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Geerlings, L.R.C.; Lundberg, A.

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Global discourses and power/knowledge: theoretical reflections on futures of higher education during the rise of Asia

L. R. C. Geerlings[†]  and A. Lundberg 

College of Arts, Society and Education, James Cook University, Singapore, Singapore

ABSTRACT

This paper re-reads a selection of critical interdisciplinary theories in an attempt to open a space in higher education for cross-cultural dialogue during the rise of Asia. Theories of globalization, deterritorialization, power/knowledge and postcolonialism indicate that students and academics have the ability to re-imagine and influence globalization processes in higher education. The current power effects of global discourses restrict the imaginaries and territories of globalization – leading to specific enactments in ways that prioritize western understandings of higher education. The paper argues for the need to explore hegemonic discursive formations of globalization to uncover processes of “othering” and the subjugation of knowledges. In this regard, a postcolonial perspective can help by opening up scenarios for the future of higher education in the Asian Century.

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I often ask myself the question: am I Chinese or am I Western? Because in my heart I feel Chinese, but in my work [as an educational researcher] I have to be Western. (Yang, 2014)

A key issue for academics working in universities in Asia is how they will position themselves in increasingly international higher education landscapes. In the last two decades, higher education has become a centrepiece of globalization: the sector is deregulated in most countries, and around the world universities are increasingly organized as businesses (Mok, 2011). On a global scale, a growing number of higher education institutes are competing to become a “world-class university” and to progress higher on the rungs of international university rankings (Sidhu, 2009, p. 126). In this context, Asian universities are progressively gaining international recognition and prestige as they climb the ranking ladders.

Against this background, the prefatory quote above, from an educational scholar at a university in Hong Kong, stands out. He calls for the need to question the idea of “progress” of Asian universities. His words pay attention to the complexity of the notion of a “global education” from a cultural perspective. For academics in Asian countries embroiled in western discourses, the current higher education system may involve cultural masquerades due to an intrusion of “western” influences. The increasing international recognition of Asian universities is important for globalization; however, perhaps not at the risk of a cultural shift towards western academic models. The rise of Asia, and the concomitant rise of the universities, highlights the need to critically scrutinize the cultural effects of globalization of higher education in Asia – for global diversity.

CONTACT L. R. C. Geerlings  l.r.c.geerlings@fsw.leidenuniv.nl

[†]Institute of Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology, Leiden University, the Netherlands

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Higher education is a key instrument in establishing truths and for prioritizing specific knowledges and skills to prepare students for future citizenship. In the current climate of globalization, new forms of “global citizenship” have developed in which students are being prepared for entering the global workforce (Ng, 2012, p. 439). Despite perceived benefits of the emphasis on “global” knowledge and skills in terms of greater applicability of degrees in larger areas, global knowledge may be at the expense of local expertise and diversity in education (Bourn, 2011). In addition, global knowledge could become a tool for soft power, which is witnessed as Anglo-American academic paradigms taking the lead in defining the norms for higher education (Yang, 2006). Through standardization of knowledge, globalization of education thus carries the risk of cultural imperialism, neo-colonialism, and of spreading epistemological hegemonies (Rizvi, 2007).

Thus, there is an urgent need to study the cultural consequences of globalization of higher education in order to re-think the future of higher education during the rise of Asia. This paper uses critical theories from anthropology and philosophy to open up a space for discussion on the cultural effects of globalization of knowledge for countries in Asia. It reviews the theories of Appadurai (1996) on globalization, Deleuze and Guattari (1977, 1988, 1994) on deterritorialization, and Foucault (1977, 1978, 1984, 1985, 1988, 1994, 1997) on power. These theories critique western hegemony and draw attention to multiplicities in understandings, nuanced contexts, and the complex interplay of power and knowledge claims. Read with postcolonial theory, such insights recognize neo-Orientalist or neo-colonial tendencies in education, and help critique the western hegemony of higher education (Said, 1985, 1995). This opens up a critical space in the notion of global education and highlights the importance of re-thinking futures of higher education.

