Développement Humain, Handicap et Changement Social
Human Development, Disability, and Social Change

Doing Disability Research in the Majority World: an Alternative Framework and the Quest for Decolonising Methods

Shaun Grech and Dan Goodley

Volume 19, Number 2, October 2011

De l'appropriation du pouvoir et de l'autodétermination : le parcours du mouvement social des personnes ayant des incapacités
Empowerement and Self-Determination of People with Disabilities: History of a New Social Movement

URI: https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1086899ar
DOI: https://doi.org/10.7202/1086899ar

See table of contents

Publisher(s)

Réseau International sur le Processus de Production du Handicap

ISSN

1499-5549 (print)
2562-6574 (digital)

Explore this journal

Cite this article

Grech, S. & Goodley, D. (2011). Doing Disability Research in the Majority World: an Alternative Framework and the Quest for Decolonising Methods. *Développement Humain, Handicap et Changement Social / Human Development, Disability, and Social Change*, *19*(2), 43–55. https://doi.org/10.7202/1086899ar

Article abstract

Research on disability in the so-called majority world remains scarce, and that which exists, continues to be dominated by Western epistemologies and methods, transferred indiscriminately from the global North to the global South. Unfortunately, the cultural and contextual relevance of these approaches remain largely unquestioned, a dynamic premised on the assumption that theories and methods bred in Western spaces are not only superior but applicable to all and sundry. This is what we term the *neocolonisation of research*. In order to challenge this, our paper takes up Tuhiwai Smith's (1999) call for decolonizing research, by exploring the potential for a conceptual framework blending elements from poststructuralism, post and neo-colonialism, and Hardt and Negri's (2000) work on Empire to engage more meaningfully with the study of disability across global contexts.

Revue Développement humain, handicap et changement social, 2011, **(19)**, 2, p. 43-55.
Journal of Human Development, Disability, and Social Change

Doing Disability Research in the Majority World : an Alternative Framework and the Quest for Decolonising Methods

SHAUN GRECH AND DAN GOODLEY
Research Institute for Health and Social Change, Manchester Metropolitan University, United Kingdom

Article original • Original Article

Abstract

Research on disability in the so-called majority world remains scarce, and that which exists, continues to be dominated by Western epistemologies and methods, transferred indiscriminately from the global North to the global South[1]. Unfortunately, the cultural and contextual relevance of these approaches remain largely unquestioned, a dynamic premised on the assumption that theories and methods bred in Western spaces are not only superior but applicable to all and sundry. This is what we term the *neocolonisation of research*. In order to challenge this, our paper takes up Tuhiwai Smith's (1999) call for decolonizing research, by exploring the potential for a conceptual framework blending elements from poststructuralism, post and neo-colonialism, and Hardt and Negri's (2000) work on Empire to engage more meaningfully with the study of disability across global contexts.

Keywords : global disability, poverty, critical disability studies, international development, decolonizing methodologies

Résumé

Les recherches réalisées dans le soi-disant « monde majoritaire » sur le phénomène du handicap sont encore aujourd'hui plutôt rares. Elles restent pour la plupart inféodées aux épistémologies et aux méthodes occidentales et leurs résultats sont exportés sans discernement par les pays du Nord vers ceux de l'hémisphère sud[2]. La pertinence culturelle et contextuelle de ces approches demeurent malheureusement largement incontestées dans le « monde majoritaire », cette situation se fondant sur la présomption que les théories et les méthodes développées en Occident sont supérieures et s'appliquent en tout lieu et auprès de tous. Nous appelons ce phénomène la *néocolonisation de la recherche*. Le présent article vise à renverser cet état de fait en répondant à l'appel de Tuhiwai Smith's (1999) en faveur de la recherche décolonisatrice. Il explorera tout le potentiel d'un modèle conceptuel fusionnant des éléments des approches post-structuralistes, post et néo-colonialistes, de même que les travaux de Hardt et Negri (2000) sur l'Empire, et ce, de façon à réellement s'engager dans une réflexion sur le handicap en tant que phénomène global.

