



FCT



Forum on Contemporary Theory, Baroda
(A Member of the Consortium of the Humanities Centers and Institutes)

XXII International Conference
“Global South Cultural Production and Dialogue”

Venue:

Osmania University Centre for International Programmes, Hyderabad

The twenty-second International Conference of Forum on Contemporary Theory will be held in Hyderabad from the 19th to 21st December 2019 in collaboration with Osmania University Centre for International Programmes (Formerly American Studies Research Centre) and International Lincoln Center for American Studies of Louisiana State University in Shreveport, USA. The theme of the conference is: “Global South Cultural Production and Dialogue.” Walter D. Mignolo, William H. Wannamaker Professor of Literature at Duke University, USA has agreed to be both an Academic Convener and a Keynote Speaker at the conference.



Thematic Introduction
(Prepared by Walter D. Mignolo)

I

There is a taken for granted belief (both theological and secular) according to which names name entities and therefore when the name of a given entity changes, the entity changes. In the process, the history of naming is erased and the entity itself shines in their ontic existence. The most common rendering of this belief system (common to theologians, scientists [natural and social] and humanists) is the recurrent question of modern/colonial epistemology asking for the ontic identification of an entity: hence the question “what is X?” In this case, it would be “What is the Global South?” Decolonial epistemology starts from someplace else and avoids the “Is.” It asks instead: “how was it that what it is came to be what it is?” Consequently, the question is not “what is the Global South” but “how what is named ‘Global South’ came to be what it is.” The change of terrain is very simple: every question about what it is (which are modern/colonial) are ontological questions asking for the content (the enunciated) of the entity behind the name, while decolonial questions are always addressing the assumptions and presuppositions (the enunciation) that made possible for such an entity to become what it is.

My aim is to explore how the Global South came to be and what are the consequences of its coming into existence. Subsequently, I will ask also what “Dialogue” means when paired with a geo-political/hemispheric configuration. There is a larger aim in my presentation that I will frame towards the end of this concept note: it is a common dictum today in the media, social sciences and humanities to recognize that we, globally, are experiencing a dramatic critical moment in the life of the planet and hence, in our animal-human species. Now the planet is not guilty of the responsible of the crisis, but us animal-human species. But not all of us. Facing such generally recognized and dramatic moments what shall the role of the social sciences, humanities, artistic endeavors, religious institutions and believers be? What shall we (in the humanities, social sciences, journalism, art and religion) expect from the sciences, financial and corporate institutions and governments? What shall “Global South cultural production and Dialogue” mean and do for us?

II

It has been said and it is being increasingly recognized, although in small circles, that today, we, the animal-human species on the planet, are experiencing no longer an epoch of changes, but of change of epoch. As it often happens, the sentence is over used and for that reason each time it is pronounced it needs qualifications. Here are three qualifying criteria derived from Anibal Quijano’s work:

- 1) The relationship between capital and labor has changed dramatically, to the point where the dominant part of capital not only has no capacity, but has no interest in producing employment. On the contrary, jobs have to be eliminated and technology and AI are supplanting human labor. Then, we cannot wait for capital to produce more employment, never again.
- 2) For this reason, it is also not possible to expect capital to produce the minimum of public liberties associated with the market, as it was the case in the previous stage of capitalism. That is why political democracy is being re-concentrated and the public domains are constantly being privatized from the center to the periphery.

3) Therefore, the change of the very basis of capital is no longer the purchase and sale of labor power, but the control of our subjectivity, the control of our mentalities. It is in that control that the main dispute of the moment lies.

What does it mean, under these circumstances, I ask again, “Cultural production in the Global South and Dialogue”? Since the end of the Cold War, the idea of the Global South displaced and replaced the idea of Third World. The change of name did not modify the land and water masses of the planet; they remained the same. What changed was not “nature” but “culture.” Or, to avoid the Western dichotomy (for there is neither nature nor culture beyond Western vocabulary, imaginary and areas of influence), what changed was how human beings imagine themselves on a planet that they (or we) have not created. The question is who is responsible for the change? Apparently, it was a US writer Carl Oglesby, who used the expression “Global South” referring to less industrialized countries. It was synonymous with Underdeveloped and Third World countries. The expression became popular in the twenty-first century and it is used today both by the World Bank (in the Global North, for there cannot be a Global South without a Global North) and by activists and intellectuals and progressive politicians to assert their position confronting the economic, politic, and cultural (scientific, intellectual, artistic, political) dependency from the Global North.

