

CANADA AND BRAZIL: SHIFTING CONTEXTS FOR KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

CANADÁ E BRASIL: CONTEXTOS DE MUDANÇA PARA A PRODUÇÃO DE CONHECIMENTO

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Abstract: This paper addresses the shifting contexts for knowledge production as they affect researchers in the humanities and social sciences working within Canada and Brazil on dimensions of Canadian studies in the twenty-first century. It argues for closer attention to the meanings that words carry within localities and when they travel, and to the contexts in which they make sense. Using a series of brief case studies, the paper suggests that interdisciplinary attention to democracy and governance questions may require a shift in focus and a widening of responsibility beyond traditional academic and institutional actors, as well as deeper attention to the role of English in politics and higher education, and a shift in focus from the nation-state alone to the sub-regional and supra-regional levels. The rise of a global higher education regime further highlights the need for researchers, teachers, and students to question not only the methodological nationalism of nation-based studies, but also the methodological cosmopolitanism that works at the global level alone, locating both of these within the frames afforded by those decolonial and postcolonial studies that value place-based knowledges and the transnational literacies they can generate. In short, globalization is creating conditions in which the development of transnational partnerships in the co-creation of knowledge seems both desirable and necessary.

Keywords: knowledge production; global English; transnational literacies; research partnerships; interdisciplinarity

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Resumo: Este artigo aborda os contextos de mudança para a produção de conhecimento e como afetam pesquisadores nas ciências humanas e sociais que trabalham no Canadá e no Brasil no âmbito dos estudos canadenses no século XXI. Ainda defende mais atenção para os significados que as palavras carregam dentro de localidades e quando se deslocam, bem como os contextos em que fazem sentido. Usando uma série de breves estudos de caso, o artigo sugere que a atenção interdisciplinar para a democracia e as questões de governança pode exigir uma mudança de foco e um alargamento da responsabilidade além dos tradicionais atores acadêmicos e institucionais, bem como aprofundar a atenção para o papel do Inglês na política e no ensino superior, e uma mudança de foco do estado-nação em paz para os níveis sub-regional e supra-regional. A ascensão de um regime global de educação superior ainda destaca a necessidade de pesquisadores, professores e alunos a questionar não só o nacionalismo metodológico da nação com base em estudos, mas também o cosmopolitismo metodológico que funciona em nível global, localizando ambos nos quadros oferecidos por esses estudos descoloniais e pós-coloniais que valorizam os conhecimentos arraigados ao lugar e os letramentos transnacionais que podem gerar. Em suma, a globalização está a criar condições para que o desenvolvimento de parcerias transnacionais na co-criação de conhecimento pareça desejável e necessário.

Palavras-chave: produção de conhecimento; Inglês global; letramentos transnacionais; parcerias de investigação; interdisciplinaridade

Introduction

This paper raises questions about how best to promote learning for democratic engagement in a world where people's lives are increasingly affected by decisions made beyond the boundaries of their locality or nation-state. I argue that globalization demands a renewed attention to the vocabulary we use, in Portuguese and English, in ways more attentive to the histories of these vocabularies within and across languages and cultures, and to the unexamined assumptions that certain words and word clusters may carry in specific linguistic and geopolitical contexts. This is one

reason why research in the humanities continues to matter, not just in local but also in global contexts. Globalization is creating a need to reconceptualize much of the vocabulary once employed to describe earlier world-views associated with different times. Democracy is proving itself a particularly complex term in the current conjuncture. New technologies add new dimensions to this age-old challenge of communicating across differences. David Theo Goldberg (2011), for example, contrasts the views of “ancients” and “moderns” with the emergent thinking of those he playfully calls “Webbies.” According to Goldberg, “Each of these social tags conjures different knowledge practices, common sense, and hermeneutic dispositions” (p. 452). Recognizing that the meanings of words change over time and across places in relation to changing political, economic, linguistic and social contexts, many thinkers are now wrestling with the need to reconceptualize, not only democracy, but also related concepts such as autonomy, citizenship and nation, and the “grammars” through which they make their meanings. Ideas about democracy have changed throughout history but we are not yet in a position to effectively imagine how a truly global democracy might work, nor how countries such as Brazil and Canada might contribute to that reimagining.