Before proceeding, some remarks on our localization as authors to facilitate the positioning of the paper. Both authors are originally from a western country – one from the Netherlands and one from Australia – and have been educated in “western” universities. In addition, both authors have lived in various parts of Asia and are currently located in Singapore, where they were, at the time of writing this paper, both affiliated to an offshore branch campus of an Australian university that educates local Singaporean students and international students from the wider Southeast, South, and East Asian regions – as well as international and exchange students from America and Europe. Consequently, we do not write from a position of an “Asian” intellectual and neither do we intend to write on behalf of such a community. Such an act of representation through writing would constitute a “double repression” (Foucault & Deleuze, 1977, p. 209) – of our perspectives and of the various perspectives of different intellectuals from various parts of Asia. Instead, in this paper, we discuss theories that have been developed in the West, have been re-theorized by academics in Asia, or applied to higher education in Asia, and which critique hegemonic notions of westernization and globalization.

Globalization and deterritorialization

Critical theories of globalization and deterritorialization are significant in forming an understanding of current processes in higher education. These theories, originally emerging from anthropology, philosophy, and cultural studies have been taken up in a range of interdisciplinary contexts. They are particularly pertinent to this study.

Arjun Appadurai understands globalization as forming an important place in the social imaginary. According to Appadurai (1996), the current “global cultural economy” is characterized by a complex network of transnational constructions of “imaginary landscapes” (pp. 27, 31). These social imaginaries depend upon people’s interpretation of encounters with global flows, and as a result, are always perspectival and dynamic. Furthermore, social imaginaries are not just imaginaries that exist only in people’s individual minds; they are shared worldviews that create meaning and aspirations, and their tangible and intangible effects are felt when people act upon them. Globalization thus provides people with power to act or “to imagine otherwise”, and to shape their worlds (Yang, 2006, p. 208). In brief, based on their social imaginaries of globalization, people enact globalization in certain ways.

Appadurai theorizes global cultural flows within five dimensions: people, information and images, technologies, capital, and ideologies. He labels these dimensions: ethnoscapas, mediascapas, technoscapas, financescapas, and ideoscapas respectively (Appadurai, 1996, p. 33). Specifically relevant to the study of higher education is the extension of Appadurai's theory to the notion of eduscapas (Forstorp & Mellström, 2013). Eduscapas are our imaginaries of higher education which transverse Appadurai's five global flows, or "scapes". The suffix "-scape" underlines the subjectivity, irregularity, and fluidity of the flows; they are ambiguous processes that create new and unpredictable perspectives or imaginary worlds (Marginson & Sawir, 2005) which define how people enact globalization. Eduscapas are thus the imaginaries of higher education that take shape in how intellectuals, education policy makers, lecturers, students, and other actors represent globalization, and how they enact such processes.

Appadurai theorizes that as an effect of globalization, global flows are increasingly deterritorialized (1996, p. 38). An example he uses is the deterritorialization of foreign workers into the lower class sectors of wealthy nations (1996, p. 37), such as Indian construction workers or Filipino domestic helpers in Singapore or Hong Kong. He uses the terms "overseas movement", "displacement", or "travel" (Appadurai, 1996, p. 38), all referring to movement from one geographical territory to another. Thus, the term deterritorialization, as used by Appadurai, refers to geographical movement. According to this reading of deterritorialization, global flows of people, information and images, technologies, capital, and ideologies, must have at some point moved from one geographical place, region or country to another, in order to be part of globalization. In other words, this theory of globalization implicitly relies on a "geographical" notion of deterritorialization (Geerlings & Lundberg, 2014).

Paradoxically, Appadurai's reliance on geographical flows in globalization relates to a problematic idea of stasis. His notion of global flows, as dependent on geographical movement, creates a binary in which "things" (people, information and images, technologies, capital, and ideologies) were stagnant and fixed to territories at some stage – at least before the advent of globalization (Geerlings & Lundberg, 2014). Similarly, his idea that cultural effects of globalization involve rupture and spatial movement can be read to assume that cultures were bound in geographical places before globalization processes rendered them mobile (Geerlings & Lundberg, 2014). In summary, the concept of rupture in the face of globalization rests upon assumptions of a once territorialized culture – the very notion that Appadurai (1996) tries to deconstruct.

