on the African continent were created, in the periods just before and after independence. In 1960, only six universities existed in the region; by the end of the 20th Century, there were about 100 universities, with the number of university students increasing by as much as 8.7% per year over this period (World Bank, 2009).

In Tanzania, education was central to the newly independent republic. Its first president, Julius Nyerere, was considered one of the architects of African socialism (Friedland & Rosberg, 1964), which sought to incorporate a growing public sector with a pan-African model of social development. African socialism was built around historically-rooted African community life, rather than Marxist class struggles. Nyerere was also an educator. In 1967, the government’s *Arusha Declaration* outlined the state project by which all means of production were to be nationalized with the aim of achieving self-reliance through agricultural development *Ujamaa* - literally translated as “brotherhood” or “family” - also named the form of socialism espoused by the Nyerere government, which established community-owned property system and village cooperatives.

The developmental university and the beginnings of Mzumbe University

It was in this post-independence regional context that the idea of the “developmental university” was elaborated (Coleman, 1986, p. 477). Newly established national universities—including Ahmadu Bello University in Nigeria, the University of Science and Technology in Ghana and the University of Nairobi—were to play an important role in not only development but also in the construction of national identities, diversifying the institutions, curriculums and programs to respond to the specificities of African cultures. Kwame Nkrumah, the Ghanaian leader of the pan-African movement, asserted in 1956: “We must in the development of our universities bear in mind that once they have been planted in the African soil they must take root amidst African traditions and cultures” (cited by Letsekha, 2013, p. 9). Tanzania’s University of Dar es Salaam led significant contributions in cultural and political terms, becoming an international seedbed for progressive Third World thought (Bgoya, 2015; Blommaert, 1997).

Tanzanian rural institutions of higher education were also expected to respond to national needs. The British Local Government School in the province of Morogoro had operated since 1953, when it was established under British administration with the purpose of educating local chiefs and their children as native authorities at the service of the colonial structure, as tax collectors and court secretaries. In 1970, at the height of support for the “developmental university,” the Local Government School merged with the Public

Administration Institute of the University of Dar es Salaam to become the Institute of Development Management (IDM). Tanzania's second national development plan of 1972 gave priority to making the Institute an autonomous State institution that would provide advanced management training previously only available abroad (Habi, 1991). Thus, the IDM functioned as an extension of the University of Dar es Salaam until becoming Mzumbe University in 1989.

State-defined goals for higher education institutions outside of the capital city included the formation of a bureaucratic middle class that could help strengthen national public administration. Provincial institutions such as the IDM were specifically encouraged to prepare accountants, professors, doctors, technical experts, and engineers to hold what were considered important positions for reconstruction of the nation (Tadesse & Doevenspeck, 2013). A professor who experienced these changes in the Morogoro Institute recalls that this institution sought to produce graduates to be employed in various public service positions. University faculty also carried out commissioned research studies for the Government and para-State institutions (Interview, 6 October 2015a).

The Africanization of university education was particularly endorsed by national professors because it legitimated their training and experience with respect to expatriate professors (Cloete & Maasen, 2015). In its first decades, the IDM produced research that sought national development with attention to the particular social and cultural context of the new Republic of Tanzania. Representative publications in the IDM's journal *Uongozi* (Swahili for "leadership") through the 1980s include: "Disengagement from imperialism: an imperative for the structural transformation of Tanzanian-type economies", "Workers' participation in management", "Civil servants' value system and public policy making in Africa for the 1980s" and "Social articulation as a condition for equitable growth in poor countries." Of note in these articles are their insistence on understanding and incorporating endogenous African society and traditions into the new institutions that might steer the continent's new nations towards more just societies.