As part of my Canada Research Chair program investigating national and global imaginaries, I am currently engaged in a collaborative partnership with colleagues in Brazil and Canada to think about how English teaching can contribute to developing transnational literacies for fuller democratic participation at local, national, and transnational scales of involvement (See BRYDON; MONTE MOR; DE SOUZA [2010] for early work on this partnership). What I bring to the partnership is earlier interdisciplinary experience in a large team project investigating “globalization and autonomy” (described in COLEMAN; BRYDON, 2009) and involvement in an international partnership working on “building global democracy.” Each of these projects identifies a need for greater interactions

between the humanities and social sciences and for rethinking some of the key concepts central to Brazilian and Canadian Studies and International Relations as disciplines that emerged during those earlier stages of global development associated with the Cold War.

As part of that larger project of examining the power relations of knowledge production today, this paper addresses how my various experiences in transregional and interdisciplinary collaboration contribute to understanding the shifting relations between region and nation when English is becoming a driver for rethinking citizenship, identity, and responsibility within a globalizing world. Brazil and Canada, once studied as distinct nation-states within an international system, find themselves reconfigured in a closer relation when studied within a larger transhemispheric imaginary called the Americas. While some advocates of the hemispheric turn in academic studies worry that this may prove a new way to ensure the centrality of the United States within a changing global system in which supra-national regions are gaining more power, others see an opportunity for countries such as Brazil and Canada to establish a new relation unmediated through the United States within a growing multipolar world system.

Education, once a privileged site of identity formation for the nation-state, has emerged as a key site of regional and global restructuring since the European Union Bologna Declaration of June 1999. Bologna itself, of course, was a European response to the changing global higher education environment and its increasingly important role in economic competition. English occupies different places within different national systems but as English becomes a leading global language for knowledge exchange, the mission of English studies changes. English departments, however, have been slow to respond to this reality.

Reinventing democracy, locating power today

Recognizing that globalization is not leading to the demise of the nation-state, as once imagined, but that it is changing how states operate and what they can do in an increasingly integrated global economy, transnational studies have emerged as a popular alternative to discussions of postnationalism. We have not moved beyond the nation-state, and nationalism in many ways seems stronger than ever. But it is often a nationalism that threatens established nation-states as much as it threatens regional arrangements such as the European Union. Challenged from above and below, the nation-state no longer seems the sole sphere for the exercise of citizenship. As the market assumes greater power within the global arena, states often find themselves pooling their once exclusive sovereignties in recognition of changing economic realities (PAULY, 2009). In such a situation, the sources of power seem harder to locate or to be made accountable (SAVOIE, 2010). Such a context holds ramifications for how government and politics are organized within the nation-state and for regulation within the international arena. They also affect the role and power of English.

a) The Law Commission of Canada

First, let me share an example of how the Canadian federal government may choose to retreat from taking a national role in response to globalization within certain spheres of engagement. The Law Commission of Canada was a partner in our “Globalization and Autonomy” major collaborative research project (funded by SSHRC from 2002-2012). Noting in 2006 that “globalization is rarely considered a phenomenon that affects how laws are made and applied in Canada,” the Law Commission issued a discussion paper, *Crossing Borders: Law in a Globalized World*, on this issue, inviting Canadians “to participate in a conversation on law in our globalized nation” (p. 3). That discussion had barely begun when the

federal government discontinued its funding for the Law Commission on the 26 September 2006, forcing it to close down, and abandon its various initiatives. *Crossing Borders* remains important for the many questions it raises about what rules should govern globalization: who has the legitimacy to make and enforce them; and what forms they should take in what contexts. Decisions as to whether these laws should be made through international bodies such as the United Nations, nation-to-nation agreements, public-private arrangements, or private organizations clearly carry implications for autonomy and democracy. The Law Commission had originally been set up by Parliament with a mandate to consult, educate and advise. By cutting the funding to zero, the government of the day was able to bypass a parliamentary debate on the decision to defund the organization. In response to complaints about this decision, the government suggested that the functions performed by the Law Commission of Canada as a stand-alone national body with a unique multidisciplinary mandate to take a long-term view could be disaggregated and dispersed among various other bodies, with different mandates, such as the federal Justice department, the Canadian Bar Association, and the legal community at large. It is too early to predict the social costs of such fragmentation but it is already clear that Canadians are not having the conversations on law in a globalized world that the Law Commission once envisioned and enabled.