A more nuanced understanding of deterritorialization was formulated in the collaborative works of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1977, 1988). They originally described deterritorialization as part of their philosophy of rhizomatics. The image of thought on which they base this philosophy is the botanical rhizome: tropical plants such as the gingers, galangal, and turmeric. The underground root system of these plants form horizontal networks in which nodes of the root may spread out in all directions. Each node holds the potential to connect and multiply, creating ever growing networks under the ground. When severed from its root network and replanted, a node will continue to grow into a new root network and sprout into a plant. Significant to rhizomatic theory, there is no origin or hierarchy in the rhizome: every node holds the potential to expand the network or start a new one (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988; Lundberg, 2013). The horizontally networked image of rhizomes can be juxtaposed with the hierarchical image of the European tree with its deep penetrating roots, upright trunk and radial branches – the arboreal image on which traditional western philosophy bases notions of evolution, development, progress, and knowledge. However, the example of the tropical banyan tree, with its spreading branches that drop down tendrils to the ground that sprout roots to form new branches and trunks suggests that rhizomatics is never simply anti-tree (Lundberg, 2008, 2013). Rhizomatics is "anti-memory" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988, p. 21): defying tracings, calculations, or centrality, and inviting mappings, multiplicities, and non-linearity.

In the philosophy of rhizomatics, deterritorialization is referred to as processes of intrinsic change that, like the roots of gingers or branches of banyan trees, push and pull in multiple directions. In other words, deterritorialization is potentiality an ability to re-create, to re-design, or to re-shape. Deterritorialization makes seemingly stable relations virtual, that is, preparing them for more distant or different actualization, or reterritorialization (Parr, 2010). As a result of these processes of continuous

change “things” are never stable, and can be best understood in terms of potentiality, relationships and patterns (Deleuze & Guattari, 1977), or, to use concepts from physics, as quantum fields (Lundberg, 2013).

Deterritorialization takes place in any physical, mental, or spiritual domain (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994). Applied to higher education, for example, territorialization of an idea takes place when this idea is fixed on paper in a textbook; de- and reterritorialization of this text occur when it is interpreted and taught by an academic to a student audience; the teachings are deterritorialized when listened to by students, and are reterritorialized when students interpret the teachings to create new meanings, write assignments, or discuss the teachings with their peers, among others. Movements of de/reterritorialization occur simultaneously. Thus, rather than the hierarchical tree model of origins and essence (roots), linear development (trunks) and diverging academic disciplines (branches) – academic knowledge is rhizomatic (Lundberg, 2013, pp. 16–17). Knowledges related to academic disciplines are never fixed, but are always interpreted and re-actualized – deterritorialized and reterritorialized.

As a result of continuous de- and reterritorialization of knowledges, academic disciplines can be considered territories of change. Each time disciplinary knowledge and practices are used by intellectuals, lecturers, or students, they are inevitably changed (Geerlings & Lundberg, 2014). Relating this notion of deterritorialization to the social imaginary – and thus returning to Appadurai via Deleuze and Guattari – we can analyse how disciplines are interpreted in line with our imaginaries of education; our eduscapes. For example, if a particular academic discipline is perceived to be of global importance, its related knowledges and practice will be interpreted to align with this idea. Elsewhere, we have illustrated how such processes are taking place for clinical psychology, a subfield of the discipline of psychology (Geerlings & Lundberg, 2014). Cultural effects of globalization of education thus take place as eduscapes and influence de- and reterritorializations of academic knowledges. Each (re-)actualization can be regarded as a cultural influence. This means that in theory, academic researchers, students and lecturers “on the ground” have the opportunity to culturally re-imagine and redesign academic disciplines and higher education (Geerlings & Lundberg, 2014), and to influence processes of globalization of higher education.

Globalizing higher education

The combined theories of Appadurai (1996) and Deleuze and Guattari (1977, 1988, 1994) lead to several insights on the cultural effects of globalization of higher education.

Globalization is not an epistemological or ontological reality, but is an assemblage of social constructs of globalization. This means that globalization is not a process with causal power that is “out there” and happening to the world, and that is subjecting people to its influence. According to the globalization theory of Appadurai (1996) people are constructing globalization in two ways. Firstly, people create meaning based on their perceived encounters with foreign ideas, things or activities, which gives rise to specific social imaginaries of globalization, and furthering his ideas, thus through specific eduscapes of globalization in higher education (Forstorp & Mellström, 2013). People thus create ideas and knowledge of globalization. Secondly, people enact and thereby construct globalization processes as they respond in certain ways to their imaginaries. People thus actively construct the ideas and the workings of globalization; globalization has no causal power of itself.