Yet as Tanzanian universities enjoyed a shared national mission with the socialist state, their sense of autonomy was not *from* the national government—as was the autonomy claimed by Latin American universities—but rather a shared autonomy *with* the government from the structures of unequal international relations. Mamdani (2008) notes the dangers of such close collusion: "The more nationalism turned into a state project, the more there were pressures on the developmentalist university to implement a state-determined agenda. The more this happened, the more critical thought was taken as subversive of the national project" (p. 6). This was a concern throughout African countries in the 1970s, where university professors and researchers were expected to be fully committed to state interests. In Tanzania, Nyerere's progressive project of "Education for Self-Reliance" led to ideological requirements for university authorities and the expelling of students protesting state-dictated policies (Berdahl, 2010). This weakened higher education's capacity for critique, further aggravated when the state turned to neoliberal responses to its economic crises of the 1980s.

Subordinated social sciences in a neoliberal Tanzania

Through the 1970s, Tanzania showed strides in education, health care, political stability and a steep decrease in income inequalities—the ratio between highest and lowest paid civil service salaries decreased from 50:1 in 1961 to 5:1 in 1981 (Mukandala, 1988).

Nevertheless, its economy was in serious straits by the 1980s, as was the case for many African countries. The World Bank reports that Tanzania's economy contracted on average by 0.5% a year between 1965 and 1988 (Lewis, 1990). Resisting stringent structural adjustment economic reforms that would have to be imposed with International Monetary Fund aid, Nyerere was criticized by a World Bank country director in Tanzania for his “I asked for money, not advice” attitude (Helleiner, 2000). Dissension within his government grew over this stance and, in 1985, Nyerere resigned. His successor as President, Ali Hassan Mwinyi, signed an agreement with the IMF in 1986.

In this context, the developmental university model ceased to be a benchmark for public policies for education, and a new frame of reference appeared, characterized by a series of fundamentally neoliberal discourses, practices and policies tied to the market. The structural adjustment programs promoted by the World Bank and the IMF (Sawyer, 2004) transformed universities in the country, privatizing education and implementing cost-sharing programs (Aina, 2010, p. 29), and replacing academic programs with vocational technical training. These dynamics were clearly reflected in the changes that took place at the Institute for Development Management into the 1990s, which once more assumed its role of training teams and professionals to serve the government. A long-time professor and administrative authority of the university commented that the IDM had to serve the country's shift from a socialist to a liberalized economy: “We had to help solve the crises which is why we established a number of programs in the training institution” (Interview, 5 October 2015). In 1988, the IDM charter was amended, to establish further roles in the IDM's provision of courses and consultancies to meet the needs of expanding corporations, decentralization programs and administrative reforms scattered all over the country (Interview, 6 October 2015a).

The changes throughout the country were enormous. Throughout the rocky transition period from a centralist, socialist economy to a market-based economy, public sector employment declined substantially, and the informal sector gained importance (Mukyanuzi, 2003). This sector had to be addressed, particularly since this period saw the number of university graduates entering the labour market growing faster than wage employment. At the University of Dar es Salaam, professors remembered the university's response: “With para-State reforms and the privatization process, it became necessary to support the development of domestic entrepreneurs dominating the informal sector” (Alsamarai, 2003 cited in Kalimasi, 2013, p. 438). The IDM considered that “competition is the order of the day and one will survive if one delivers the goods” (Ntukamazina, 1991, p. 435). In terms of research, the “goods” to be delivered included a research agenda and issues that could find support from private and international funders, as public support for the university and its research waned.

Multilateral agencies, such as the IMF and the World Bank, foreign European governments, and international foundations including the Rockefeller, Ford, and Carnegie Foundations became increasingly central to the financial support of Tanzanian scholars' research; in this transition, topics such as “African socialism, self-reliance, and even labor relations were replaced with a focus on issues such as technology, gender issues, and highlight environmental planning” (Jamison, 2010, p. 170–171). Research on the international context and political economy likewise decreased at the IDM from the 1990s onward, to focus increasingly on specific issues and case studies. From 1982, when the IDM's journal *Uongozi* was inaugurated, through 1994, close to a third of the research

published focused on the international context of management. Through the 1990s, however, such subjects decreased to make up only a small part of the studies published in the journal (12% of the studies from 1995–2013). Case studies and research on entrepreneurial issues, increased from only 7% of the publications from 1982–1994 to make up 33% of the publications in 1995–2013. Studies that situate local and national development issues in the context of international political economy are increasingly rare in the journal.