The change of nomination did not change, just disguised, the power differential that structured the global world order since the sixteenth century, when Western/Northern Europe began to affirm itself by means of invading, conquering and colonizing first the unknown land that Europeans named New World, and then America, and subsequently the territories of Asia and Africa. There were some exceptions in the process of conquest and colonization: China and Japan were never colonized as were South Asia (cf., the Mughal Sultanate), South-east Asia and Africa. Since the sixteenth century European men of knowledge began to dominate the intellectual scene due to the navigation across the globe, the books they wrote to describe the planet, the maps they drew to map the planet. The privilege of controlling knowledge and being the describers of the planet without being described, gave them the privilege of placing themselves at the center of the terrestrial world and to the present of time (e.g., Hegel).

To make things more complicated, let's take two examples. In the US, the traditional South that divided North-South during the Civil War has become now part of the Global South, the Global South in the Global North. The South of Europe has been established, from the Northern perspective, since the eighteenth century. Catholic countries plus Greece (Orthodox Christians) were located in the South; they are also people of color. Kant was already noticing that Spaniards were mixed with Muslims. Whether blood or skin colors was a factor is irrelevant. It was already imprinted in the mind of Northern Europeans. Coincidentally, the South of Europe and Orientalism were invented during the same period, solidifying the geographic and epistemic (control of knowledge) of North/Western Europeans. Not to mention that since US politicians and intellectuals asserted their own geopolitical location by defining the Western Hemisphere as their territory, Europe was relegated to the West of the Eastern Hemisphere the Eastern Hemisphere. Hence, Europe was the West of the Eastern Hemisphere. The rift was easily negotiated when the US, after WWII, took on the leadership of the World Order, the expression North Atlantic encompassed both the Western Hemisphere and the West of the Eastern Hemisphere.

First, Second and Third World modified the principle of classification: instead of cardinal points, the classification was in unapologetic ranking. Needless to say, there was nothing in “reality” (the ontic dimension of lands and water masses to sustain that hierarchy). Those who control knowledge placed themselves in the First World, which they justify by saying was developed, industrial and democratic. The second was also

industrial and developed but alas was not democratic. And the Third World was underdeveloped—that is the reason the concept of development was invented. However, during the Cold War, the struggle for decolonization revindicated the lower ranking of the Third World and it became a region of pride and struggles for liberation. It was the first time in the 450 years of the Western dictation of geo-political configuration of the planet that people inhabiting a lesser region of the planet and, therefore, knowing that they/us are considered also lesser human beings, transform into pride, self-assertion and disobedience to the dictate of the First World, and to the Global North now. However, today Global South/Global North are half of a global order composed by the Global West/Global East.

III

The return to geographic classificatory criteria after the straightforward Three-Worlds ranking cannot erase the memory and the logic of all those classifications: the logic is the logic of coloniality always diverted and disguised by the rhetoric of modernity. “Newness” is a powerfully entrenched expectation of the rhetoric of modernity and “Global South” had that effect: it is “New,” it “changed” (another mantra of modernity: the worshipping of “change”) the old Three World division.

I repeat the third criteria of the change of epoch enumerated by Anibal Quijano:

- 3) Therefore, the change of the very basis of capital is no longer the purchase and sale of labor power, but the control of our subjectivity, the control of our mentalities. It is in that control that the main dispute of the moment lies.

The points of contention are the drive towards—on the one hand—managing and controlling the growing awareness of people who do not want to be managed and controlled, who are powerless in front of the state, the corporations, the finances and the mass media but who are—on the other hand—in a position of power to decide their/our own destiny, building the knowledge we need for our own liberation rather than contributing to the knowledge they need for our subjective enslavement. Hence, the “cultural production” in/of the Global South cannot be isolated from the Global North and from the power differential in every domain of life (political, economic, military and cultural, although politics, economy and military are cultural too). The question then is what kind of cultural production, whom (person and institutions) and what for are we talking about when we talk about Global South cultural production? What are our responsibilities, as scholars, journalists, intellectuals, artists, professionals with different training, and what are our possibilities in the Global South, in the North/West or in the Global East?