Relating the social constructs of globalization to a rhizomatic notion of networks, globalization can be understood as dynamic networks of ideas about globalization. These ideas are constructed and enacted by people, rather than superimposed upon them. In these networks, ideas of globalization are constantly changing as they are de- and re-territorialized through actions, and reinterpretations of these actions and encounters. Moreover, meanings attached to globalization can differ but can also be shared among groups of people, giving rise to clusters in these networks. These clusters resonate with shared social imaginaries of globalization, or eduscapes in the case of higher education. Shared social imaginaries of globalization give rise to similar expressions of globalization, such as specific ways of writing about the phenomenon. For example, the idea of globalization as cultural imperialism is a cluster of shared social imaginary. It is a particular meaning attached to globalization: it is an idea of

what globalization could be, but this is not *per se* what globalization is or what it means to everyone. Similarly, the notion of “global knowledge” reflects a particular imaginary of an increasing similarity of the world and of humans due to globalization. According to this eduscape, higher education should focus on so-called “universal” knowledge rather than on cultural specifics. Again, this is one imaginary of globalization among many others. Notions of globalization thus always require closer scrutiny of underlying imaginaries and assumptions related to globalization.

The combined theories of Appadurai and Deleuze and Guattari point to people’s ability to re-interpret and change higher education. Yang (2006, p. 208) calls this the power “to imagine otherwise”, and regards it as an important aspect of the decolonization of research. It means that academics and intellectuals can use critical investigation of the assumptions underlying their own or common understandings of higher education and scholarship to open up new avenues for education and research. This paper extends Yang’s (2006) argument by pointing out the possibility of re-imagining and redesigning higher education in the context of globalization. Theoretically, people have the ability to re-think and re-analyse processes of globalization of higher education, and thereby change how they enact globalization. In other words, academics can influence how theorists, lecturers, students, and others think and write about globalization, and thereby influence how they enact globalization of higher education.

In theory, change in the imaginaries and enactments of globalization can be initiated from every network node, as much in the United States or Europe as in countries in Asia – the networks are non-hierarchical and rhizomatic. This is especially noticeable when clusters of social imaginaries are highly charged (or at a point of paradigm shift), for example, when an idea becomes very influential and changes other ideas; such intellectual endeavours could have significant effects on global higher education. In practice, however, it is difficult to change influential clusters or social imaginaries of globalization. Some nodes or clusters may have a greater ability to initiate change than others. In order to analyse how these differences in the creation of knowledge and truth are related to power, we turn to the work of Michel Foucault.

Discourses and power/knowledge

Foucault puts forward the idea that knowledge and power are in relation; and denotes this interweaving as power/knowledge. He explains: “It is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge, it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power” (Foucault, 1977, p. 52). In the study of higher education, this means that academic disciplines, sciences, and knowledges always refer to some kind of power and imply power effects. Foucault critically analysed “truths” through epochs of epistemologies, called “epistemes”. In other words, he sought to discover what was considered “truth” at different times, without seeing the present as a causal, linear progression from the past. An important epistemological consequence is that “truth” can never be more than “a thing of this world”, a social construction (Foucault, 1994, p. 133). Foucault’s critical epistemology thus aligns well with the other theorists described in this paper who critique the taken for granted nature of knowledge.

The notion of discourse plays a central role in Foucault’s theory of power/knowledge. Discourses can be defined as “the domain of subconscious knowledge” (Foucault as quoted in Ball, 2012, p. 40), that guide the “games of truth” which define which “things” become articulable as knowledge (Deleuze, 1988, p. 63). For example, in his three volumes of *The History of Sexuality* (1978, 1985, 1988), Foucault describes how in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries a discourse of sexuality came to define how people looked at pleasure, kinship relations and interpersonal relations from a particular point of view related to sex, and how this discourse excluded other views on these topics. Thus, discourses are filters through which people see the world and which define what counts as knowledge and truth. Discourses thereby produce statements of knowledge and certain realities. Based on these realities, specific social imaginaries are constructed which affect our epistemology and ontology – our ways of knowing and being in the world. In other words, discourses create specific types of subjectivities: “We do not speak discourse, discourse speaks us” (Ball, 2012, p. 40). Through the nuanced interrelations of perspectives,

truths and social imaginaries, discourses shape people's realities and the questions that they, in their roles as intellectuals, students or citizens, do and do not ask.