Mots-clés : handicap comme phénomène global, pauvreté, études critiques dans le champ du handicap, développement international, méthodes décolonisatrices

[1] In this paper, the terms "majority world" and "global South" are used interchangeably. These delineate a divide with their opposite, the global North or the West, and hence with rich and powerful countries, a power that is a function of and manifest in history, ideologies, economics and politics among others. The terms do not simply connote geographical, but also economic, political, cultural and social disparities. The implication is that the existence of a poor, subjugated South and its subjects is reflected in, maintained and indeed necessitated by a dominant global North and vice-versa. The South, is a space that exists both physically and ontologically.

[2] Dans cet article, les concepts de « monde majoritaire » et de « pays de l'hémisphère sud » sont utilisés de manière interchangeable. Ils décrivent l'existence d'un clivage avec les pays de l'hémisphère nord ou l'Occident, donc les pays riches et puissants, lesquels exercent un pouvoir qui peut s'observer dans l'histoire, les idéologies, l'économie et la politique, etc. Ce terme ne fait pas uniquement référence aux différences géographiques, mais également aux inégalités économiques, politiques, culturelles et sociales. L'existence de pays de l'hémisphère sud pauvres et soumis, au même titre que les sujets y vivant, est maintenue et rendue nécessaire par celle de pays de l'hémisphère nord privilégiés et vice-versa. Le Sud est un espace qui existe donc physiquement et ontologiquement.

Introduction

The lives of disabled people based in the global South have received questionable interest from disability and development studies. Despite a substantial number of organisational documents published around the theme of "disability and development", research on disability in the majority world in the West remains particularly underdeveloped. Furthermore, disabled people are hardly, if ever, considered in research on other populations such as women, ethnic minorities, refugees, and those living with HIV/AIDS. This is an unfortunate negligence considering that disabled people constitute a substantial proportion of these and other societal groups.

Research exclusions are particularly evident in Western disability studies. This, however, has not stopped the almost wholesale exportation of concepts from the Western tool kit to various parts of the globe. Grech (2009, 2011) argues that the place of Western perspectives needs to be questioned and repositioned. We argue here that streamlining disability theory and homogenising the disability experience across peoples, nations, cultures and locations, only provides a superficial comfort zone for those attempting to "do research" on disability in the global South.

We argue that this exportation of frameworks and inferences from the Western context reflects the continued domination of Western knowledge and practices and their imposition on others forged by centuries of pillaging and "othering". This is what Alatas (2006, p.61, 63) calls "academic neo-imperialism" or "academic neo-colonialism" to describe "a centre-periphery continuum in the social sciences", predicated on the economic, political and cultural prowess of the centre, forged by centuries of pillaging and "othering", and maintained by the unstoppable hand of unequal globalising forces and markets not so free.

Furthermore, epistemological imposition leads to what we call *epistemological rejections*, specifically of those that contradict and question. There have been many contributions from the South as well as those from other fields (see for example Ghai, 2002; Ingstad & Whyte, 1995, 2007; Miles, 2007), but which are ignored, rejected or intentionally silenced. Contributions that are not written in English remain effectively ignored (see Miles, 2007) because they do not reference "standard" disability studies literature, do not use "adequate" terminology and concepts, are written in non-Western institutions (academic or other), or simply because they are not considered "academic" enough.

This is perhaps not dissimilar to the ethnographic enterprise itself, embedded in the colonial process of domination (see Goodley, 2004). Tuhiwai Smith (1999, p. 8) explains how much ethnographic research served to represent an "Other to a general audience back in Europe, which became fixed in the milieu of cultural ideas... stories which told of savagery and primitivism, generated further interest, and therefore further opportunities, to represent the Other again" to the end of ruling and controlling them more efficiently. This colonial gaze is indeed perpetuated in contemporary research with a range of Southern subjects including disabled people who remain the subjects of a Western gaze. Ethnocentric research is not readily concerned with comprehending anything about the complex realities *out there,* but instead risks ordering and dominating to fit our own reality *in here* : "knowledge" accessible to and for consumption by the Western academy. Little if anything challenges or shifts the fixities of these epistemologies or methods-research is colonised and re/neocolonised at the core.

