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# Absences and Imaginings: The Production of Knowledge on Globalisation and Education

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**Abstract**

In his paper *Grassroots Globalisation and the Research Imagination*, Arjun Appadurai challenges academics to develop ways of researching and engaging with the victims of globalisation. A key objective of Appadurai's is to sketch out the problematic and build up the terrain on which a democratisation of research about globalisation might take place. In order to proceed in ways that are productive for developing a critical research imagination, we must begin by first interrogating the conceptual tools we use to understand globalisation. I identify three absences that are evident in current approaches by researchers working on globalisation and education which seem to me to be particularly pressing; first, the absence of a critical spatial analytic; second, the absence of subaltern or alternative knowledges; and third, the absence of research reflecting on the altered terrain and politics of democratic representation as a result of global processes. In the final concluding section I return to the idea of a social imaginary and introduce several experiments with the development of dialogical approaches to knowledge production based on participatory parity.

**Introduction**

In his paper *Grassroots Globalisation and the Research Imagination*, Arjun Appadurai challenges academics to develop ways of researching and engaging with the victims of globalisation. Fashioned from the cleavage between the ideas and material concerns of a privileged intellectual class and the burgeoning mass of precarious and permanently excluded in the social hierarchy of the global economy (Cox, 2003: 84), our deliberation on globalisation, Appadurai argues, contributes to an apartheid between the academy and local communities.

A key objective of Appadurai's essay is to sketch out the problematic and lay out the terrain on which a democratisation of research about globalisation might take place. In this way, he argues, we might have some hope of (i) closing the gap between the globalisation of knowledge and the knowledge of globalisation by mediating the uneven distribution of resources for intellectual labour.

Whilst I agree with the urgency of Appadurai's call, I want to argue that in order to proceed in ways that are productive for the development of a critical research imagination and counter-hegemonic project, it is important we begin by interrogating the conceptual tools that Appadurai's call invites us to use. If, as Cox (2003: 79) argues, "globalisation is a struggle over knowledge of world affairs" (76) and "a mirror of changing power relations" (79), then it is important that we develop ways of knowing that help us understand and act upon a particular historical conjuncture. If, too, globalisation has also changed the way we must argue about justice, largely as the transformation of nation states and the emergence of new global governance structures have altered the terrain and politics of representation, then our research must also pay attention to the nature of this transformation (Fraser, 2005: 87).

Three absences seem to me to be particularly pressing and they form the substantive focus of this paper: first, the absence of critical spatial analytic in research on globalisation and education; second, the absence of subaltern and alternative knowledges in our understanding of globalisation and education; and third, the absence of a sustained engagement with the implications for education systems in nation states of the altered

spaces for political engagement and representation resulting from emerging processes of global governance.

In the final section of the paper I argue that our imaginaries for the future must these absences take into account, and provide three brief examples of tranformative practice to guide our imaginary.


## Conceptualising (the) globalisation of/and education

As Peter Dickens' recent noted, "…'globalisation' is a big problem in every sense of the word" (2004:5). This is not only because globalisation embraces many of the big issues in contemporary societies, or highly uneven outcomes, but because the meaning of globalisation is deeply and widely contested. Given this state of affairs, we might be tempted to use globalisation as a catch-all phrase. However, this would undermine the imperative of developing a clear understanding of the transformations that are taking place around us. Such understandings are central if we are to build a better world.

It follows then that our knowledge of globalisation is substantially a function of how the concept is defined. And though, as Scholte argues,

> "….definition is not everything…everything involves definition. A muddled or misguided core concept compromises our overall comprehension of the problem. In contrast, a sharp and revealing definition promotes insightful, interesting and empowering knowledge, an understanding that helps us shape our destiny in positive directions" (Scholte, 2002: 3).

Much of the research in education has a tendency to use globalisation in a rather loose and often determinist way. While this might be expected, for instance when politicians galvanise support for a political project, it is not particularly helpful in research work. As we have argued elsewhere (see Robertson, Bonal and Dale, 2002), deploying globalisation as in "globalisation does" or "globalisation causes" means that globalisation is constructed as a process without a subject or agent. In other words, globalisation is not an actor in its own right. Rather, actors may use the idea of globalisation in a rhetorical or discursive sense to further their own projects, or to describe processes, such as the flow of knowledge through digital networks. This is not a new insight on our part. Colin Hay (1999: 1) has helpfully pointed out framing globalisation in ways that hide social processes ignores the place of ideas and the role of agency. Thus, restoring subjects to the process of globalisation is crucial to the broader task of demystifying globalisation and challenging the logic of 'there being no alternative' which might be implied.