Discourses of globalization restrict imaginaries of higher education and limit the options for higher education to develop in various ways. For example, the imaginary of "world-class universities" as a desirable development course of modern universities is reinforced by discourses of globalization. They create eduscapes that relate to international competition in higher education, global status and internationally valid practice, and also relate to specific ideas of "the university" – for example, as a world-class institute that should gain international prestige. These eduscapes are met with actions of university staff and policy makers, and influence how universities redesign themselves. Hence, through their limiting effects on eduscapes, discourses justify particular actions and render alternative actions invalid. In addition, particular subjectivities are accepted as the status quo and many questions remain unasked; not because of overt repression, but due to the subtle power effects of a particular discourse.

Research indicates that discourses of globalization influence how higher education is redesigned. For example, in a review of universities' mottos, Hasan, Ramaprasad, and Singai (2014) noted that the majority of universities in the Indian state of Karnataka aim to be a leading institute with at least a country-wide or global focus and impact. Specialized local expertise or impact in local communities, on the other hand, is not deemed a valid option for many universities (Hasan et al., 2014). In the example of Singapore, Sidhu (2005) illustrated how in the island state a specific discourse of globalization created an eduscape that invoked ideas of struggles for evolutionary progress. This imaginary legitimated particular neoliberal education policies and practices on the state-level, which greatly affected universities in the city-state (Sidhu, 2005). Loke, Chia, and Gopinathan (2017) in their discussion of Singapore's developmental state eduscape highlight the hybridity of the global/local relation in the history of Singapore Universities and the move towards becoming a global city in the knowledge economy. In summary, discourses of globalization can restrict the social imaginary to the extent that, for example, becoming a "world-class university" seems to be the only option.

From the perspective of knowledge, discourses can have a similar restricting effect on the imaginary of scholarship and science. This power/knowledge effect is experienced in the prioritization of some, and dismissal of other, knowledges in the creation of "global curricula". The selected knowledges are fixed in texts that are circulated across large cultural and geographical areas – they are disseminated as universal truths. These "truths" are strongly influenced by power/knowledge effects of discourses. Yang (2006), for example, has criticized how the prominence of "western" research traditions in China has led Chinese policy researchers to import these research practices without contextualization to the local research traditions. Although, recently, this discussion has highlighted the hybridity of Chinese universities in their negotiation of different philosophical systems and both the difficulties and potentials of relations between east and west traditions – suggesting a rethinking and refinement of what constitutes "global" discourses (Chan, Lee, & Yang, 2017; Yang, 2017). In addition to global discourses, discourses of "science" have very strong centralizing powers that can invalidate "other" knowledges (Foucault, 1997). As a result, many intellectual discourses are disqualified as below the level of science or globality. Often these subjugated knowledges are local knowledges, and often they are knowledges that are produced outside of the western world.

In summary, discourses of globalization and of science have prioritized western perspectives. The criteria for scientific knowledge are often largely defined as knowledge that is based on "western" experiences (Appadurai, 2006), based on "western" research methods (Yang, 2006), and are disseminated in the English language (Ng, 2012). One needs only to walk into a library of a university in Singapore and witness the plethora of American and British textbooks to find an example of the prioritization of western knowledge in the non-western world. In this situation it becomes difficult for Asian knowledges to attain the same international scope and receive similar recognition as western knowledges – because the latter is considered part of a global or scientific discourse, while the former is excluded from it. For example, an examination of the curricula of clinical psychology courses in the Malay Archipelago countries of Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore, revealed that none of the graduate programmes included

any indigenous or local psychological understandings or knowledges on how to deal with mental distress (Geerlings, Thompson, & Lundberg, 2014).

It is important to explore the hegemonic discursive formations of globalization in order to uncover processes of inclusion and exclusion, and the subjugation of knowledges. Robertson (2012) has argued that a theoretical focus on the flows and deterritorialization in globalization can obscure the ways in which globalization processes are regulated and restricted by processes of power. Globalization creates new ways of bordering and ordering: power is expressed in how spaces – for example, how the “global” or the “local” – are constructed and reproduced (Robertson, 2011). Consequently, it is important to explore how globalization is constructed in hegemonic discourses in order to analyse whose perspectives are included and whose are excluded. A postcolonial perspective is instrumental to this.

