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# Colonial legacies in internationalisation of higher education: racial justice and geopolitical redress in South Africa and Brazil

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## ABSTRACT

Internationalisation of higher education has mostly been theorised from a Euro-American perspective, taking less into account how legacies of colonial expansion impose unique demands on universities. This article highlights the tensions that arise when universities must respond simultaneously to transnational pressures for internationalisation and local demands for racial justice. Drawing on insights from two qualitative case studies at public universities in South Africa and Brazil, it is argued that the inbound mobility of regional students serves the instrumental purpose of holding together these conflicting imperatives at the level of the individual institution without fully accounting for international students in institutional discourses, policies and structures.

## KEYWORDS

higher education;  
international student  
mobility; Africa; Latin  
America; social justice

## Introduction

Around the world, university administrators and policy makers increasingly devise internationalisation policies in response to the proliferation of the knowledge economy in higher education and to foster national development against the backdrop of globalisation (Bolsmann and Miller 2008). It is widely acknowledged that internationalisation – that is:

specific policies and initiatives of countries and individual institutions or systems to deal with global trends [including] policies related to recruitment of international students, collaborations with academic institutions or systems of other countries, and the establishment of branch campuses abroad. (Altbach 2015, 6)

engages a variety of stakeholders: governments, institutions, faculty, and students (de Wit 2002). Within this broad internationalisation framework, this article focuses on the understudied phenomena of inbound international student mobility in postcolonial contexts, and how it intersects with national efforts to reform higher education systems to democratise access for historically marginalised populations. More precisely, we offer a conceptual and comparative reflection on the significance of the inbound mobility of

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regional students into South Africa (from the Southern African Development Community [SADC]) and into Brazil (from the Community of Portuguese-language Countries [CPLP]).

South Africa and Brazil offer compelling cases for comparison because they share important characteristics: in both countries, histories of colonial occupation (apartheid and Portuguese colonialism) have provided the grounds for what today are highly unequal higher education systems (Badat 2008; Schwartzman and Paiva 2014); both represent attractive study destinations for growing numbers of regional students (Kotecha 2012; Milani, Da Conceição, and M'Bunde 2016); both aspire to regional leadership roles (Flemes and Wojczewski 2010), and both countries have made efforts to improve access to higher education for historically excluded student populations (Akoojee and Nkomo 2011). Moreover, public universities in both countries must strike a balance between the imperative of global competition (e.g. university ranking systems) and domestic demands for institutional transformation.

Drawing on insights from qualitative case studies at two public universities in South Africa and Brazil, this article illustrates how internationalisation, especially inbound regional student mobility, intersects with longstanding patterns of racialised educational inequalities. It examines the two cases across recent efforts to expand, equalise, and internationalise opportunities for higher education. It is argued that the presence of regional students gives the impression that universities are undertaking internationalisation while simultaneously addressing racial justice demands. At the level of the individual institution, regional students come to represent both – the increased presence of non-national and Black students (proxies for internationalisation and for transformation). This positions regional students at the intersection of the *economic* and the *sociocultural* rationale detailed in Knight's (1997, 2004) well-known typology of internationalisation. Yet, it requires shifting the theoretical conceptualisations of the *political* and the *sociocultural rationales* – beyond the assertion of national identity and the promotion of intercultural understandings (de Wit 2002) – to account for inbound student mobility as a form of geopolitical redress.

To develop this argument, we review the internationalisation literature and explain the methodology that guided the research, before discussing our findings. At the end, we summarise the main line of argumentation. The positionality of regional students in South African and Brazilian universities and the instrumentalisation of their presence require comparative and international education scholars to grapple more carefully with the questions of what constitutes a public university (in postcolonial contexts and beyond) when aspirations to compete in a globalised higher education landscape are in conflict with demands for redress, educational equity and decolonisation. In the conclusion we offer some thoughts regarding these concerns.

## Globalisation and internationalisation

Although internationalisation of higher education means many things, scholars often perceive it as a response to globalisation pressures. 'Globalisation' has been used to refer to the social processes that constitute the rapid movement of ideas, goods, and people around the globe, radically transforming relations among people and communities across national borders (Cohen and Kennedy 2007). Felix Maringe (2010) characterises

globalisation as a multidimensional concept whereby sociocultural, technological, political, and ideological aspects become presumably more and more homogeneous and driven by free market principles. While people continue to live in particular localities, globalisation has given rise to new forms of transnational interconnectivity increasingly integrating the local into larger, globe-spanning networks (Rizvi 2011). Scholars widely acknowledge that globalisation produces significant repercussions for higher education. It leads to the emergence of a global knowledge economy characterised by heavy investment in knowledge industries, dependency on knowledge products for economic growth, growing demands for highly educated knowledge workers, the spread of English as lingua franca in research, and the growing relevance of information and communication technologies (Altbach and Knight 2007).