While he does not discuss the Law Commission of Canada specifically, what happened to this organization seems illustrative of the problems identified by Donald J. Savoie in *Power: Where Is It?* (2011). Savoie argues that “the location of power has shifted in recent years, and this shift has enabled those who wield power to sidestep responsibility” (p.16). He continues: “It seems that we should no longer focus on institutions but should look to corporations and especially individuals” (p. 46). Such conclusions carry disturbing implications for democratic practice and individual and collective autonomy (BRYDON, 2011). These are the focus

of the SSHRC-funded “Globalization and Autonomy” project, which is now winding up after publishing eight volumes in the University of British Columbia Press “Globalization and Autonomy” series.

b) The “Globalization and Autonomy” project

Each volume in the “Globalization and Autonomy” series our team produced examines the relation between globalization and autonomy through a different lens: institutions (PAULY; COLEMAN, 2008); community (BRYDON; COLEMAN, 2008); legitimacy (BERSTEIN; COLEMAN, 2009); empire (STREETER; WEAVER; COLEMAN, 2009); culture (RETHMANN; SZREMAN; COLEMAN, 2010); indigenous peoples (VLASER; DA COSTA; MCGREGOR; COLEMAN, 2010); property (COLEMAN, 2011) and interdisciplinary research in global times (BRYDON; COLEMAN; PAULY, in progress). We also published a volume in French and English on the two Mediterraneans (ESSID; COLEMAN, 2010; 2012), organized with colleagues out of Tunisia. To me, our key contribution was to consider how a focus on autonomy might change understanding of what is at stake in globalization. Autonomy, as the self-conscious and informed ability of individuals and collectivities to make decisions governing their lives, is clearly central to most understandings of democracy, and as our work progressed, we realized ever more strongly what complex, intertwined concepts autonomy and democracy were.

c) Building global democracy

The “Building Global Democracy” project, recognizing the disputed nature of democracy across cultures and regions, organized its first workshop around the question of “conceptualizing global democracy.” A volume from the preceding pilot project appeared in 2011 (SCHOLTE, 2011). “Building Global Democracy,” conceived and led by Jan Aart Scholte with

Ford Foundation funding, brings together an interregional, intercultural, interdisciplinary and ideologically plural convening group to organize a series of practitioner-researcher workshops with the goal of advancing knowledge and practice for greater public participation and control in the governance of global affairs. This project is unique in several ways. Out of ten conveners, only two are located in what is considered the global North. Five are men, five women. Such gender balance makes a difference. We come from a range of disciplinary backgrounds and ideological positions. We are meant to involve the range of views coming from transnational regions, not those of individual nations, but given the current global order, we each still have a national location and citizenship, so by happenstance we have conveners from Canada and Brazil. Part of our role is to negotiate the nominating of individuals to author papers for discussion and respondents to initiate the group discussion of them. A distinctive feature of the initiative is its involvement of a wide range of theorists, teachers, civil society actors, media and government personalities and policy makers in these discussions.

Our first workshop, held in Cairo in 2009, brought a wide range of perspectives to the task of “conceptualizing global democracy,” with a focus on what democracy might mean and how it could be organized at a global level. Nonetheless, for many, the problem of national democracy remained a more urgent issue and the value of democracy itself, depending on how it was understood, sometimes came into question. Our second and third workshops, involving new participants in different locations, addressed “citizen learning for global democracy” and “including the excluded in global politics.” Abstracts and papers from these workshops are posted on the website: www.buildingglobaldemocracy.org.

While the working language of the group remains English, provisions have been made for translation and sections of the website function

in seven additional languages (Arabic, Chinese, French, Hindi, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish). The goal is to promote long-term thinking about the structural changes and learning innovations, which might become necessary to ensure a truly global democracy. To advance that goal, the project offers a space where the full range of views can be aired, debated and developed among diverse groups of stakeholders. Yet language, so necessary for dialogue, still remains an obstacle. We cannot afford simultaneous translation for participants from all corners of the globe. If the press of a host country does not function in English, then press coverage of our conclusions is limited. Clearly the language of global politics, so often English, carries implications for democracy at this level.