Global discourses and postcolonialism

One of the most striking examples of the power of discourses in the subjugation of “others” and their knowledges is Orientalism. Edward Said describes Orientalism as a cultural hegemony that was expressed in post-Enlightenment western academic traditions and styles of thought that separated “the Orient” from “the Occident” (Said, 1995, p. 7). In this discourse the Orient was pictured as passive, feminine, sensual, static, undeveloped, inferior; in contrast to the Occident, which was defined as active, masculine, rational, flexible, developed, civilized, and superior (Said, 1995). This discourse portrayed Asia as an ambiguous thing that was both desired and disdained (Bhabha, 2012). It created an imaginary of an exotic but backward “Oriental culture” in need of western knowledge. This idea was articulated and reproduced in colonial politics, bureaucracies, ideologies, scholarship, and arts. The discourse of Orientalism thus served European interests, which accumulated in the restructuring of, and authority over, Asia (Said, 1995). Alternative views of Asia – or knowledges developed by Asian intellectuals – were rendered invalid by Orientalism. This discourse thus made Asia “not Europe’s interlocutor, but its silent Other” (Said, 1985, p. 93).

After colonialism other discourses replaced Orientalism, but with similar divisive effects. According to Talib and Richards (2008), the discursive hegemony of Orientalism has shifted to serve a globalized “economic order” that reflects America’s interests and expectations for the so-called “developmental economies” of Asia (p. 141). In other words, economic status has become the new criteria for separation of “us” and “them” that replaces and reproduces the division between Occident and Orient. Consequently, economic division lines allow powerful actors, such as the United States, or international institutes, to establish “truths” and guide the actions of less economically powerful actors. The International Monetary Fund, which was part of the Bretton Woods System, is one earlier (post-WWII) example of a consequence of this economic privileging. The Bretton Woods System secured financial superiority of the United States and other participating countries, determined particular forms of knowledge and values, and exported these to less economically powerful countries (Talib & Richards, 2008).

A similar privileging of economic status is currently taking place in globalization discourses. According to Rizvi (2007), in academic literature, media, and pop culture, globalization is often portrayed as a set of neoliberal economic processes. He thus identifies a discourse of globalization that links education to neoliberal development. This discourse reproduces the separation of economically powerful and less powerful actors, and justifies neoliberal methods as a means to the globalization of higher education. Additionally, the discourse subjugates economically less well-off actors and their knowledges, which is problematic for intellectuals in so-called “developing countries”, including those in Asia. For these intellectuals, it is difficult to disseminate their results and receive international appreciation for their scholarship because they are outside of the perceived economic “centre”. In other words, globalization discourses create divisions of more and less powerful actors in higher education. Rizvi (2007) underlines the importance of understanding the current discourse as an historically and contextually specific notion of globalization that is rooted in European colonialism and imperialism. Discourses of globalization have taken the place of Orientalism in the subjugation of those who are “other” to the West.

Asian universities risk enacting globalization of higher education along the lines of westernization. Current globalization discourses prioritize neoliberal economic perspectives that have been associated with the western world. These discourses dismiss, or make unthinkable, alternative ideas on globalization – for example the idea of globalization as a process that can be influenced by students, intellectuals or university policy makers; or the idea that globalization is not necessarily related to economics. From a knowledge perspective in line with current globalization discourses, scholarship from rich and western countries has often been denoted as the norm for academic knowledge; while scholarship from other regions, including Asian countries, is often dismissed (or invisible unless written in English). As a result, “global” knowledge is largely constituted of research and ideas developed in western countries and defined according to Anglo-American paradigms. These power/knowledge effects perpetuate the subjugation of Asian countries. Westernization has become hegemonic: education literature has expounded best practice as the westernization of universities, education systems and knowledges. By limiting the social imaginary, globalization discourses limit the questions that we ask as academics, “Asians”, “Westerners”, intellectuals or students. Hence, important critical questions remain unasked.