The more policy makers and university administrators are confronted with an intensified globalisation, the more they are drawn to internationalisation policies to meet the challenges and seize the opportunities presented by this global interconnectivity. Scholarly accounts of internationalisation are also surging, covering a wide range of topics. Knight (1997, 2004), who has pioneered internationalisation research, devised typologies of internationalisation research (see also de Wit 2002; Maringe and Woodfield 2013). Her initial classification distinguished between the political, the sociocultural, the academic, and the economic rationales (Knight 1997).

The *political rationale* pertains to a nationalistic perspective, which links back to international education as a ‘soft power’ tool for nation-states around the world to assert their influence (Nye 2004). Governments have long been investing in internationalisation to foster future diplomatic and economic relations. The *academic rationale* presents internationalisation as adding value to national higher education systems and triggering institutional change (Frank and Gabler 2006). This, however, poses concerns to those who fear that the emphasis on the global might result in uniformity and homogeneity among tertiary institutions at the local level. Scholarly accounts grouped under the *sociocultural rationale* centre on respect for cultural diversity in an effort to counterbalance these homogenising effects. Universities are viewed as institutions that emphasise the preservation of national culture while promoting mutual and cross- and intercultural understanding (de Wit 2002). Lastly, and by far the largest body of work, it seems, falls within the realm of the *economic rationale*. It centres on how countries respond to growing global economic pressures including the global competition for academic talent (Wildavsky 2012). Yet many scholars are concerned that if the market logic continues dominating discussions on higher education, university leaders will feel more and more compelled to prioritise fields directly linked to revenues (e.g. STEM), leaving fields behind that are central to addressing sociocultural issues but are less remunerative (e.g. social sciences, humanities) (Kim 2009).

Knight (2004) further differentiated between national-level and institutional-level rationales, whereby *national-level rationales* include human resource development, strategic alliances, commercial trade, nation building, and social/cultural development, whereas *institutional-level rationales* include international branding and profile, income generation, student and staff development, strategic alliances, and knowledge production. This later typology highlights internationalisation at home and abroad as divergent but interrelated spheres. We contend, however, that neither of these typologies fully captures the entanglement of democratisation and geopolitical redress in post-

apartheid/post-colonial contexts. Very little research has aimed to understand and conceptualise internationalisation efforts in the context of the historical particularities of the postcolonial condition. With some notable exceptions – Habib (2016) and Hall (2004) – scholars have rarely examined the challenges that policy makers and administrators face, given the demands of local movements for educational equity, in response to situated histories of colonisation vis-à-vis institutional and economic pressures to internationalise higher education. The South African and Brazilian case studies featured in this article spotlight the tensions between justice-oriented goals and processes in higher education and the internationalisation imperatives of universities as embodied by the figure of the regional student.

### Decoloniality as research framework

The suspicion remains that processes of globalisation and the proliferation of internationalisation agendas represent yet another vehicle to promote Euro-American logics in the guise of the ‘global’ (Jowi 2012; Leite 2010). A useful framework for understanding the complex challenges facing public higher education systems in South Africa and Brazil as they navigate (post-/neo-) colonial relations is decoloniality. Emerging out of the struggles of colonised peoples, decoloniality describes a set of diverse approaches that propose coloniality as *the* problem in the modern age: there can be no analyses of Euro-American-centric modernity (and its re-appropriated variants in post-colonial contexts) without considering the history of the slave trade, empire, colonialism, apartheid, neo-colonialism, and underdevelopment (Mignolo 2007; Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Zondi 2016; Mbembe 2017). A decolonial epistemic perspective allows for the systematic interrogation of the global asymmetries that constituted imperial power by challenging longstanding Euro-American claims to a universal, neutral, objective, and disembodied epistemology (Grosfoguel 2007; Maldonado-Torres 2007; Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Zondi 2016; Quijano 2007). The decoloniality framework illuminates the tensions between internationalisation as conceived in the Euro-American west and racial justice demands in post-apartheid/post-colonial contexts. However, the binary cartography of decoloniality fails to take into account regional relations – South Africa’s historical relations with other SADC countries or Brazil, one of Portugal’s main colonies and importer of more enslaved labourers than any other country in the world.

In the case of South Africa, the SADC countries played a pivotal role in the struggle against apartheid, in supplying migrant labour for South African mines and as investment destinations for South African capital (Saunders 2011). South Africa also owes a moral debt: the war of terror waged by the apartheid regime in the 1970s and 1980s against Southern African countries to try and prevent largely anti-apartheid forces from undertaking operations to end apartheid left more than a million of the region’s people dead and is estimated to have cost the region more than tens of billions of dollars in destroyed infrastructure and lack of development opportunities (Booth and Vale 1995; Hentz 2005; Saunders 2011). Despite the costs of the destabilisation policy, the countries in the region welcomed South African students, and helped educate and train many of the professionals who are currently the mainstay of South Africa’s economy.