1. Global English in politics and higher education

Canadian political scientist Peter Ives has expressed surprise that neither political science nor cosmopolitan studies have as yet paid much attention to the ways in which English informs current thinking about transnational relations, global citizenship, or how cosmopolitan democracy might actually function in practice (IVES, 2006; 2010). Similarly, English wields considerable power in shaping prescriptions for global education without attracting much analysis of the sources and implications of its power.

English has become a form of mobile imaginary that serves multiple functions in different contexts. As higher education globalizes, English publication often determines what counts. Simon Marginson (2008) explains: ‘In research there is a single mainstream system of English-language publication of research knowledge, which tends to marginalize other work rather than absorb it’ (p. 303). This is a serious problem for adequate as well as equitable knowledge production. Of Brazil, Ravinder Sidhu (2006) notes: “Like other countries deemed to be outside of the key Euro-Amer-

ican knowledge nodes, the Brazilian academy faces the dual challenge of doing research deemed credible by international networks and retaining a focus on local problems” (p. 285). This challenge is intensified by the current trend to applying inappropriate bibliometric measures devised for the sciences and university ranking systems skewed toward Northern or Western biases, publication venues, and publication in English.

2. Canada and Brazil within the hemispheric turn

In seeking to address these issues, each of the projects described here stresses the importance of locality within emergent transnational frames. In setting up a process of knowledge exchange between Canada and Brazil, contributors to this journal participate in the hemispheric turn in contemporary scholarship. I see three changes in spatial relations that now frame the transnational dialogue between Brazil and Canada:

1. With globalization, region now requires analysis at both sub-national and supranational levels.
2. In many discussions, sub-national forms of region are increasingly being seen as obstacles to national competitiveness in a globalizing world, whereas regions at supranational levels are increasingly understood as important for ensuring competitiveness on the global scene.
3. European Union initiatives in the area of higher education reform are transforming higher education within transnational and global arenas.

Savoie’s argument in *Power* is that globalizing shifts in trade patterns, together with the “ability to communicate in microseconds,” has rendered obsolete the organizational models under which the Canadian department of Foreign Affairs operates (p. 36-7). He adds: “the desire of subnational regions to integrate more fully in the global economy” means that the “traditional east-west trade between Canada and the United States is giving way to a north-south pattern. It is becoming more and more dif-

difficult for national governments to define a national economic interest that speaks to all its subregions” (p. 37). While regional studies in Canada have focused extensively on sub-national geopolitical units, globalization is shifting attention to regionalization at the supranational and transnational levels. In keeping with this turn, the Canadian government is increasingly focusing its attention on asserting its presence within the Americas. At the same time, provincial governments are also moving to develop partnerships with sub-national state governments within the region. My own province of Manitoba, for example, has an agreement with the State of Rio Grande do Sul in Brazil.

3. An emerging transnational higher education regime?

The European Union Bologna Process is being described as an emerging “transnational higher education regime” (HEINZE; KNILL, 2008, p. 498). In a survey of EU policy (2007), Hind Zantout and Parviz Dabir-Alai conclude that “the need for the EU to compete globally in education and research can be ensured” through this regime even as it needs to recognize the heterogeneity of its regional components (p. 139-140). This is a dilemma Canada also faces, albeit on a smaller scale. With education as a provincial responsibility, the Canadian education system is highly decentralized. While many assume the lack of a national higher education strategy puts Canada at a disadvantage, others see some benefits in the diversity and heightened local autonomy enabled by provincial control. There is probably insufficient evidence to support either position at this stage. In their chapter on ‘Globalisation, NAFTA, and Higher Education in Canada’ (2003), Barrow, Didou-Aupetit and Mallea note “Published research on the impact of globalization and trade liberalization on Canadian higher education is thin on the ground. The same is true of efforts to internationalise the colleges and universities. Case studies do not exist....” (p. 95). That

situation is changing but more work needs to be done. This research gap seems to echo a governance gap, identified in two reports issued in Canada in 2010. Each argues Canada is falling behind in the key global indicators of innovation, research and development because of a lack of leadership at the federal level.