Futures of higher education with the rise of Asia

With the predicted rise of the economic and geopolitical power of Asia, the twenty-first century is also called the Asian Century (Kohli, Sharma, & Sood, 2011). The expected change of Asia’s status in the world heralds an important time to ask questions about the future of higher education in the region. These questions can interrupt a path towards western hegemony in higher education and open up possible future scenarios for higher education in Asia.

One possible scenario is to continue along the path of globalization that is in line with current global discourses. This will involve redesigning universities in Asia to align with Anglo-American ones, and to assimilate western knowledges into curricula. In this scenario, Asian universities will further progress in international university rankings and improve the impact and economic gains of higher education. Indeed, universities from Asia are serious competitors to universities in the western world in the search for financial benefits, prestige, and human capital. However, as discussed above, this scenario also involves giving more prominence to selected “global” knowledges at the cost of the subjugation of local knowledges and alternative cultural perspectives. The influence of Anglo-American research paradigms encourages researchers to immerse in “western” practices while forsaking indigenous research traditions. This leads to a loss of diversity in academia, as well as to painful cultural masquerades, as expressed in the prefatory quote by Yang (2014). From a cultural perspective, therefore, this scenario may not be the most desirable option.

In a second scenario, the Asian region will acquire a more powerful voice in shaping discourses of globalization. This scenario is made possible in light of the prediction that the economic centre of the world is shifting towards Asia (Rizvi, 2012). The first signs of increasing interest for Asian higher education can be witnessed as a result of the enhanced position of Asian universities in global rankings. For example, it has been argued that the competition for “world-class universities” closely aligns with competitive Confucian models for education, which has generated interest in Confucianism (Marginson, 2011). In this scenario, Asian universities are expressing their voice in shaping imaginaries of higher education. However, an important challenge will be to abstain from creating new binaries and cultural hegemonies, such as “Confucian models” or “Asian values”, which amalgamate the diversity of educational models, values, knowledges, and perspectives in universities in Asian countries into a unitary “Asian” discourse of higher education. Such an Asian higher education discourse could have similar subjugating and limiting effects as neoliberal globalization discourses (Loke et al., 2017).

In a third and final scenario, with the rise of Asia, this could become a time in which different knowledges and expertise are empowered, and in which higher education is re-imagined from multiple perspectives. This scenario involves a change in which globalization in higher education is redesigned in ways that renounce cultural hegemonies and totalizing discourses. In order to create such pluralistic understandings of globalization and higher education it is crucial to open up imaginaries of

globalization and higher education and to explore alternative futures. This is an inclusive process, in which all universities, researchers, lecturers, students and others, regardless of their country of origin and practice, can participate. Parallel to what Appadurai (2006, p. 167) calls “the right to research”, a right to generate knowledge and be informed in order to partake in democratic citizenship, in this third future scenario all actors have a right to re-imagine and redesign globalization of higher education. In this way, globalization of higher education could become a set of processes that are more inclusive.

The three scenarios outlined above have different theoretical implications. In the first scenario, eduscapes remain linked to hegemonic western conceptions of neoliberal economic globalization. The power/knowledge effects of these discourses reinforce particular understandings of what globalization of higher education and global knowledge entail, and restrict alternative interpretations or re-actualizations. The second scenario involves a diversification of eduscapes with the inclusion of particular Asian discourses of higher education. However, these Asian discourses are most likely to be aligned with western conceptions of globalization, and are themselves at risk of creating new hegemonies and binaries, for example between what is considered “Asian” and what is not. Social imaginaries thus remain restricted and re-imaginings controlled. In the third scenario, the eduscapes and the social imaginary of globalization are opened up towards alternative understandings. Only in this scenario is deterritorialization uncontrolled and re-imaginings are able to influence social imaginaries and eduscapes. This third scenario embraces cultural diversity. It could give rise to a new form of democratic global citizenship, in which each person co-designs and co-enacts globalization.

The third future scenario of higher education in the Asian Century highlights the importance of opening up eduscapes and social imaginaries of globalization to create a critical space in which alternative understandings can be explored. There is thus a need to explore hegemonic discursive formations of globalization in order to uncover processes of “othering” and the subjugation of knowledges. For this to occur, there are two tasks ahead.