In the case of Brazil, the Transatlantic Slave Trade provided the foundation for the economic development of the nation. Between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, Portuguese slave traders and their middlemen transported over 5.5 million people from West-central Africa (e.g. Bight of Benin, Luanda) and Mozambique to Brazil (Lovejoy 2011; Trans-Atlantic-Slave-Trade Database Voyages)<sup>1</sup> to work on farms and in mines rendering the men, women, and children a commodity in the triangular trade between Africa, the Americas and Europe. Slavery was abolished only in 1888, yet followed by a number of evolutionist and determinist theories developed by Europeans and North Americans and adopted by Brazilian social scientists at the beginning of the twentieth century, which declared the cultural inferiority of Africans as scientifically proven and biologically determined (Schwarcz 1999). As a result, a politics of Whitening Brazilian society ensued, which relegated non-White Brazilians to the poorest segments in the society (Telles 2004). When the Brazilian government under the presidency of Luis Inácio Lula da Silva (2003–2010) revived Africa-Brazil relations, it justified its efforts in the name of solidarity. Lula construed internationalisation of higher education as a form of reparation (if only symbolically) for the historical debt Brazil accrued from slavery, and as a form to recognise Afro-Brazilian's role in building the nation (Cesarino 2017).

In Europe, internationalisation and international student mobility have also been approached in terms of regionalisation to foster a regional identity and create European citizenship in the aftermath of World War II (de Wit 2002). The focus has been on multicultural dimensions to inspire international tolerance and respect. By contrast, in South Africa and Brazil international student mobility is framed in terms of development and support to other countries in the region as a form of regional cooperation for development and geopolitical redress that acknowledges the role other countries played for national economic advancement. These policy efforts are linked to South Africa and Brazil's emerging role as regional hegemons (Majee *forthcoming*; Ress *forthcoming*).

### Selection of case studies

The case studies that inform the discussion have been conducted independently. They shared as a starting point an interest in international students' experiences in southern, thus far under-studied, contexts. South Africa and Brazil have become popular study destinations for a variety of reasons. Both countries are increasingly regarded as leaders in their respective regions (Flemes and Wojczewski 2010). Their higher education systems are relatively well developed and English and Portuguese as languages of instruction are widely shared within the respective regions. Because of limited higher education opportunities, the general scarcity of employment, and political instability in their home countries, many regional students regard South Africa as a coveted study and work destination (Kotecha 2012; Schoole 2011). Nearly one-half of SADC's mobile students study in South African universities (UNESCO 2012), numbering 52,878 in 2015 (Council on Higher Education 2017). In Brazil, the influx of students from African countries has also been growing, from 116 students in 2004, to 4264 students in 2009 and to 5202 in 2014.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the South African and Brazilian governments are subsidising regional students. Pursuant of the SADC Protocol of 1997, SADC students are treated as domestic students for purposes of fees and accommodation. In Brazil,

public higher education is tuition-free and international students can apply for need-based stipends (Milani, Da Conceição, and M'Bunde 2016).

## Research methodology

The case studies are doubly anchored in: (1) organisational ethnographies (Eberle and Maeder 2011) and (2) historical reason (Mbembe 2017). Regarding (1), both are embedded in a critical development studies framework – development as discursive regime that constructs its objects of interventions (Ferugson 1994; Popkewitz 1998) and in an understanding of educational policies as processes of vertical interrelations – from school to mid-level bureaucracies to national policies to global discourses (Bartlett and Vavrus 2014). Both frameworks regard policies as technologies of power and sense-making devices by which people organise and justify their everyday practices (Kendall 2007; Shore, Wright, and Però 2011). In this sense, the universities selected as research sites sit at the intersection of national, regional, and global pressures. Hence, they afforded an opportunity to study how competing imaginaries of the roles and missions of public universities are conceptualised, institutionalised, contested, and re-appropriated.

Regarding (2), we forefront an understanding of history that refuses to gloss over the fact that the idea of internationalisation of higher education rests on a history *longue durée* of colonial expropriation and exploitation of non-Europeans' labour to fuel the global capitalist logic of progress and modernity. We depart from notions of reliability and validity in the sense that they carry ideas of allegedly universal understandings of objectivity, which in fact is only a cultural parochialism invented during the enlightenment era in eighteenth-century Europe (Popkewitz 1998). Instead we provide a narrative that attests to the complexities of educational policy making in post-apartheid/post-colonial contexts, which does not gain its strength from 'methodology'; rather it is 'validated' (that is, claimed to be true) by virtue of its situatedness in history (Mbembe 2017). In short, we found the answers to our questions not so much in scripted approaches to data analysis (in the traditional sense) rather than in a reading of universities as relational entities imbued with historical reason (in the decolonial sense), through which we hope to impart lessons that are relevant for internationalisation policy concerns more broadly.

