



UNIVERSITETET I BERGEN

UiB Global

Conference

Why should universities and academics in the North and South collaborate?

Knowledge, development, strategy and/or competition?

Bergen 15-16 June 2015

Call for papers and attendance

In this conference we address the so-called North-South collaboration between universities and professors/researchers.

We, as professors, work together for mutual benefit and with a main concern to increase insights and new understandings. Ideally, we choose to collaborate across borders and boundaries in the interest of improving knowledge.

We also use publications from wherever we can get them, and publish what we know openly. We stand on one another's shoulders, and we all contribute. The well-known "regulars" on the curriculum all over the world are so because they build on the undercurrent of researchers and students. The lesser known researchers appear in the lists of references of articles or books.

Thus, the academic community is like a gifting-society, where we constantly exchange bits and pieces of knowledge, or create networks for a more systematic structuring of these gift-relations for the benefit of all.

This gifting-society is however easily distorted. It is influenced by competitive forces from the outside and social ambitions on the inside. These undermine and transform the gift-relations on which the academic knowledge production depends. Today, this can be observed in the ways universities are transformed; form arenas for exchange of ideas, knowledge and insights; and how they organize for competition. Knowledge resources increasingly become tools for promoting this competition.

The academic honour that was earlier driving the exchanges of knowledge gifts, and which constitute a *raison d'être for all academic work*, is transformed into organisational resources for promotion of one's own position. What determines this position is reputation gained from external evaluations, external rating, systems of ranking, and all kinds of citation and other measurable quantities of production. Rankings are more discussed among professors than their latest book. Resources are spent on the so-called "best", who are isolated in centres of excellence where they are unable to live up to their gift commitments to all those they have interacted with to become chosen as "excellent". This take an extra toll from the "next-best", to the degree that they may vanish: the pool of knowledge diminishes.

In such a scenario, universities develop strategies to enhance reputation, important in external evaluations, which give access to resources.

Within these strategies, collaboration with universities that may improve one's perceived standing in society becomes important. Collaboration must be justified as a tool for better positioning oneself in competition for resources. Such strategic choices are contradictory to gifts exchanged between academics in an open public space – everyone wants to collaborate

with someone who is better than themselves. Curiosity and doubt as decisive ingredients of research are thus diminished.

The consequences of all this, for North-South collaboration, can be detrimental. Universities that are not part of the ranking system become strategically unimportant for those who already have a position.

In such a situation it is argued that university collaborations must be anchored in its support of development rather than in the sheer interest of knowledge exchange and production. The development goal must be to make the universities in the South good enough to be competitive on the global arena: they need help.

Cooperation vs. competition

This conference opens the discussion about *academic cooperation vs. academic competition*. Is it really so that academic collaboration with so-called weak and vulnerable universities in the South may be detrimental to competition for those who are rated high?

And, why should universities in the South accept university collaboration as “development aid” given the fact that these universities have first-hand experiences with global challenges, and therefore access to knowledge on their own about environment degradation; energy failures; poverty; inequality; destructive forces inherent in global capitalism; health problems; and repressive working conditions.

Is it possible to (re)build open gift-relations where we follow our academic interests in an ongoing exchange of knowledge, whether these lead to improved strategic positioning of a university or not?

This conference is in particular oriented towards contextualising the Norwegian NORHED program (The Norwegian Programme for Capacity Development in Higher Education and Research for Development) but not limited to this.

The conference has for the time being the following speakers:

Professor **Göran Hydén**, Department of Political Science, University of Florida
Types of North – South linkages in the area of research and higher education: development or knowledge or both.

Professor **A.B.K.Kasozi**, Institute of Social Research, Makerere University
Research based knowledge for economic development? The case of Uganda.

Professor **Anders Bjørkelo**, UiB Global, University of Bergen and **Fadwa A. R. Ali Taha**, Professor, University of Dammam, Saudi Arabia and University of Khartoum
The crisis in higher education in the Sudan with special reference to the University of Khartoum, 1956-2013.

Assistant Professor **Evan Berry**, Department of Philosophy and Religion, American University
Latin-America and the USA.

Senior Adviser **Jorun Nossun**, Norad's NORHED Programme
Presentation of the NORHED programme.

Associate Professor **Tor Halvorsen**, UiB Global, University of Bergen
Multilateral domination; the role of OECD.

Assistant Director **Tore Sætersdal** and Associate Professor **Anne Bang**, UiB Global
The role of the humanities in North-South Collaboration.

Hans Geir Aasmundsen, UiB Global, University of Bergen
Establishing academic South-North networks; strategies, concerns and outcomes.

Associate Professor **Bjørn-Ola Tafjord**, Department of History and Religious Studies,
University of Tromsø
The study of and collaboration with the BriBri of Talamanca, Costa Rica.

We welcome all interested academics to present a paper or attend the conference and contribute to the discussion.

Please send an abstract by March 1, 2015.

The full program will be distributed by mid-March 2015. Presenters are encouraged to distribute an extended abstract or a full paper by June 1. 2015.

Registration is open until we have reached the maximum limit of 30 participants. Registration and abstracts should be sent to the following two addresses: Hans.Aasmundsen@adm.uib.no and Tor.Halvorsen@aorg.uib.no

The conference is organised through the NORHED project *Building and reflecting on interdisciplinary PhD studies for higher education transformation* at UiB Global, the University of Bergen.

For general information, any question or comments, please contact:

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