It was in response to this particular problem of research on globalisation and education that colleagues and I worked on a series of papers exploring different global and regional organisations as subjects (and outcomes) of globalisation. For instance, in *The Varying Effects of Regional Organisations as Subjects of Globalisation* (Dale and Robertson, 2002)*,* we argued that the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the European Union (EU) and the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) all were established by national governments to further their interests regionally, typically against the perceived threat of an unfettered global economy. Similarly, in our analysis of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) under the auspices of the World Trade Organisation, we argued that little or nothing could be explained in terms of the causal

powers of globalisation and that it was the outcome of processes that involved real actors—economic and political—with real interests (Robertson, Bonal and Dale, 2002: 472). We drew attention to the fact that the creation of the WTO, and its agenda to bring services sectors—such as education—into the negotiations on trade, was the result of powerful mercantilist lobbies within the US and other countries (including New Zealand and Australia), seeking to promote the progressive liberalisation of the services sector as well as to regulate those sectors through global rules.

In these papers we were able to show the importance of ideas (for instance, that education should be viewed as a service sector/commodity) and agents (such as national states, transnational firms, INGO's, and lobbies, such as the Coalition for Public Services in the USA) in the construction of this new system of global and regional governance. Similarly, in his paper on the mechanisms of globalisation, Dale (1999) elaborated the different ways in which agents of globalisation were seen to work both on and through education systems, using processes such as borrowing, learning, imposition and so on. Importantly, conceptualising globalisation in agency and structural terms enabled us to not only demystify globalisation, but to use this knowledge strategically to intervene in the process, particularly around the GATS.

A rather different problem with research on globalisation is the conflation of the global with the economic strategies of capital, while the local is conceptualised as the space for an oppositional and emancipatory politics – as in the idea of grassroots globalisation. However, this approach tends to fetishize both the global and the local, as containers of already identified social relations with firmly fixed boundaries (Collinge 2005). As Massey notes, "…it is no response to globalisation simply to press the case of the local as the site for resistance, for the specific meaning of local cannot be determined outside of specific contextual reference" (2005: 184). More than this, thinking of the global this way, as an ungrounded 'up there' or 'out there', reinforces an imaginary of the local and place as potentially vulnerable, while capital has agency in global space. However, as Novelli (2004) demonstrates in his research on social movement unionism, Sintraemcali, the Colombian public sector workers union in Cali, developed strategic linkages and alliances with actors and institutions that stretched across space, in turn enabling the union to mobilise a range of different actors in opposition to privatisation.

## Absences 1 SPACE (how can education develop a critical spatial lens?)

As it evident from my arguments above, that simply invoking the spatial is gestural and inadequate (Robertson and Dale, 2005). In this section on spatial absences I outline two ways of proceeding that open up new ways of thinking about globalisation and education; first, that space is socially produced; and second, the idea of scale which helps us think about differences in the spatial organisation of societies.

*Space as socially produced:* Drawing inspiration from the work of Henri Lefebvre, a number of writers (cf. David Harvey, Doreen Massey, Neil Smith, Neil Brenner, Erik Swyngedouw) have sought to develop a more dialectical account of space, where society and space are integral to each other, as opposed to space being either regarding as static or the backdrop against which social relationships take place. As Massey argues in her now well-quoted claim*: "The spatial is social relations stretched out".* Massey is further helpful here, particularly in her insistence on the relational and co-constitutive nature of local-global. As she argues:

> The lived reality of our daily lives is utterly dispersed, unlocalised in its sources and in its repercussions. The degree of dispersion, the stretching, may vary across social groups, but the point is that the geography will not be territorial. Where would you draw the line around the lived reality of your daily life? …If we think space relationally, then it is the sum of all our connections, and in that sense utterly grounded, and those connections may go around the world (Massey, 2005: 184-5).