## South Africa

The South African case study draws on ethnographic research conducted between 2014 and 2016 at one of the country's public universities. It is among the country's top-rated, historically White, research-intensive public universities and has some of the highest proportions of Black South African and international students. According to institutional records, as of 2013, the university enrolled more than 30,000 students: 68% undergraduates, 31% postgraduates, 1% non-degree students. Of all students, 10% were international students, of whom at least 70% come from SADC neighbours (e.g. Zimbabwe, Swaziland, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Zambia). The research was conducted in three phases over six months in total, including the collection of a wide spectrum of policy documents and 90 in-depth interviews with diverse



institutional actors including 26 university administrators, 15 staff and faculty, 30 international students, and 19 South Africa students. A variety of university settings (e.g. student organisations, hallways, cafeterias, dorms, etc) were observed. To verify insights gained from this particular case study, five expert interviews with administrators from other South African universities were conducted. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. Data were analysed through ‘concept mapping’ (Butler-Kisber 2010), which involves sifting through research texts and documenting emerging interpretation in a series of visual, relational concepts. The visual mapping technique allowed for a conceptual understanding and a holistic overview of patterns in the data, thus helped with the formulation of emerging analytic ideas.

### **Brazil**

The Brazilian case study draws on ethnographic research conducted between 2012 and 2015 at a government-funded international university with the explicit mandate to foster relations with CPLP countries. Inaugurated in 2011, by 2015, the university enrolled 2666 undergraduate students, 73% of them Brazilian nationals and 27% non-Brazilian nationals from Guinea Bissau, Angola, Mozambique, São Tomé e Príncipe, Cape Verde, and East Timor. The research involved five months of ethnographic fieldwork, including repeated and in-depth interviews with 24 professors, 20 students, and 5 administrators, as well as countless informal conversations with students, professors, and administrators who were purposefully selected to reflect the general demographics (e.g. gender, socioeconomic, ethno-racial, linguistic, national, professional and disciplinary backgrounds). I conducted 133 hours of in-classroom and over 400 hours of on-campus (e.g. general assemblies, faculty meetings, library, hallways, university restaurant) and off-campus (e.g. bus stops, market square) observations. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. Data were analysed using MS Office applications following a Grounded Theory methodology (Clarke 2005) and the first and second cycle coding procedures suggested by Saldaña (2013).

### **Terminology**

Deploying ethno-racial descriptors as a form of categorisation is always complicated, therefore a word on terminology. In the South African case the 2011 censuses distinguishes between Black Africans (79.2%), Coloured (8.9%), Indian/Asian (2.5%), White (8.9%), and other (0.5%).<sup>3</sup> In the Brazilian case, the 2010 census distinguishes between *Branco* (White, 47.7%), *Pardo* (mixed-race or Brown, 43.1%), *Preto* (Black, referring to the darkest Brazilians, 7.6%), *Amarelo* (Yellow or of Asian descent, 1.9%), and *Indígena* (Indigenous, 0.4%).<sup>4</sup> In everyday interactions, Brazilians use *Negro*, which also translates into Black in English. We recognise that classifying populations by race and ethnicity, through censuses or otherwise, naturalises dividing lines – such as the lines between who is Black and who is White – while they are in fact socio-historical and ‘cultural impositions upon the natural fact of physical variation among human beings’ (Loveman 2014; xiii [see Christopher 2009]) for similar argument regarding the South African census). We use the terms *Black* and *White* because much of the tension between internationalisation efforts and domestic demands for redress and educational



equity hinges on the racialised inequalities that ensued from apartheid and colonial history. In South Africa, a White minority exercised complete political power over the rest of the population until the 1994 transition to democracy. Many Black South Africans have long been demanding racial justice to mediate the legacies of the apartheid era (Badat 2009). In Brazil, White elites have long been denying that racialised inequalities even exist and Afro-Brazilian activists have long been fighting for the recognition of race (*raça* or *cor* [colour]) as a legitimate political category through which to advance claims for social justice (Paschel 2016).