We are not too hopeful that the neocolonial mechanisms of research are likely to change any time soon. We do believe however that research can be conducted differently, in ways that take up Tuhiwai Smith's call for "decolonising methods", for use in research on disability in the global South. The result is what we call a *decolonising open framework*. Informed by elements of poststructuralism, post/neocolonialism, and work on Empire, our aims are simple as we grapple with the idea of research that could be culturally, contextually, historically and

power sensitive. Our approach is neither comprehensive nor exclusive, but puts forward an alternative conceptual space to probe, critique and extend from. This project is in the spirit of two recent (2010 and 2011) conferences held at Manchester Metropolitan University, UK[3], promoting the idea that decolonising research needs to take off with the decolonising of thought itself.

Decolonising research

In a forthcoming publication, Goodley and Runswick-Cole (2011) argue that :

> Just as colonial research has challenged the tendency to consider "the 'native' as object for enthusiastic information-retrieval and thus denying its own worlding" and, simultaneously, being driven by "nostalgia for lost origins" (Spivak, 1985 p. 245), similar challenges have been adopted to disability research which have measured the loss and adjustment of disabled people, while simultaneously trying to give a voice to the articulate "victim" in research. Disabled people, people of colour and gay, transsexual and queer people, exemplify communities that have been medicalised, pathologised, exoticised, belittled, stereotyped, excluded and objectified by research.

The majority and disability worlds share this experience of pathologisation. In order to challenge such demonisation, disabled people and people located as majority world subjects have responded by developing new and exciting approaches to colonising and medicalising research. "Writing back" is a term employed by the postcolonial writer Tuhiwai Smith (1992) and refers to the re-introducing of minority perspectives into research production in order to change the colonizing and pathologising tendencies of expert and professionally-led research programs. Writing back, following Fanon (1993, p.30), involves people "freeing themselves from the analyses of exploitative research and the categorization of parasitical researchers". It evokes change in the doings of research : to seek new assumptions, methods and relationships in which research is neither colonizing nor reductive but decolonizing and expansive. Fanon (1993, p.12-13) describes this as a process of socio-diagnosis : of waging war on both levels of the socio-economic and psychological. Disablism, homophobia and racism, can seriously threaten the ontological lives of disabled, black and queer people.

Decolonising research has a number of ambitions. The first is a methodological aim associated with opening up the mode of research production in ways that meaningfully involve co-researchers who, previously, would be known simply as subjects of research. Disability studies shares this approach to shifting research from a mode of engagement where research is owned by an often sole, non-disabled researcher to a mode where a community of co-researchers work together towards an emancipatory aim (see special issue of *Disability, Handicap & Society,* vol. 7, no. 2, 1992). A visualisation of this shift in research production is provided in Goodley (2011, p. 24). (see Figure on next page)

Developing more participatory and emancipatory approaches, challenges the hegemonic position that the academy holds, and invites participants to occupy more directive roles in research.

Clearly, re-locating disability studies research in the majority world is an essential part of the package of a decolonising critique. The second aim of relates to the epistemological, ontological and theoretical concepts that undergird our approach to the understanding of disability. While Tuhiwai Smith (1992) emphasises the indigenous foundations of knowledge that must be tapped into, recent developments within social theory have emphasised the hybridised and glocal formation of knowledge. The (disabled) subject of the majority world is already a hybridised figure (Fanon, 1976). As Fanon (1976, p. 55) suggests, a colonised people is never alone and its frontiers remain open to new ideas and echoes from the world outside. Decolonising research therefore attends to the

[3] Available to : http://disabilityworld.wordpress.com/

FIGURE 1 : RESEARCH AS PARTICIPATORY AND EMANCIPATORY

Disability studies research can be conceived as a continuum :		
Knowledge	Shared Knowledge	Action Research
e.g. An academic analyses the constitution of normalcy (Davis, 1995)	e.g. Researchers work with a self-advocacy group to develop inclusive research practices (Doherty and al., 2005)	e.g. Disabled people's Organisations work with researchers to measure and eradicated disablism (Arthur and Zarb, 1995a)
Non-participatory	**Participatory**	**Emancipatory**
Researcher-led	Researcher invites participants into research	Co-researchers

ways in which the majority world or disabled subject of research is, in actuality, a resistant and sophisticated phenomenon. Yet, in order to engage with and recognise this sophistication then decolonising research must draw on equally sophisticated and responsive social theories of disability, neo/post/colonialism, and minority/majority/global worlds.