For Massey, social phenomena and space are constituted out of social relations and "…since social relations are imbued with power and meaning, this view of the spatial is as an ever shifting geometry of power and signification (1994: 2).

This is particularly helpful in understanding changes taking place in education. For instance, the development of a global circuit of schooling, where well-off families are able to purchase a highly desired education in the developed English speaking world through their capacity to access resources and be mobile across space, in turn produces an uneven geography in the consumption of education (Lewis, 2004).

Conceptualising social relations in spatial terms focuses attention on the flows and linkages in the production, distribution and consumption of education, in particular the way this geometry is the outcome of strategies and struggles  (see Jessop, 2004 on spatio-temporal fixes) (Brenner, 1998), and how particular configurations work in the interests of some groups and not others.  This is helpful in revealing the ways in which institutions concerned with education are assembled and reassembled over time, and how these configurations of knowledge/power produce particular kinds of subjectivities. Olds and Thrift's (2005) work on the Singapore Global Schoolhouse shows not only how the Singapore government ahs assembled a regional/global hub for education services as a response to competitive pressures in the global economy, but also  how new enterprising subjects are fashioned for the global economy.

*Scale and the organisation of space:* The emergence of a scale analytic in critical theories of space (Smith 1992; Brenner, 1998; Swyngedouw, 1997; Collinge, 2005), to understand the differences in the spatial organisation of societies has significantly helped us to capture something important about contemporary social change, in which globalisation tendencies go hand-in-hand with the restructuring of nation states.  As Collinge (2005: 189) observes,

> Scale discourse is powerful as it holds out a totalising perspective, seeking to integrate different levels of geographical inquiry. In so doing it draws attention to the division of the global social formation into not only a  'horizontal' structure (in which similar activities are organised at similar scales in different places) but also a 'vertical' structure (in which different activities are organised at different scales covering the same places).

Scale analysis functions by assembling a series of spatial categories into a hierarchical framework that is used to investigate social change. Both Jessop and Brenner (1998; 2005), for instance, have focused their attention on statehood and processes of rescaling, arguing that diverse areas of national state power, policy formation and socio-political struggles are being redefined in response to both global and local pressures. Further,

Collinge's (1999) innovative contribution to scale analysis – 'the relativization of scale' – distinguishes dominant and nodal scales in a scalar division of labour.

Scale dominance refers to the power which organisations at certain spatial scales, such as the national, are able to exercise over organisations over other higher or lower scales, while nodal scales are defined as scales that are non-dominant in the overall hierarchy of scales. They nonetheless serve as the primary loci for the delivery of certain activities.

This is a particularly fruitful set of conceptual innovations for scholars concerned with understanding globalisation and education. It enables us to move beyond the language of devolution and decentralisation, to seeing the strategic and relational content of these processes. As argued elsewhere (cf. Robertson and Dale 2005), much of the writing on the restructuring of education has operated with the national as an implicit scale against which change occurs, while spaces like the 'local' or 'national' are regarded as having natural, enduring and universal properties enabling them to be compared across spaces, or being the container of particular organisations, such as the state.

One result has been to fuse the state to a particular scale, the national. Not only does this close off the possibility of seeing and understanding a continual process of flux and transformation, but as Brenner's (2004) argues, it also locks us into seeing states as part of an international state system based on national territorial units. For researchers seeking to understand, for example, the emerging globalising education industry, the creation of the European education space, or the European Higher Education Area—all significant developments in the field of globalisation and education—an inter-state analysis can only provide us with a partial insight; that is the interests and strategies of nationally-located actors – states, firms and so on.

So, what is left out from this epistemological vantage point? With its focus on horizontal space, we do not see the way in which transformations, particularly in the governance of education, are taking place along a vertical axis. By bringing the scalar in, Dale's research on the creation of the European Education Space (2003) is able to reveal an emerging functional and scalar division of the labour of education between global, regional, national and local scales, revealing something more that is at play.

## Absences 2  KNOWLEDGE (whose knowledge is being globalised?)

In this section I want to explore the question of knowledge, in particular whose knowledge of globalisation is being globalised and how our research and dissemination agendas might productively engage with alternative, other, or subaltern knowledges of globalisation.  Specifically, I want to argue that Appadurai's call for the globalisation of knowledge could be developed using the work of Boaventura de Sousa Santos in order for it to connect with the concerns of the dispossessed.