And that “cultural production” shall be one of delinking from Western epistemology and aesthetic, whether it is active in the Global North or the Global South or in the Global East. Border, the consequences of coloniality and coloniality, the darker side of Western modernity, is all over. The awareness and the sensing of dwelling in the border, and the will to delink, brings about border thinking and border doing in our daily and professional praxis of living. To quote just one case of what I have in mind: the work of Vandana Shiva always provides, as scientist and activist, an example—not a model—of scholarly and scientific work driven not by the disciplinary norms but by the needs emerging from the very praxis of living being undermined by the current hegemony of epistemic coloniality. Disciplinary knowledge is being used and activated by her dwelling in the border of Western “science” and “indigenous” wisdom, in the border of Western (and westernized) expectations of planetary homogeneity and non-Western disobedience civil, political and epistemic disobedience (as many of us have learned from Mahatma Gandhi).

And this brings us to the question of “Dialogue.” Regions do not talk to each other, they do not have “dialogues.” The Global South doesn’t dialogue with the Global North. People do. And people dwell *in the territory* (e.g., the normativity of the nation-state, of whiteness, of heterosexuality, of religion) or *on the borders* (*border land and border lines*). The Global South is not warranty of good causes, for the Global South has been infiltrated by the Global North/West. Borders like coloniality are all over and it is not a question of *studying* the border dwelling *in the territory of the social sciences or/and the humanities*, but dwelling, thinking and doing on the borders where disciplinary formation are out of place: border thinking is un-disciplinary, it is not inter-disciplinary. Many people in the Global South (in government, banks, corporations) have productive dialogue with Bank’s and Corporations’ CEOs as well as with functionaries and officers of the State, technological mega-corporations and the like justified by the rhetoric of modernity: it is necessary to develop and update the Global South while peasants and Indigenous people organize themselves to stop extractive and fracking.

Given the geo-political world order since 1500 when European map makers in collaboration with international law-makers mapped the planet geo-graphically and legally, global linear thinking was crucial to trace the borderlines (physical, legal and mental) gardening the center and increasing their intervention in memories and territories that were neither derived from Greece and Rome nor had anything to do with Western international law. Borderlines created the conditions for border dwelling: the majority of the world population had their own memories that had to be accommodated to the foreign memories of European settlers, officers of the states and merchants. Border dwelling became the common experience of the world population outside of Europe. Border thinking were the epistemic and political consequences for those who did not want to become clones of North Atlantic global designs.

In sum, running through all the geo-political configurations of the planet since the sixteenth century, there is a common logic of devaluation and exploitation regulated and justified by the rhetoric of modernity, progress, development, and civilization in/from the West/North. Facing this long history of coloniality of power, the question is less the cultural production in/of the Global South, but the relentless intellectual work to delink and undermine the belief system that has sustained the image of the West, the First World and the North as the guiding light of Universal History. That is, border thinking in epistemology, politics and ethics cannot be contained in geopolitical regions. Since coloniality operates by tracing borders all over the planet, tracing the interiority of the North/West and the exteriority of the South/East, coloniality is all over and so unavoidably is border dwelling and border thinking: The North is in the South and the South is in the North, and the East is in the West as the West is in the East.

If then capitalism (or more encompassing the economic domain of the colonial matrix of power) is less interested in purchasing and selling labor power than in controlling our subjectivities and our mentalities, then the main battle field is the domain of knowledge, both at the level of constituted knowledge (what is said, the enunciated, the content of knowledge) as well and mainly at the level of the constitutions of knowledge (the saying, the enunciation, the terms [assumptions, principles, beliefs]) upon which constituted knowledge has been built and continues to be defended.