When the IDM was transformed into Mzumbe University in 2001, Tanzania was the East African country with the lowest rate of university education, despite having one of the largest populations in the region. Under pressures to expand higher education, Mzumbe University was established as the third public university in the country and its Faculty of Social Sciences, which had been founded with an Economics Department, expanded to include an education program. The current dean of Social Sciences recounted that the establishment of the education program was “by request of the government of Tanzania” (Interview, 15 October 2015). The Education Department was established in 2005, yet a decade later, a professor in the Education Department noted its continued isolation from the rest of the university (Interview, 12 October 2015). A current professor of Development Economics, also part of the Faculty of Social Sciences, spoke of the need to include fields that reach beyond solving immediate and pragmatic problems: “For development studies, you need humanities” (Interview, 6 October 2015b). The Mzumbe University Prospectus itself shows a conception of social sciences that serve management and development, with little attention to teaching critical skills needed to analyse social and economic structures. The university’s sense of functional social sciences, “geared toward the solution of problems” (Mzumbe University, 2015, p. 114)—in one of the very few provincial universities to even have a social science faculty—is reflected in the Education Department’s emphasis on entrepreneurial education.

If, as we began this paper proposing, the social sciences include fields of study most apt for critiquing unequal social and economic structures, then the neoliberalization of higher education in Tanzania has marginalized these fields both in terms of content and in number. Of the undergraduate programs nationwide in the 2013–2014 academic year, social science programs make less than 3% (Tanzania Commission on Universities, 2013). Of 907 undergraduate programs, almost 300 were in Finance, Business, and Management; Services was the next highest category of undergraduate programs with 112 programs. The smallest number, by far, of programs by study area is the social sciences with only 24 programs. This lack of social science programs translates into a dearth of critical studies of social relations but is also characteristic of the university and research structure in a peripheral country such as Tanzania, in which neoliberal pressures actively curb the critique of international inequalities. As we have seen in this section, the production of knowledge that can critique the political economy that shapes it is intimately linked to the question of the audience and interlocutors of for whom the knowledge is produced, and the actors with whom the university is engaged. The close university-state relations in Tanzania meant that as the state increasingly hewed to pressures from the global economy so did the production of knowledge in the social sciences at Mzumbe University.

RADICAL CRITIQUE AND ITS NEUTRALIZATION IN ECUADORIAN UNIVERSITIES

The changes in African and Tanzanian universities were part of a larger shift in higher education throughout the global south. In the last three decades of the 20th Century, university enrollment in developing countries increased more than ten-fold, going from almost seven million students in 1970 to more than 75 million in 2004 (Guruz, 2011). The number of institutions of higher education in Latin America rose from 330 in 1975 to approximately 2000 in 2003 (Fernández & Pérez, 2013). In Ecuador, rising socioeconomic expectations from the banana exportation boom in the 1950s and increasing urban migration after the land reforms of the 1960s led to the growth of urban Ecuadorian population from 28% in 1950 to 41% in 1974. University enrollment began growing annually by 10.8% in the 1950s and by the 1970s was growing annually by 27.4% (Romero, 2002).

While the African “developmental university” in the 1960s and 1970s put higher education at the service of the newly independent states, the link between universities and development in Latin America was complicated by the contentious relationship between educational and state institutions. In Africa in this period, new national bourgeoisies were emerging in the newly independent republics, reproducing social inequalities and neo-colonialism (Sow, 1994). In Latin America, however, the growing university student population of the 1960s and 1970s radicalized the democratizing role of universities and state-university antagonism. In 1970 in Ecuador, President Velasco Ibarra issued a decree to shut down the capital’s public university. His 1971 Law of Higher Education was emphatically rejected by the First National Congress of Universities and Polytechnic Schools of Ecuador. Ecuadorian universities of the 1970s thus found themselves in a quandary, caught between social demands of the post-Cuban Revolution era and national developmental needs, as we shall see below.