For Santos, many accounts of globalisation typically promote a conventional account of globalisation as a top down process of diffusion of economic and cultural paradigms and models from the north to the south (2005. 2). Alternatively, if focusing on hegemony, researchers fail to see the anti-hegemonic so that our accounts are only partial.  More recent studies on governance have tended to focus on devolution and networks, failing to see that networks are often local elites (the kind of problem that we were exploring in the first half of this paper where the global and the local are both fetishized).  Thus,

global corporate lawyers are likely to be very different from global human rights lawyers in their interests and projects.

As Santos shows, alternatives to hegemonic forms of globalisation (and here he means the globalisation of neo-liberalism), are not only present in the 'South' (used metaphorically to describe the subaltern) but they offer a powerful set of possible alternate ways of knowing. Any socially-just form of globalisation can only emerge as a result of making present the absences in the knowledge that we have of the world. As Santos argues, "there can be no global social justice without global cognitive justice" (2005: 13).

In order to move forward, Santos calls for a plurality of efforts from those within the academy and outside. Such efforts would be directed toward a *sociology of absences* and *a sociology of emergences*; a way of understanding (describing) and critiquing (prescribing) that "amplifies the voice of those who have been victimised" (2005: 2) and identifies the signals, clues and traces of future possibilities for social life. Not only is Santos deeply opposed to the organisation of hegemonic forms of knowledge production, distribution and consumption into disciplines, but he argues that the knowledge of the north, hegemonic knowledge, is dominated by western-based modern science and supported through western legal structures that tend to support property rights. Thus, the differences are not merely political – as in whose knowledge counts; rather the differences are "the result of what counts as relevant knowledge, differences in identifying, validating or hierarchizing the relations between western-based scientific knowledge and other knowledges derived from practices, rationalities or cultural universes" (Santos, 2004: 12).

In our role as founding editors of *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, we have been acutely aware of the problem of allowing a necessarily partial western northern knowledge to parade as global knowledge. In the first issue of the journal we published Orlando Fals-Borda and Luis E. Mora-Oseja's *Eurocentrism and Its Effects: A Manifesto from Colombia* in the hope that we could stimulate debate on the question of whose knowledge was being globalised. We also interviewed Boaventura de Sousa Santos (see Dale and Robertson, 2004) as a way of making existent a major theorist of the 'south'. Clearly much more than this needs to be done – however it is useful to be guided by Santos' view as to what a sociology of absences might consist of.

Santos argues that a sociology of absences should consist of an inquiry that aims to explain that what does not exist is in fact actively produced as nonexistent (2004: 14). In other words, existence of particular objects and social relations is made impossible in the light of conventional social science. As Santos states:

> "There is no single, univocal way of not existing. The Logics and process through which hegemonic criteria of rationality and efficiency produces the non-existence of what does not fit them are various. Non-existence is produced whenever a certain entity is disqualified or rendered invisible, unintelligible, or irreversibly discardable. What unites the different logics of production of non-existence is that they are all manifestations of the same rational monoculture" (p. 15).

Santos moves on to identity five logics or modes of production of non-existence that would make up a *sociology of absences*. These are:

1. *The monoculture of knowledge and rigor of knowledge* – where modern science and high culture are the sole criteria for truth and aesthetic quality. All that is not recognised or legitimated by the canon is declared non-existent because it is ignorant or backward [THE IGNORANT].
2. *The monoculture of linear time* – the idea that history has a unique and well-knowledge meaning and direction. This logic produces non-existence by describing as backward that which is not forward [THE RESIDUAL]
3. *The monoculture of the naturalisation of difference* – based upon the logic of social classification. Categories naturalise hierarchies – for instance in the way in which categorisations around race or gender create domination [THE INFERIOR]
4. *The monoculture of the universal and of the global* - based upon the logic of the dominant scale. In western modernity, the dominant scale appears in two different forms: the 'universal' which ignores specific contexts, and the 'global' – the scale that in the past twenty years has dominated thinking and come to privilege those activities or entities that widen their scope to the whole globe [THE LOCAL].
5. *The monoculture of criteria of capitalist productivity and efficiency* – based upon the logic of productivity. All labour is converted into productive force for the economy, while labour that cannot be converted is regarded as non-productive and therefore non-existent [THE NON-PRODUCTIVE]

Taken together, these social forms, in privileging some social entities and disqualifying others, waste of experience and knowledge. This is all too evident in the instrumentalisation of knowledge (such as the World Bank's knowledge management approach or the OECD's use of indicators and statistics as a means of governance), and the commodification and patenting of knowledge through the World Trade Organisation and the various regional and bilateral agreements.