## Colonial legacies and recent reform efforts

### *South Africa – apartheid and the decolonial struggle*

Higher education in South Africa has been profoundly shaped by the dynamics and persistent salience of race (Seekings 2008). Apartheid was a comprehensive, state driven, top-down system premised on the making and remaking of society through policy formulated by government and implemented by the different government departments and state apparatuses (Muller, Maassen, and Cloete 2006). In line with this vision, the South African higher education system was segregated into institutions reserved for White South Africans and institutions tasked with providing limited tertiary education to those who were not classified as White (Council on Higher Education 2010). Intended to ensure that Blacks would have no place in the community of Euro-descendants, apartheid education limited opportunities for Blacks to semi-skilled labour force thereby forging inferiority among Blacks and superiority among Whites, which in turn promoted Black intellectual under-development (Maile 2011).

Due to its historical and contextual peculiarities, South Africa's higher education reform agenda is caught between the logic of incorporating within a competitive global economy and national concerns for redress and racial equity (Cooper 2015; McLellan 2008). A top-level university administrator pointed out that 'transformation' is the official word and was part of the anti-apartheid repertoire in South Africa even before 1994 (interview, 6 September 2015). He argued that, in its broad sense, transformation has to do with empowering the Black South Africans, who were most marginalised during apartheid. It expresses the need for racial distribution of students and faculty to mirror the country's racial demographics, an Africanised curriculum to replace the dominantly Euro-centric curriculum, and the institutional culture to be responsive to the academic and other needs of Black South Africans.

The idea of creating a more equitable higher education system that reflects the country's diverse society in terms of race, gender, and socioeconomic status found expression through eight institutional priorities intended to increase diversity and racial equity on campus. The priorities include: (1) mobilising funds to appoint new African and Coloured academics, and advance African and Coloured senior/associate professors into professorship; (2) reforming the curriculum and rethinking pedagogy; (3) renaming buildings and statues to strike a balance between names derived from sponsorships and donations and those relevant for institutional identity; and introducing local languages such as IsiZulu and Suthu to permit multilingual instruction.

To describe this need for sociocultural and epistemological redress, the official discourse spoke of ‘transformation’, whereas Black student and scholar activists promoted the term ‘decolonisation’. As a Black, non-national professor pointed out, the notion of decolonisation ‘assumes that the current condition or situation in South Africa is still a colonial condition, starting with the name of the institutions, culture, what is being taught and how, and who is teaching’ (personal conversation). As championed by the most radical among Black South African student activists, the decolonisation discourse agitates against what the students see as institutionalised racism and Whiteness; confronts hierarchies in institutional governance and other structures; and puts pressure on the university to transform in more fundamental and radical ways. As expressed through the 2015 and 2016 #RhodesFeesMustFall student protests (Booyesen 2016; Jansen 2017), the radical decolonisation stance invoked notions of power and hierarchies and focused on the roles and positionality occupied by Black person within the university: who taught, what was taught, who got to be financially excluded.

### **Brazil – transatlantic slave trade and affirmative action policy**

Throughout most of the twentieth century, Brazilian elites upheld the idea of racial democracy portraying ethno-racial relations in Brazilian society as harmonious and tolerant. They celebrated cultural mixing (*miscenginação*) and considered racial categories fluid along a colour-continuum (especially in comparison to the colour-line between Blacks and Whites in the USA). At the same time, the belief in the superiority of Europeans was widespread. Brazilian elites encouraged European immigration to replace slave labour after the abolition of slavery while obviating questions of discrimination and poor socioeconomic integration of freed slaves. These hierarchies discursively and materially placed Blacks at the bottom and Whites at the top of Brazilian society (Telles 2004).

Brazil’s educational structures served to maintain these inequalities. Historically, the educational system has been two-tiered. It combines private and public institutions in an inverse status position across different levels of education. At the primary and secondary level, private schools are considered to offer better quality education than public schools. Therefore, middle- and upper-income families, who can afford to pay tuition, send their children to private schools. At the tertiary level, on the other hand, public universities (federal and state institutions), which charge no tuition, rank among the most elite in the country. Access to these public universities has traditionally been limited and gated through competitive entrance examinations (*vestibular*). Often, though not always, private school students have been better prepared and therefore have been more likely to pass these examinations. Many low-income, public school students have been left to the less competitive and mostly less prestigious private universities because, as in South Africa, they have not been prepared well enough for either public university entrance examinations or successful completion of their studies (McCowan 2016a). Long-standing patterns of racialised socioeconomic inequalities have led to the systematic exclusion of non-White students from higher education (Bailey and Peria 2010). In 2006 20% of White college-age students attended university,

whereas less than 6% of their non-White peers were enrolled (Paixão and Carvano 2008).