Firstly, it is important to start discussions and to author writings of power/knowledge in order to change power relations (Foucault, 1984; Foucault & Deleuze, 1977). Speaking and writing help create awareness of the effects of power/knowledge, which is a necessary step for “detaching the power of truth from the forms of hegemony” (Foucault, 1994, p. 133). In other words, raising awareness of the prominence of western neoliberal discourses of globalization of higher education is the beginning of challenging this hegemony. Theorization of the effects of power/knowledge is therefore more than engaging in theory alone. It is practice. It is a “struggle aimed at revealing and undermining power where it is most invisible and insidious” (Foucault & Deleuze, 1977, pp. 207–208). Academics, both from Asia and the West have already started this practice (e.g., Ng, 2012; Yang, 2006), and its continued importance and trajectory is highlighted by the recent collection of papers in a special issue on “the hybrid university in East Asia” which specifically addressed the complex “histories, developments and challenges” of higher education in various countries of East Asia (Lincoln & Kearney, 2017, p. 1801). Likewise, this present paper is, also, we hope, another small example of this engagement. It is important to encourage discussion, elaboration, or critique of these practices until such practices resonate in networks of social imaginaries.

Secondly and relatedly, reactivation of subjugated knowledges is instrumental in critiquing hegemony. These local knowledges diversify the academic domain. They help establish an historical knowledge of struggles of “truth”, which is important for critiquing the coercion of a unitary global academic discourse. Speaking and writing about these knowledges can be a means of empowering such subjugated knowledges and to provide alternative voices to global academic discourses. In this sense, these local knowledges are “anti-sciences” (Foucault, 1997, p. 3) – they challenge the hierarchy and unitary discourse of the sciences and academic knowledges, and instead invite us to embrace diversity. In the same way, these knowledges can serve as “anti-globals” that, through diversification, challenge hegemonic interpretations of globalization of higher education. Diversification of the debates, topics, and perspectives thus not only enrich the academic domain, but, also raise awareness of cultural hegemony in globalization of higher education.

Conclusion

Through a discussion of critical theories of globalization, deterritorialization, power/knowledge, and postcolonialism, this paper has argued for the need to explore social imaginaries of globalization of higher education. Hegemonic understandings of globalization that prioritize western neoliberalism have inspired universities in Asian countries to enact globalization along these lines, but have also been the blinkers that have promoted the scholarship of Asian universities as emulating western universities. However, the Asian Century could become a time for dismantling this hegemony, and for embracing cultural and academic diversity. Researchers, public intellectuals, lecturers, students and others have an important role to play in opening up the social imaginary of globalization of higher education for diverse understandings. For instance, the recent scholarship of higher education in Asia has critiqued both the now prominent discourse of the notion of westernization of education as well as counter discourses reliant on notions of Asian values, opening the way to critical discussions of hybrid Asian universities (Chan et al., 2017; Lincoln & Kearney, 2017). Though discussion and reflexive writing academics can create alternative voices, that without totalizing or overriding “others” voices, create a space for explorations of the power/knowledge effects of discourses and of the diversity of perspectives. Discussing and writing about hegemony, or about local knowledges, forgotten understandings, radical new ideas, or pioneering philosophies, are essential tools for change. By doing so, debaters and writers map out new territories for thought, critique, elaboration or inspiration.

From this we can get the triple definition of writing: to write is to struggle and resist; to write is to become; to write is to draw a map... (Deleuze, 1988, p. 44)

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Notes on contributors

L. R. C. Geerlings is PhD candidate at the Institute of Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology at Leiden University, and at the KITLV/Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies. Her ethnographic research focuses on the social effects of globalization of knowledge and movements of people. She holds an MPhil in Interdisciplinary Studies and is a migrant living in both Singapore and the Netherlands.

A. Lundberg is a cultural anthropologist whose interdisciplinary practice includes analyses of higher education. Her ethnographic research focuses on Southeast Asia. She has held numerous fellowships including: CNRS LIA TransOceanik (CNRS, Collège de France & JCU), The Cairns Institute, Australia; a Post-Doctoral Fellow, Cambridge University, UK; a Guest Researcher, Maison Asie-Pacifique, Université d'Aix-Marseille, France; and a Visiting Fellow with the Institute of the Malay World and Civilization, National University Malaysia.

ORCID

L. R. C. Geerlings  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8805-1950>

A. Lundberg  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-0271-4715>

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