The increasing incorporation of the production, distribution and consumption of knowledge for the globalising economy, the new engine for development (see Van Der Velden, 2004) and global competitiveness through the rapid generation of ideas and innovation (Robertson, 2005), is guided by the logic of the global capitalist economy; 'accumulation by dispossession'. It is, however, as Cox (2003: 84) notes, a world composed of an emerging 3 part social hierarchy which cuts across state boundaries – of those who are integrated into the global economy, and a growing number who either serve the global economy in a more precarious way, or who are permanently excluded.

In concluding this section, it is important to note that these logics or monocultures of production of non-existence are not the consequence of recent processes of globalisation. Feminists and postcolonial scholars have already recognised these logics; logics that are imprinted on the spatial presentations of societies and which have framed women and blacks as non-productive, ignorant, residual, inferior and local. As Collinge (2005: 193) notes, |Massey, Rose and Gibson-Graham have contributed significantly to showing how geographical knowledge has been constructed around the dominant subject positions of white, heterosexual, bourgeois masculinities – "the exclusion of black or female experience is thought to be rooted in the operation of a series of hierarchical dualisms (such as mind/body or space/place".

**Absences 3 REPRESENTATION (how does a globalising education sector alter the politics of representation?)**

"Globalisation is changing the way we argue about justice", argues Nancy Fraser (2005: 69), largely as a result of changes taking place within state structures. However, the national (Westphalian) state has, with good reason, been the space where political claims-making has taken place. Thus, arguments around social justice have tended to centre on fellow citizens and the means through which to redress these, that is, the national and sub-national state spaces.

However, globalisation and associated regionalisation processes have been unleashed by national states (along with other actors) with some powers being ceded upward and outward to new global and regional actors. Jessop (1997) calls this the denationalisation of the state. Today, the social processes that shape peoples lives flow over borders, rather than being contained by them. Decisions taken in one state may well have consequences for another (such as with the General Agreement on Trade in Services), while the actions of non-state actors, such as transnational firms (such as Microsoft or Sylvan learning systems), international organisations (for instance the OECD), non-governmental (e.g. Oxfam) or multilateral agencies (as in the World Bank) have important consequences for groups and communities within a national territory. Jessop (1997) calls this process 'de-statisation', or privatisation.
As Hirsch (2003: 243) argues, that there is a 're-feudalization' taking place, where there is a decline in the institutional decision-making processes in favour of informal negotiating fora, which are almost beyond the control of traditional democratic institutions and processes.

As noted earlier with the production of scale (regional, global), there is the growing internationalisation of political regulatory systems, largely as the globalising political economy has sought to create structures that enable some degree of coordination and regulation amongst competing nations and blocs. And, as Hirsch (2003: 246) also notes, in this new world order, stronger states and political lobbies have been able to dominate negotiations and decision-making structures, leading to a crisis of structures of representation and also of legitimation (see also the Kwa, 2003).

This point is pursued by Fraser, who argues that as a result of these shifts, contemporary structures of justice and the means for contesting these forces are woefully inadequate as they were shaped within the Keynesian-Westphalian frame. As she notes, "…it has ceased to be axiomatic that the modern territorial state is the appropriate unit for thinking about issues of justice, and that the citizens of such states are the pertinent subjects of reference" (2005a: 71). Fraser goes on to argue not only are the governance structures of the global economy (e.g. credit rating agencies, International Financial Organisations, WTO, and so on) exempt from democratic control, but that the state-territorial framing of political claims-making is a major vehicle for injustice in that it partitions political space in ways that block citizens from challenging these forces (Fraser 2005b: 304).

While broadly agreeing with Fraser about the changing architecture of power in the global economy, her analysis tends to take for granted that the form (as opposed to the degree) of the state's sovereignty and forms of political constitutionalism have either remained in the same or been eroded through the ceding of sovereign powers upward.