As in South Africa, since the beginning of the 2000s and in response to sustained activism and in collaboration with social movements (e.g. *Movimento Negro* [Paschel 2016]), the Brazilian government launched a number of reforms to combat these inequalities. In 2005, the government began giving tax incentives to private institutions through the *Program of University for All* to open up slots for low-income students (Ceaser 2005). In 2007, it implemented the *Program of Restructuring and Expansion of Federal Universities* (REUNI) to expand the federal university system, creating evening courses and opening new campuses (Paiva 2013), including two inter-regional universities for Latin America and CPLP countries (McCowan 2016b). In 2012, the Supreme Court declared the affirmative action policy of race-targeting quotas legal, and in 2013, the government made them mandatory for federal universities (Schwartzman and Paiva 2014). In 2003, Lula da Silva sanctioned Law n° 10.639, which mandates the teaching of the history and culture of Africa and Afro-Brazilians at all levels of education. Taken together, these policies represent a revolutionary shift in state discourses from racial democracy to affirmative action (Htun 2004).

## **Inbound regional student mobility and racial justice**

### ***South Africa – the search for regional talent***

In contrast to racial justice and educational equity imperatives, internationalisation is nestled within the orthodoxy of the knowledge economy and places high value on elite, world-class, and research-intensive universities as dictated by systems of global university rankings (Naidoo 2011). As revealed by a high-level administrator, top South African universities respond to the pressure to benchmark against international norms, standards and best practices by resorting to highly selective admissions policies: ‘we take 60,000 applicants ... we have 5800 places, but the 5800 places mean that we take the top end of the students’ (interview, 9 September 2015). The selective admission is closely linked with the institution’s internationalisation vision as clearly articulated by an institutional internationalisation administrator: ‘we want the postgraduate (graduate) numbers to increase; that’s the university drive right now’ (interview, 12 August 2014). The university’s preoccupation with attracting and strategically recruiting international graduate students to increase research outputs directly contradicts the demands made by South African student activists to further and deepen the redress and equity goals of public universities.

Unlike in Brazil, where the government under the Lula-presidency promoted regional cooperation and student exchange within CPLP countries, in South Africa until very recently, the internationalisation of public universities was not a government priority, regionally or otherwise. A former top administrator, who was involved with crafting the university’s internationalisation policy, indicated very little attention was given to internationalisation between 2007 and 2012. He said:

we had an international office, but it was really about sort of looking to the interests of the small number of international students who came to the university and, to some extent,

the international visitors. There wasn't any particularly sort of strategy – we were taking things as they came. (interview, 19 August 2015)

Other administrators similarly described internationalisation goals as aspirational, or as a proxy for excellence, rather than as tangible targets. A mid-level administrator, for instance, pointed out that the goal of recruiting 50% graduate students (including international students) seemed rather unlikely since the university needed the revenues from undergraduate tuition payments (interview, 12 August 2015). Additionally, institutional administrators worried that they were not getting the kinds of experience they needed and acknowledged the difficulties of integrating international students on campus due to bureaucratic processes (e.g. visa issues) and the waves of xenophobia that have mainly targeted Black international students (Sichone 2006).

The xenophobic rhetorics and actions emanate from the perception among Black South Africans that they should be the primary beneficiaries of the government's post-apartheid efforts of racial justice (Handmaker and Parsley 2001). To compound the situation, South African higher education is perched above a public school system that is regularly denounced as failing the nation because under-resourced schools do not sufficiently prepare Black South African students for university (Ramphela 1999). Thus Black South African students fear that better-prepared students from neighbouring countries take their seats in public universities (Prew 2003). These fears are exemplified in the comment made by a South African student activist who argued that over many years White South Africans:

employ[ed] fellow Africans because the labour employment equity allowed them to tick the box with non-national Africans as Black. Since 1994, the Whites never bothered to train Black South Africans to become academics. This is how they starve Black South Africans' (interview, 21 September 2015)

The student also pointed out that, while almost every department in the university employs non-national Blacks, some departments do not have a single Black South African faculty member or PhD student.

These tensions and Black South African students' resentment of regional competition over resources and opportunities make particularly evident the challenges that higher education policymakers face in the pursuit of internationalisation. In the case of South Africa, access to higher education has historically been limited and structured in ways that systematically excluded large segments of society based on racial difference. As excluded populations increasingly and rightfully demand inclusion, catering to the needs of non-national students constitutes hardly a priority even when internationalisation rhetorics seem to suggest that integration into the global knowledge economy is paramount for national development. Yet, confronted with critical shortages of Black South African students who are willing and prepared to pursue graduate and academic careers, the country's top-rated universities find that to be relevant in the global higher education marketplace dominated by research-intensity metrics, they have to attract and recruit better prepared, regional students of whom the majority comes from the SADC region.