The struggle to delink from Western/Northern epistemic hegemony and re-build from the sources and energies that Western modernity disavowed (epistemic/aesthetic reconstitution), is a modest but important and urgent contribution that decolonial praxis of thinking and praxis of living should do; it doesn’t matter in what region of the “Global” it is enacted, for the politics and ethics of border thinking cut across territorial units. Hence, dialogue among people dwelling in the borders shall take the front stage across the globe and beyond any

“Global X.” However, delinking doesn’t mean ignoring (since we cannot) Western institutional (e.g., disciplinary propagated by mainstream media in every day conceptual language) ways of knowing but reducing it to its own size and appropriating it in our political, ethical and epistemic creativity as border dwellers, border thinkers fashioning borderlands praxis of living that are no longer anchored in any regional or hemispheric territoriality. “Global South” exposes the vulnerability of “identity politics.”

Border thinking opens up instead the possibilities and potentials of “identity IN politics:” which means operating from the *identifications and classifications* (racial, sexual, national, religious) hegemonically and/or dominantly imposed, without assuming ourselves that we *are* what some else says we are: Western knowledge(s) has bestowed and imposed upon people and regions of the planet identifications that we could either accept and bend to them or to reject and delink from them. And that is a task of every “cultural (epistemic, political, aesthetic, ethical) production of border thinking, doing and praxis of living.” It doesn’t matter if it takes place in the Global South, Global North/West or Global East. If coloniality is all over, so decolonial responses are all over too, and decolonial responses at this point cannot be but responses from border dwelling, border thinking and border praxis of living.

Related Themes:

Proposals may be formulated around the following themes. These are only suggestions; you are welcome to prepare your papers based upon other ideas relevant to the broad theme of the conference.

- (a) “Dialogue of Cultures (Pagan/ Non-Pagan)”
- (b) “Cultural Translation”
- (c) “Geophilosophy”
- (d) “Politics of Cartography”
- (e) “De-Territorializing Memory”
- (f) “Globalectical Imagination” (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o)
- (g) “Poetics of Relation” (Edouard Glissant)
- (h) “Pitfalls of One-World Thinking” (Aamir R. Mufti)

Special Session:

FCT’s annual conference has always included a special session on a literary text from India for close examination. However, this year, as part of its focus on Global South cultural production and dialogue as a broad theme it has chosen Tayeb Salih’s *Mawsim al-Hijrah ilâ al-Shamâl* (*Season of Migration to the North*) for this session. First published in 1966, this Arabic novel has been frequently read as a counter-narrative to Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*. Although set in Sudan in the 1960s, this novel examines the fragmented topographies of its colonial history from the years between the World Wars to its freedom struggle through multiple perspectives. These perspectives often conflict with each other through their overlapping confluences. In a way, this novel critiques the Orientalist construction of colonial identity. The central protagonist, Mustafa Sae’ed, one finds out slowly, has used his oriental, eroticized appeal to gain sexual favors with several white women, and killed one of them. At a crucial point in the narrative, he declares, “I am no Othello; Othello is a lie!” and follows it shortly with, “I am a lie.” The point that he seems to be making by these assertions is that the colonial act of naming the Other is already a fabrication. The novelist treats Sae’ed contrapuntally as both a product of colonial modernity and a critic of its excesses. His return to Sudan from England and his

subsequent attempt to participate in Sudan's nation-building program indicate his anxiety and ambivalence about his colonial legacy, which he cannot fully abjure nor fully embrace. The unnamed narrator, who has been sketching Sae'ed's life story through their conversations and later through his rummaging of Sae'ed's letters and diaries, has been deeply moved and bewildered by the force of the inexorable logic of Sae'ed's experience. One can even say that it is in Sae'ed that he finds his own doppelganger that he both loves and hates. This ambivalence is symbolized in the architecture and internal décor of the colonial library that Sae'ed had built in his home in Sudan as a testimony to his past association, and perhaps to his romantic fascination with colonial splendor. Salih's novel implies the inherent ambivalence in liminal identities within the "colonial matrix of power," to use a phrase from Walter D. Mignolo.