However, Jayasuriya's argument, that "Globalisation shapes sovereignty" (2001: 444) leads him to conclude that there has been a transformation in the *form* of sovereignty within the state, on the one hand as a result of its dispersion of powers of governance in institutions of civil society and the economy, and on the other "because of a transition from political constitutionalism to a kind of economic constitutionalism" (Jayasuriya, 2001: 443). As activities of the state are dispersed across civil society and the market, law and the territorial state are uncoupling so that economic constitutionalism gives a juridical cast to economic institutions, in turn placing these institutions *beyond* politics. For instance, once education sectors are committed to trade agreements between countries through the WTO mechanisms, it is almost impossible to reverse these decisions without prohibitive penalties. Similarly, amongst the NAFTA countries, if the education sector is privatised, then any effort to nationalise (as a public service) can be contested by economic actors.

These developments have profoundly affected the education sector. For instance, the international finance agencies (such as the World Bank and the Asia Development Bank), international organisations such as the OECD, and non-governmental organisations, have become even more influential in shaping the education agendas of the developing and developed economies, not only through funding but through policy advice and determining national state regulations. And while this is not new in that the 1980s Structural Adjustment Programmes of the IMF and the World Bank undermined national autonomy, there is good evidence to suggest there is greater penetration of the national state policymaking space, for example through (a) Sector Wide Programme Strategies (see Kuder, 2004, where aid funds are made available subject to new conditions of policy and practice; Hirsch, 2003) (b) Fast Track Initiatives (Rose, 2003), or (c) being placed under pressure (from within and outside of the country) to make commitments under the World Trade Organisation to trade in service sectors, like education.

While there has been some research taking place in these important areas, there is simply not enough; nor is there sufficient attention paid to the consequences for education systems, not only in terms of who gets taught what (what kind of knowledge), but indeed, who gets to be taught (access) where (cross border supply), and who gets to provide education (for instance, for profit firms) One reason for this lacuna in the research on globalisation and education is the overly 'national' focus and perspective of many researchers (to some extent shaped by research funding bodies). Another is because approaches to the study of education systems and problems, such as international and comparative education, still suffer from disciplinary parochialism and methodological nationalism (see Dale, this issue).

**Imaginings**

The question remains as to what to do about this state of affairs, particularly when the question of justice in a global context is so under-developed (Higgott, 1999: 23). Like Appadurai, Santos calls for a new social imaginary based on already existing realities that emphasize knowledge and knowledge generation as cultural and public and social acts (2005: 17). Our knowledges must face head-on the blindnesses and absences that Santos outlined earlier—of what is constructed as ignorance, residual, inferior, local and non-productive. It must also, as Jayasuriya and Fraser (2005a) argue, take note of the changing political realities of nation-states legal and political structures so that there can

be a "…reformulation of new models of democracy appropriate to the emerging complex sovereignty" (Jayasuriya, 2001: 443) and a new basis for claims-making.

One way forward is to begin the process of making present the absences in our own knowledge of globalisation and education. By developing a critical spatial analytic, we can see more clearly how the social relations of space and scale are not pre-given but the outcome of political projects and struggles. It is thus possible to imagine and create a different assemblage of social relations in new spaces of engagement with a different geometry of power, set of knowledge and politics of representation.

Three brief examples will be developed here as illustrative of the possibility of a different imaginary and practice in education. The first example may well be familiar to those following the World Social Forum—an alternative political space to the World Economic Forum that was inspired by the Porto Alegre experiment in Brazil. In writing on this for *Globalisation, Societies and Education,* Danilo Streck (2004: 222) reports Port Alegre Mayor Tarso Genro[i] as arguing that the experiment with participatory budgeting was a means for developing a different political agenda and social contract. As Streck notes:

> For him [Genro], the idea of a new social contract starts from the proposition that the present state and its political representation system is not adequate for mediating the conflicts in the context of economic globalisation within the new patterns of production originated through the modern scientific and technological development. …Genro argues for the necessity to create a new 'non statal public space'which would be the equivalent to a 'new political contract' through which the government would be open to the decisions of another sphere; a sphere characterised by broad public participation (2004: 222).