### ***Brazil – cultural and scientific integration***

The Brazilian government has launched numerous internationalisation efforts – CAPES and National Council for Scientific and Technological Development [CNP] programmes, Science

without Borders – (Rivas and Mullet 2016; McManus and Nobre 2017; Nery 2017). However, the focus has been on efforts to expand scientific networks and to increase Brazilian student mobility towards countries in Europe and North America and within Latin America, whereas academic collaboration and exchange with African countries seemed to be more of a footnote. Several administrators in international offices at universities in São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, and Campinas had little to say about international students from African countries when asked about the universities' internationalisation efforts. Yet, they spoke at length about internationalisation agreements with partner institutions in other parts of the world (observations, 2011). In 2012, when a Brazilian professor at the university under study explained to a roughly equal mixture of Latin American, Asian, and African students that internationalisation is studying abroad in Portugal (and did not bring up the international students in her classroom), the sense that the collaboration with Africa might somehow not constitute internationalisation repeated itself (observations, 1 October 2012).

Similar to South Africa, the Brazilian government in general lacks a strategic approach to internationalisation, and tertiary institutions continue to face significant bureaucratic obstacles, for instance in hiring non-national faculty (Schwartzman, Pinheiro, and Pillay 2015). Only under the presidency of Lula da Silva did regionalisation towards CPLP countries receive significant attention (Ullrich and Carrion 2012; Milani, Da Conceição, and M'Bunde 2016), not the least as a tool for southern diplomacy (Abdenur 2015). The university under study was created from REUNI funds to foster explicitly the cultural and scientific integration between Brazil and African countries. The government envisioned the university as serving the two policy objectives of expansion to improve access for previously excluded populations and internationalisation to strengthen Africa-Brazil relations.

This dual mandate, however, caused tensions in the institutional consolidation of the young university. To provide an example, initially, the university had planned to admit 50% Brazilian and 50% non-Brazilian students (document#01). Although the university never reached the intended goal of parity in enrollment, for some time international enrollment grew faster than national enrollment allowing the regional student population to expand from 22% in 2011 to 30% in 2014. In 2014, however, the university's administration capped international student enrollment at 20%. Moreover, the mechanism to select international students was designed in a way that allowed unfilled international slots to be redistributed among Brazilian students, which, in the long run result in more slots for (local) Brazilian students at the expense of regional students. In response, some faculty and administrators suspected that the enrollment of regional students was reduced to allow race-targeting quotas to kick in and provide study opportunities to non-White Brazilian students rather than regional students of whom many were regarded to be Black in the sociocultural fabric of Brazilian society (fieldnotes, 9 February 2013; fieldnotes, 27 August, 2014; interview, 9 July 2015).

To provide another example, the university's purpose to foster scientific exchange with African countries and to co-educate Brazilian and non-Brazilian students attracted a growing number of Afro-Brazilian activist faculty, many of whom (but not all) self-identify as Black (interviews, 4 and 11 February 2013). Even when they were notably fewer in numbers than their non-activist Brazilian colleagues, over time, activist faculty became increasingly able to lobby for an institutional agenda of racial equality (e.g. regarding the hiring of faculty, leadership responsibilities, and student enrollment). To support this political goal, they called on non-Brazilian faculty and students in the name of solidarity to mobilise the support they

needed (fieldnotes, 14 July 2015). The call for support was met with hesitation by some of the international faculty and students because they worried that these domestic struggles over the recognition of Afro-Brazilian rights did not easily translate into trans-regional issues, particularly since the university spends its limited resources mostly on domestic research rather than on fostering a broader, regional research and teaching agenda (interviews, 26 January, 4 and 22 February 2013). Like Afro-Brazilian activists, the university also relied on the presence of faculty and students from African countries to domestically and internationally project an image of racial inclusiveness, for instance in publications to promote the university, albeit at a much smaller scale than in the case of the South Africa university described above.

## Discussion and conclusion

Despite being peripheral in the international sense, universities in the developing world are quite central in their regional contexts (Altbach 1998). Both South Africa and Brazil are key study destinations for SADC and CPLP students. We have been arguing that internationalisation and transformation imperatives produce tension in South African and Brazilian universities. In light of South Africa and Brazil's regional roles, inbound regional student mobility holds together the internationalisation and transformation tensions by making universities appear more internationalised (by including non-national students) and racially integrated (by including non-White students). In the South African case, the presence of SADC students on campus serves to level the otherwise barely irreconcilable tension between aspirations for international recognition and domestic demands for racial justice because regional students are counted as Black students in statistics that report student demographics. In the Brazilian case, Afro-Brazilian activists mobilise the sociohistorically perceived Blackness of regional students from African countries to promote their political agenda. Bringing the two case studies into conversation highlights that, although South African and Brazilian universities utilise the regional students to orchestrate a response to conflicting demands, in reality regional students are not fully accounted for in either of the internationalisation and transformation logics. They are neither the self-funding international customers nor are they the marginalised national students targeted by affirmative policies. Ultimately, institutional policies and practices of internationalisation wind up being ad hoc, with low strategic approach and limited impact.