Technical approaches to land reform

In the hopes of staving off the spread through Latin America of redistributive ideologies ignited by the Cuban Revolution, US policies offered modernization programs of agricultural development. In Ecuador’s highland province of Bolivar, one of the educators who began the process to bring higher education to the area recalls: “The country began to change after the reforms proposed by the Alliance for Progress began... So, instead of revolutions, reforms were started” (Interview, 27 July 2015). The province of Bolivar was representative, in this sense, of Ecuador’s rural mountain region, and more specifically, of the region’s poor areas. In the early 20th Century, the Bolivar province began to be isolated from the country’s economic dynamics when it was excluded from the national railway route. This isolation was further exacerbated in the 1960s–70s, when national industrialization policies strengthened Ecuador’s large cities to the detriment of provincial cities and the rural sector, and state investment in industrialization resulted in a significant reduction of wages and living conditions in the rural sector (Bocco, 1989).

In addition, development programs sought to modernize both technical rural economies and traditional socioeconomic forms of *hacienda* management. Ecuador’s *Agrarian Reform Law* was passed in 1964. In this economic and political context, a group of Bolivar’s elite, educators living in the city of Guayaquil, lobbied to establish an extension program of the University of Guayaquil in their provincial capital of Guaranda. They

convinced University of Guayaquil officials to offer an Engineering for the Administration of Agroindustrial Enterprises degree program in Guaranda.

The university extension began to function in the same years that national land reform was being implemented. But the University of Guayaquil's School of Administrative Sciences, rather than its School of Agronomy, directed the extension program, emphasizing an administrative and modernizing approach to rural management. As such, the program's curricular and educational approaches to agrarian issues responded to elite landowners' needs rather than popular demands for equality. Such a tendency to depoliticize agrarian reform is apparent in a study conducted for the University of Guayaquil's School of Agronomy in 1975; the study argued that a finite amount of land and a growing population meant that land distribution should be studied "scientifically" rather than politicized in terms of social inequality (González Holmes, 1975, p. 1).

The university leader who would later oversee the extension's transition into the autonomous State University of Guaranda describes pressures on rural institutions to increase technical careers: "[These] were pushed specifically to make technological changes in the agricultural and livestock sector. The old *hacienda*, the huge old farm, was to become a modern *hacienda*, using machinery and green farming, using agrochemicals, and the like." (Interview, 27 July 2015). Despite many Guaranda academics' critiques of national development policies, the new institution was obliged to offer technical programs in line with the development model promoted by the State. In these programs, the administrative character of land reform was emphasized, instead of its socio-political questioning of land ownership.

After the 1970s petroleum boom, the Ecuadorian economy began to falter as international prices declined in the early 1980s. In 1982–83, El Niño's severe floods, rains, and droughts damaged agriculture and infrastructure, adding to the country's economic difficulties, as debt servicing rose to absorb up to 60% of the country's export earnings in 1984. Consumer prices rose 14% in 1980, increased by 25% in 1982 and by another 53% in 1983 (Flores & Merrill, 1989). Structural adjustment policies in this period reduced public investments, including in education, and the University of Guayaquil was unable to continue funding the extension program. As inauspicious as this context seemed, it provided a momentous opportunity for the leftist academics of Guaranda to establish an autonomous university.

The political ties of these academics to Socialist Party legislators helped them gain Congressional approval and state funding for the new university in 1989. Milton Cáceres, a militant colleague of the university's first president, Cáceres had been involved in the agrarian reform demands through his contact with Indigenous and peasant farmer communities in rural provinces throughout Ecuador (Quishpe, 2015). He noted that it was to Indigenous cultures that "the Ecuadorian Marxist Left, of which I've formed part, has the largest debts... It is not possible to build another country without considering their incredible contributions" (Interview, 24 October 2015). University President Gabriel Galarza thought likewise: "Especially in the Andean countries, the Indigenous people make us break with some of the orthodox Marxist schemes... That reality has to be considered for any change here in Ecuador." (Interview, 27 July 2015).