Luís Armando Gandin (forthcoming, 2006) has also written extensively on this experiment with space, knowledge and political representation as an alternative to neo-liberal globalisation, focusing specifically on the Citizen School project, implemented in Porto Alegre. Gandin argues that the economic discourses of neoliberalism and economically productive citizens were turned on their head by the Popular Administration. With education prioritised, the Citizen School could move into the space with its own alternative project; a realignment of priorities and investment in a transformative project of education for the excluded. The Popular Administration then reinterpreted and translated concepts that had been the discursive armoury of neo-liberals, such as 'autonomy', 'decentralization,' and 'collaboration'. Gandin outlines how the basic goals of the project – democratization of access to school, democratization of knowledge, and democratization of governance – were created collectively through a participatory structure especially created for conceiving these goals.

A second example emerges with the work of Boaventura de Sousa Santos, and his critique of the modern entrepreneurial university. Santos' project is to mobilise and work with a movement to create an alternative university that would be a knowledge space oriented toward action for social transformation. Informed by a critique of the neo-liberal university (Santos, 2004), Santos outlines a process for the development of a popular university for social movements (PUSM) (2003). In a paper outlining this process, he argues "the main objective of PUSM is to help make knowledge of alternative globalisation as global as globalisation itself, and at the same time to render actions for social transformation better known and more efficient, and its protagonists

more competent and reflective".    This initiative, to embrace an array of social movements, is shaped by the idea that new forms of resistance must emerge to neo-liberal globalisation, and new directions for social emancipation (Santos, 2003: 4). The knowledge developed in the PUSM would be geared toward the gap between theory and the new practical realities.

> Its aim is the educate activists and community leaders of social movements and NGOs, by providing them with adequate analytical and theoretical frameworks, The latter will enable them to deepen their reflective understanding of their practice—their methods and objectives—enhancing efficiency and consistency. On the other hand, it aims to educate social scientists/scholars/artists interested in studying the new processes of social transformation, by offering them direct dialogue with their protagonists. This will    make it possible to identify and wherever possible to eliminate, the discrepancy between the analytical and theoretical frameworks in which they were trained and the concrete needs and aspirations emerging form new transformational practices. In this two-pronged educational approach lies it novelty (Santos, 2003:  5).

Fundamental to the project is an attempt to overcome the problem of reciprocal knowledge and sharing knowledge.  Thus, aside from being a network of plural knowledges, the aim of the PUSM is to be a network for the creation of plural knowledges.

The third and final example draws on the work of Thomas Muhr[ii] and Antoni Verger (forthcoming) and their preliminary analysis of President Chávez's strategy of short-term poverty alleviation with long-term structural transformation towards a 'Socialism of the 21st Century' in Venezuela (Muhr and Verger, forthcoming: 6-7). Specifically, Muhr and Verger focus on the policies, discourses and practices of higher education (HE) in Venezuela, as both a revolutionary process and part of Venezuela's counter-hegemonic challenge to globalisation. The outline how students in the Bolivarian Universities, for instance, will develop projects with the community, developing a close link between local need and knowledge and the resources (ideas) of the universities. Venezuelan educational restructuring is firmly embedded in an anti-(neo-liberal)-capitalist, humanist rationale for education and a model of society based on solidarity and collectivity rather than individuality. While their work is in its early stages, it is useful in highlighting the kind of research that is valuable in developing a plurality of knowledges, but that it can inform the kind of transformatory project that Appadurai is calling for.

In conclusion I want to emphasise how important it is that the south is not seen as 'out there' but in the spaces that we inhabit in our own places and spaces of knowledge production –the academy. It is critical we create the spaces in our institutions for researchers to engage in the kind of transformative work these examples instance – at the same time thinking through new kinds of research methodologies and methods that are attentive to their ontological and epistemological anchors.  And, as Boaventura de Sousa Santos rightfully argues "there is no guarantee that a better world may be possible, nor that all those who have not given up struggling for it conceive it in the same way" (Santos, 2005: 53), if we lose sight of the possibility of alternatives in our imaginations, and that spaces can be produced from a different assemblage of linkages and practices, then we become complicit in making absent, alternative forms of existence and the possibilities for more a democratic politics.

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[i] Representing the Workers' Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores – PT, formed in 1979 by a coalition of unions, social movements and other leftist organizations).

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