a) The Open Canada Report (2010)

The Canadian International Council report, *Open Canada: A Global Positioning Strategy for a Networked Age*, worries about Canada's leadership role in a changing world. It argues for a greater role at the national level for what it calls "knowledge diplomacy" and an aggressive move forward in international education taking a three-pronged higher education approach, stressing international scholarships; global studies and language programs; and strategic partnerships with Mexico, India and China (p. 28-9). The authors lament that "Nearly 150 years after Confederation, Canada's economic union remains less open than the 27-nation European Union" (p. 40). Their overall point is that Canada needs to get beyond its provincialism if it is not to fall behind in a globalizing world.

b) The Taking Stock Report (2010)

In 2010, the Canadian Council on Learning issued *Taking Stock: Lifelong Learning in Canada (2005-2010)*. This report argues that Canada's province-based system puts Canada at a serious disadvantage within the changing global system. It notes that Canada has no national strategy for public sector education, no agreed-upon goals, no benchmarks, and no public reporting of results based on widely accepted indicators. This may overstate the case. Sandra Vergari distinguishes between "national policy" and "federal policy" (p. 539) to argue that while "Canada does not have a federal department of education" (p. 536) and has no formal federal juris-

diction over education, and hence no federal policy, it does have a few entities facilitating development of national policy, most notably the Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC). Questions remain as to how effective, how responsive to globalizing changes, and how responsible to voters, such a body can be.

There is also some regional collaboration between neighbouring provinces: the Western Canadian Protocol for Collaboration in Basic Education (established in 1993), which aims to develop common curriculum frameworks in certain areas (See TAVARES, 2000) and the Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation (established in 1995). Vergari stresses that “the success of national policy depends on subnational commitment (p. 535). She concludes that the Canadian system promotes diversity and local autonomy without sacrificing equity but in a system where there is relatively weak accountability. To better understand the strengths and weaknesses of the Canadian system, she argues it would be helpful to generate future comparisons “with countries with different degrees of central government power and corresponding trends in the development of federal versus national education policy” (p. 551). Preparing the ground for such work is part of what we hope to accomplish through our exploratory research partnership, “Brazil/Canada knowledge exchange: building transnational literacies.”

c) Brazilian Higher Education and globalizing pressures

At first glance, the contrast of Canada with Brazil seems striking. Leite (2010) argues that two main factors globalizing Brazilian Higher Education are “the governmental stimulus for internationalization and the imposition of evaluation programs of control and regulation of the HE system” (p. 224). These systems were in place before the Tuning Latin America initiative, but the ALCUE Common Area of Higher Education,

set up by the EU, Latin American and Caribbean countries from a meeting in 1999, continues to promote a significant level of higher education convergence. Hugo Aboites (2010) sees the extension of Bologna to Latin American universities as continuous with the impetus begun in 1992 with the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) signed by Canada, the US and Mexico, with each demonstrating “a tendency for decisions about higher education to be made with very limited participation, with emphasis on the commercialization of education and with a pro-business orientation” (p. 443). His objections to Bologna are that it is “a transplanted model” from Europe (p. 448); that it leads to “the commodification of university education” (p. 449); and to a homogenizing of competencies (p. 450), that it involves “a questionable academic and pedagogical approach” (p. 450) and that it “threatens the identity of students and faculty as key protagonists in higher education and the identity of Latin American universities themselves” (p. 452). Our partnership to develop transnational literacies works within the context of these challenges to develop an alternative approach.