With the institutional support to explore these perspectives in theory and in praxis, Cáceres and others founded the School of Andean Culture and Education (EECA for its initials in Spanish). This new institute proposed that Indigenous knowledge was central

to the country's intellectual and political progress. The EECA project emerged from its founders' participation in the Eugenio Chusig School for political training, which educated Indigenous-peasant leaders through a pedagogical approach that recovered and legitimized Indigenous thought, traditions and organizational forms. Both the Eugenio Chusig School for political training and the university-level School of Andean Culture and Education sought to bring these Indigenous elements together with socialist militant struggles in order to challenge predominant State and economic models. Interculturality became the linchpin of both EECA's academic proposal and its political project aimed at transforming the ways that society conceived and institutionalized development.

Indigenous political-epistemological challenges and their standardization

The EECA proposed an epistemological break with Western modes of knowledge production. Its academic project and study plans were shaped through discussions with Indigenous leaders. EECA's institutional founders had originally hoped to establish a sociology and anthropology program geared to educating community leaders and supporting the organization of the Indigenous movement through research into non-Western forms of knowledge. Local community leaders, however, were more concerned with Indigenous communities' dearth of access to education. The Bachelor's degree in Andean Culture and Education was EECA's first academic program. Even though its aim was to train educators, it also always contained an important socio-anthropological component. The first curriculum of this program in 1992 included the following areas of study: Theory of the Andean Community; Pedagogy of the Andean Community; and Research on the Historical-Social Processes of the Andean Community.

The school also sought to break with traditional forms of university teaching. The educational model included on-site modules in Guaranda as well as projects in students' own communities, where their formal education was brought into dialogue with local concerns. Members of the faculty travelled to and stayed in those communities and developed curricula based on their experiences. The abstract and individual generation of knowledge was far less important in EECA than the collective construction of knowledge and its incorporation into community development processes.

The EECA also organized several international gatherings for academic reflection on Andean and intercultural issues; the First International Workshop on Andean Cosmivision and Western Knowledge was held in Guaranda in 1992. Attended by Indigenous leaders, researchers and academics from Ecuador and abroad, aimed to define epistemic alternatives to the scientific paradigm of the West. Through transforming the nature of the university, the EECA sought to impact society's understanding of development. EECA founders maintain that the school's work was influential in Ecuador's later project of a pluri-national state, a form of government that aimed to include Indigenous nationalities' autonomous political and development principles, enshrined in the country's 2008 constitution.

How did such an autochthonous and alternative intellectual project prosper at an institution begun as a rural administrative extension program? In the 1990s, Ecuadorian higher education experienced chaotic growth. In the same period that Mzumbe University academics were subjected to national development policies defined by international pressures, the Ecuadorian university system was neglected by a state that had never controlled it. Private universities with clear commercial aims sprang up throughout

Ecuador, with the country's first for-profit universities established in 1993. Unregulated, the number of private universities grew to 32 by 2006. Decreased state investment left public universities with little funding, yet also gave these universities unprecedented autonomy from state pressures. In this context, experiments like the School of Andean Culture and Education (could) appeared, animated by political, popular and subaltern interests.

Such independent spaces would not last long. A process to systematize higher education was taking place at the international level, in which certification by quality assessment agencies would grant stability and legitimacy to local university systems. The Bologna Process of 1999 standardized and homogenized European higher education. The same program was brought to the Latin American region in 2003, through the Tuning Project for Latin America. In 2005, the Tuning Project in Ecuador was established. According to Aboites (2010), these projects sought to apply a European model of cognitive skills, including commercial skills with mercantile aims, in the region, with little acknowledgment or adaptation to the local context.

These global university models were precisely what Ecuadorian state authorities needed to respond to the mounting criticisms of the nation's unruly higher education system. The 2000 and 2010 Laws of Higher Education initiated and consolidated national oversight (over the higher education system; university evaluation and accreditation became a central part of state regulation of these institutions. In this context, State University of Bolivar administrators realized that an experiment like EECA—with little infrastructure, professors without doctorates, etc.—would bring down their position in the new university ranking system. Rather than risk decreased funding, or even the closure threatened for the lowest-ranked institutions, the State University of Bolivar ended support for the EECA project.