Keynote Speaker

Walter D. Mignolo is William H. Wannamaker Professor of Literature at Duke University and has joint appointments in Cultural Anthropology and Romance Studies. He received his PhD from the Ecole des Hautes Etudes, Paris. Before joining Duke in January, 1993, he taught at the Universities of Toulouse, Indiana, and Michigan. He has published extensively on semiotics and literary theory, and has in the past years been working on different aspects of the modern/colonial world and exploring concepts such as global coloniality, the geopolitics of knowledge, transmodernity, border thinking, and di/pluriversalities. His recent publications include: *The Idea of Latin America* (2005), *Writing Without Words: Alternative Literacies in Mesoamerica and the Andes*, co-edited with Elizabeth H. Boone (1994), and *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, Colonization* (1995) which won the Katherine Singer Kovacs prize from the Modern Languages Association. He is also the author of *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges and Border Thinking* (1999) and *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis* (2018) with Catherine E. Walsh. He is the editor of *Capitalismo y geopolítica del conocimiento: El eurocentrismo y la filosofía de la liberación en el debate intelectual contemporáneo* (2000) and *The Americas: Loci of Enunciations and Imaginary Constructions* (1994-95). His current interests include colonial expansion and nation building at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. He co-edits the web dossier, *Worlds and Knowledges Otherwise*. Professor Mignolo is the academic director of Duke in the Andes, an interdisciplinary program in Latin American and Andean Studies in Quito, Ecuador at Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador and the Universidad Politécnica Salesiana. Since 2000, he has directed the Center for Global Studies and the Humanities, a research unit within the John Hope Franklin Center for International and Interdisciplinary Studies. Professor Mignolo has also been named Permanent Researcher at Large at the Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar in Quito, Ecuador.

Abstract Submission Deadline

An abstract or proposal not exceeding 500 words is due by **August 15, 2019**. The abstract should have a title along with the name and institutional affiliation of the presenter. Please send the abstract as an email attachment to D. Venkat Rao (telvenkat@gmail.com) with a copy to Tonisha Guin (tonishaforfct@gmail.com). We also welcome poster presentations.

Registration

The last date for receiving the registration fee is **September 20, 2018**. The fee may be paid through a direct electronic bank transfer or multi-city cheque drawn in favor of Forum on Contemporary Theory on a bank in

Baroda. Please ask for our bank details, if you want to make a wire transfer. The amount should be sent to the FCT's address mentioned on its website (www.fctworld.org). The registration fee is non-refundable. The accommodation will be provided in Osmania University Centre for International Programmes' guest house and other guest houses in the vicinity of the venue with limited facilities on a shared basis. Accommodation may be arranged subject to availability, on a first come, first serve basis. We encourage the participants to register early.

The registration fees are as follows:

- Participant from India (with accommodation) - **Rs. 7,000/-**
- Participant from India (without accommodation) - **Rs. 5000/-**
- Overseas Participant (with accommodation) - **US \$250/-**
- Participants from SAARC Countries (with accommodation) - **US \$150/-**
- Overseas Participant (without accommodation) - **US \$150/-**

The registration fee for the outstation participant will take care of board and lodging for 4 nights (18-21 December 2019). Participants are expected to check in at the guest house by 6 pm on 18 December and check out by 10 am on 22 December 2019. Participants without accommodation will be provided with conference tea (twice daily) and lunch during the conference. The conference will begin at 9 am on 19 December and continue till 6 pm on 21 December 2019.

There will be a General Body Meeting of the Life Members of FCT in the evening of December 18 at the Guest House of the conference venue. You are requested to attend this important meeting, which will discuss the future activities of FCT.

Members of the Organizing Committee of the Conference:

1. Prafulla C. Kar, Convener of FCT (prafullakar@gmail.com)
2. Kailash C. Baral, Conference Convener (mail2baral@gmail.com)
3. Walter D. Mignolo, Academic Convener (walter.mignolo@gmail.com, walter1654@gmail.com)
4. D. Venkat Rao, Academic Convener (telvenkat@gmail.com)
5. William D. Pederson, Director, International Lincoln Centre, LSUS (william.pederson@lsus.edu)
6. A. Karunaker, Director, OUCIP and Local Convener (akredrem@gmail.com)
7. Tonisha Guin, Academic Fellow, FCT (tonishaforfct@gmail.com)