1. The need for developing transnational literacies

Like Canada, Brazil is a fragmented system with federal, state and private universities. On the one hand, what Ulrich Beck has called “methodological nationalism” is increasingly being exposed as an inadequate frame through which to understand global transformations. On the other, states remain key players in certain arenas of engagement. They are responding to globalizing pressures by introducing more requirements for public universities to show how their work will benefit the state. While discourses of a competitive global knowledge economy are reshaping how education and research are organized and measured elsewhere, in Canada, territorial jurisdictions still largely determine a protectionist local re-

sponse. At a time when the *Open Canada* report notes the obsolescence of theories that pit “brain drain” against “brain gain” in a zero sum game, the provinces of New Brunswick and Manitoba are providing new financial incentives to recent graduates to stay within their respective provinces after graduation. Many Canadians remain suspicious of dual citizenship and unsympathetic to the democratic demands of Canadians who live and work overseas. This is at least partly because while globalization ideally enables relatively free ‘brain circulation,’ the process is actually uneven in its impact, reflecting “unequal power and resources” (MARGINSON; SAWIR, 2005: p. 300). This uneven process is further narrowed, Marginson and Sawyer suggest, by acceptance of pre-given narratives of globalization, which are “bounded by the linguistic walls of global English” (p. 304).

The dangers of parochialism are obvious but there are also benefits to a local place-based approach. Saskia Sassen (2009) argues that “In order to understand the foundational transformations afoot, we need place-based knowledges from all over the world, rather than focusing only on the seemingly self-evident new subjectivity, new imaginary, new cosmopolitanism, new kind of power, emerging at the global scale” (p. 118). In other words, there are also problems with Beck’s preferred alternative to “methodological nationalism”: what he calls “methodological cosmopolitanism.” How to balance the local and the global, the bottom up and top down approaches, is the challenge those of us studying the present continue to face. These are not so much opposites as intimately co-constructed relations that operate differently in different times and places.

Some of these tensions between region, nation, and transnation emerge in contemporary knowledge debates and in political debates about citizenship and its entitlements. These come together in the field of citizenship education. Anxieties about citizenship, belonging, and mobility,

which are often attributed to global changes, coalesce around education as a once-privileged site of nation-state identity-formation. In current times, regional, national, and global interests often seem to be at odds in citizenship education, making it difficult for many to conceive of how dual or multi-leveled forms of citizenship might work out in practice or be taught in complementary ways. Some scholars have concluded that even when people try “to tie global identity and citizenship together, the relationship is typically framed as an extension of national self-interest and almost exclusively tied to the existing civic-structures of the nation-state” (RICHARDSON, 2008, p. 58). This tendency is clearly manifested in the *Open Canada* report, which aims to make Canada the *centre* of as many international partnerships as possible (p. 15, my emphasis).

I wonder, however, whether networked worlds need centres. Can networks not function more efficiently through multiple hubs or nodes? While such a model might seem more democratic, it can also lead, as Savoie suggests, to problems in locating the source of power and hence to tracing accountability, one of the principles on which democracy is founded. The *Open Canada* report is still working within the competitive frames of an international system that seems less relevant to proponents of transnationalism or the values of the emergent group that Goldberg calls “Webbies.” Democracy theorists are now struggling with the implications of such shifts. Transnational literacies need to be developed through trans-border partnerships to better assess the threats and potentials these changes hold.

Raewyn Connell (2007) suggests that “Methods for cooperative intellectual work across regions are not yet well established” (p. 232). Perhaps especially South/North partnerships require rethinking. Linda Peake and Karen de Souza (2010) argue that “northern-based academic feminists cannot be engaged in transformative politics in the South, unless they are

simultaneously committed to challenging academic structures, norms, and practices in their own institutions” (p. 118). Such transnational partnerships, in which the co-creation of knowledge through reciprocal processes of interaction is the goal, require thinking more deeply about the research process and its contexts. That’s why transnational literacy involves thinking about the structural changes that are currently reshaping the global higher education system as well as our regional and national positions within it.

This paper has argued that in the emergent theoretical contexts of the hemispheric turn, the region operates at both sub- and supra-national scales, interacting with the global in ways that make older oppositions between local and global seem inadequate. Nonetheless, important roles still remain for the nation-state, including in the sphere of education. In the past, Canada and Brazil have seldom collaborated. However, globalization is creating conditions in which the development of transnational partnerships in the co-creation of knowledge seems both desirable and necessary. It is too early to say where new Canadian federal initiatives promoting a closer relationship between our two countries will lead. In a time of great uncertainty, one thing seems clear: how our educational systems adapt to these realities will have an impact on future well-being.¹

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