Social sciences at the State University of Bolivar are now housed at the School of Jurisprudence and Political Science, which offers degrees in law and sociology. The sociology degree was established in 2010, to train planners and civil servants. In contrast to sociology's radical and Marxist tendencies throughout Latin America, sociology at the State University of Bolivar is aimed at teaching technical skills for public policy design. The Vice Dean of the School stressed the importance of avoiding political conflict and promoting liberal inclusion: "We cannot take up the banner for a struggle, because otherwise [the state] will fault us or think that we favour one political sector over another" (Interview, 16 June 2015). That the critical edge of EECA's intellectual and political project has been dulled is apparent in the multicultural approach to Indigenous issues now incorporated into the new sociology program. Social sciences at the State University of Bolivar have been standardized, steering away from critiquing social contradictions and inequalities, to provide technical and functional responses to development problems.

HOPES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE PERIPHERAL PRODUCTION OF CRITICAL KNOWLEDGE

Given their situated and peripheral positions, intellectuals of the global south develop analyses very different from those that produced in other places. The relationship between economic and educational structures in the post-colonial period is not only influenced by international political economy, but also by local and national class relations and the historically constituted relations among universities, societies and their governments. In

their diverse contexts, universities seek to make their teaching and research relevant to the solution of collective and national problems. Yet the analytic definitions of what constitute problems, collectives, solutions and even relevance are deeply embedded in both historical and socio-political contexts.

Tanzanian universities sharpened their oppositional analyses to unequal world systems in a joint mission with the post-independence socialist state, contributing to the development of African forms of socialism. In Latin America and Ecuador, universities' democratizing bends were part of their historically antagonistic relationship to elite-controlled national governments. Further, Ecuadorian rural universities were isolated from the country's development priorities, which, paradoxically, gave these provincial sites some margin of liberty to elaborate radical epistemological and political responses to their exclusion. The framework of a situated political economy of knowledge helps us recognize the fundamental role of multi-scalar networks of academic and political exchanges in the constitution of regional epistemologies and social sciences that reflexively examine the conditions of their production.

The possibilities for such critical analyses, however, are limited when national policies seek to compete on both the epistemological and economic terms dictated by dominant capitalist processes. Tanzanian universities' historically close ties to State projects meant that university priorities shifted along with national aims. When Tanzanian national development policies took on neoliberal characteristics in the 1990s, so did their universities; dependence on international agencies became a shared characteristic of both the government and the universities. International organizations and development projects focused university research and teaching on managerial and entrepreneurial approaches, leaving little room for regional African exchanges and leading to the marginalization of the social sciences in universities. Rural universities, in particular, continued to serve the technical and administrative needs of government bodies.

In the same period that an entrepreneurial spirit began to dominate Mzumbe University's Faculty of Social Sciences, the State University of Bolivar's School for Andean Culture and Education was generating Indigenous-based challenges to dominant knowledge production. Both of these developments were responses to the changing role of knowledge in the accumulation of capital; their differences were due to historically configured political, class and institutional relations at the local, national and regional levels. Given the longstanding State-university antagonism in Ecuador, the Ecuadorian government sought to incorporate the country into the international knowledge economy through top-down higher education reforms. Such standardizing policies preclude the possibilities of experimental projects like EECA. Regional academic exchange continues, but the professionalization of Latin American academics according to international standards has generally become more important than stimulating endogenous perspectives and situated critiques.

Rigorous research and analyses from peripheral standpoints are particularly necessary for understanding the social and epistemological dimensions of unequal political economic structures. Yet, the possibilities for their continued innovation and force will depend on both national and international higher education policies that attend to the conditions in which such locally-based critiques may emerge. Inequalities persist as long as mechanisms that discipline their criticism exist. One small step in our persistent struggle

against these inequalities is a better understanding of how politics and economics function to compromise critical knowledge in situated circumstances.

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