With the necessity of internationalisation hardly questioned, much of the literature is preoccupied with best practices of internationalisation (Hudzik 2015). While there is a growing recognition of the downsides of internationalisation (Larsen 2016), mainly scholars, who write from within postcolonial contexts, critically question the very logic of internationalisation (Jowi 2012; Maringe, Foskett, and Woodfield 2013; Singh 2010; Maringe 2017). Worldwide-operative discourses, approaches, and frames of reference for internationalisation privilege the needs and realities of universities in wealthy, industrialised countries in North America, Europe, and Asia. Thus, depoliticised conceptualisations of internationalisation hinge on global competition, which disenfranchises historically marginalised Black South Africans and poor Brazilians (the majority of whom are considered to be mixed or Black), who – due to exclusionary and elitist policies of apartheid and colonisation – are saddled with weaker K-12 backgrounds and often face financial limitations. Serving these under-prepared and non-traditional students well, for instance through remediation programmes and



publicly-funded financial support, works against the economic logic, which is premised on international competition for the brightest minds (Wildavsky 2012).

The insights gained from this comparative analysis highlights that Jane Knight's (1997, 2004) typology needs to be expanded to factor in the geopolitical redress (that is, regional) dimension to the understanding of internationalisation's rationales. The decoloniality framework is useful for challenging the longstanding claims of Euro-American internationalisation templates to be universal, neutral, objective, disembodied, depoliticised, and ratio-technical operations. Chika Schoole (2006) argues that Knight's proposition of the *political* and the *sociocultural rationales* (assuming the primacy of national interests) is not fully applicable in colonial contexts due to the countries regional entanglements. For instance, in South Africa it was not possible in colonial and apartheid eras to pursue a national project as a result of artificial racial and ethnic divisions that characterised the apartheid society.

However, a decoloniality perspective has its limits. Emerging forms of resistance to global coloniality (i.e. #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall in 2015/16 and student protests in Brazil in 2013 (Alonso and Mische 2017)) that offer great promise for interrupting Euro-American dominated models of higher education are all too often undercut by narrowly nationalistic and re-racialising conceptualisation of the struggle to decolonise higher education. Instead, the goal could be to foster a 'third culture learning space' (Maringe 2017, 72) and 'diasporic knowledge networks' (Obamba 2013, 139) for contextualised and dialogical learning and as a form of regional solidarity. The emergence of South Africa and Brazil as popular study destinations for students from the respective regions requires that decolonisation and affirmative action discourses be brought into conversation with the socioeconomic and ethno-racial positionalities of the regional students to concomitantly satisfy internationalisation and racial justice imperatives without it being at the expense of historically marginalised domestic students. Very generally speaking, Black peoples' multifaceted struggles for redress worldwide must be recognised as an important political agenda and potentially a mechanism to shift dynamics in global higher education.

Lastly, we see avenues for future research in how international students interact with International Offices that do not account for their regional identity. Furthermore, little is known about regional students' post-graduation trajectories, many of whom based their education migration decisions on the recognition (or assumption) that South African and Brazilian degrees carry international currency that make them a better investment than degrees from their home countries. The findings also bring to the fore the need to engage much more deeply in conceptualisations of race and Blackness in education research and theory (Ress 2018). Finally, the competing higher education policy imperatives discussed in this article trouble the notion of nationally-constituted, nationally-funded, and nationally-regulated universities, and call for an exploration of de-nationalised higher education models (cf. Majee forthcoming). These aspects require that researchers and policy makers alike grapple with the implications of institutional structures as well as modes of knowledge production (e.g. departments and exams), asking themselves: What kinds of politics should a public university pursue, and what kinds of knowledge should count? After all, universities have long been and continue to be key sites of social change, including in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America (Lebeau 2008).



## Notes

1. <http://www.slavevoyages.org>
2. <http://data.uis.unesco.org/index.aspx?queryid=169>
3. [http://www.statssa.gov.za/census/census\\_2011/census\\_products/Census\\_2011\\_Census\\_in\\_brief.pdf](http://www.statssa.gov.za/census/census_2011/census_products/Census_2011_Census_in_brief.pdf)
4. [ftp://ftp.ibge.gov.br/Censos/Censo\\_Demografico\\_2010/Resultados\\_do\\_Universo/tabelas\\_pdf/tab3.pdf](ftp://ftp.ibge.gov.br/Censos/Censo_Demografico_2010/Resultados_do_Universo/tabelas_pdf/tab3.pdf)

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