Theoretical frameworks for decolonising research

Over the next sections we look at the potential for a conceptual framework to inform research on disability in the majority world, in ways that draw on concepts and theories from poststructuralism, postcolonial theory and the concept of Empire.

- Poststructuralism

Our first theoretical encounter appears to be at one with our conception of the majority world as a complex entity/space. Post-structuralism is a response to structuralism, or rather the search for deep, objective and universal structures and meaning, to engage instead in the troubling of grand meta-narratives and a conscious move towards "an ontological emphasis on uncertainty, instability, hybridity, contingency, embodiment and reflexivity" (Corker & Shakespeare, 2002, p.4). It provides a useful avenue to highlight and problematise a number of metanarratives that continue to appear in the disability and majority world debate. These include, amongst others; materialist conceptualisations of disability conceived in the global North that are simplistically applied to the global South; international development and poverty reduction measures that ignore cultural and historical complexity; modernist views of a "developing" world as one failing/unable to adopt Western prescribed strategies of development; and Western notions such as rehabilitation, human and disability rights, and independent living among others. An emphasis on uncertainty is necessary in spaces that defy certainty, whose histories, societies, politics,

economies resist any attempts at homogenisation or simplification.

Post-structuralism calls for the troubling of foundationalist assumptions in disciplinary knowledge, as well as the relationships of language to power and institutions. This stance destabilises for example British disability studies emphasis on the capitalist origins of disablism, instead opening up the analyses to complex local discourses around disability; the intersections between local societies and communities, politics, economics and cultures and ideologies; and the role of inter/national aspects in the construction of a disabled subject. Whether it is the heterogeneous ways in which local communities (and especially disabled people themselves) speak about and understand disability (these can vary within countries, and sometimes even within region) and personhood, or the discourses used by municipal authorities and national policies, these are some of the many issues that arise in research. We need a theoretical lens capable of dealing with local understandings of disability, even when disability is equated with impairment (see for example Ghai, 2002). Grech (2008), for example, shows how disability in Guatemala is often understood as impairment and, in some cases as pain by disabled people living in extreme poverty. A focus on the body is not surprising in contexts where survival is predicated on having a healthy body able to work in the most strenuous conditions. Impairment mattered to the people Grech spoke to because health and social protection systems were often not existent or was inaccessible, and because the harsh infrastructure, especially in rural areas, made it impossible to negotiate the most basic of mobility, for some more than others. But Grech found conceptualisations of impairment/disability varied even within one country, dependent on interactions with aspects such as place (urban/rural), types of labour activities, the presence or otherwise of relative interdependence within extended communities.

Derrida's (1978) work on deconstruction is concerned with how meanings are established, and the dynamics operating in this process, adopting an approach of rigorous rhetorical analysis, displacing dominant philosophical categories (Prasad, 2005). Deconstruction seeks to dig out and decenter hierarchical texts, which are never neutral, and can only be understood in relation to other texts. These power centers in the disability and majority world debate are many, and require researchers to be alert. Discourses and practices such as international development and development strategies; the role of institutions (e.g. the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF)); poverty and poverty reduction; neoliberalism and the market all require deconstruction[4]. This allows us to expose how the discourses of the Western centre are positioned within a framework of oppositional, hierarchical and power loaded binaries (e.g. civilized/uncivilized, dis/abled; North/South, man/ woman, developed/undeveloped, rich/ poor). Derrida notes how the first term (e.g. civilized) is considered superior to the second (uncivilized), and how the first necessitates the second for its own definition, and is therefore dependent on its opposite- necessary and consequential. Corker and Shakespeare (2002, p.7), argue that deconstruction unravels the underpinnings of binary oppositions, revealing how "normativism needs disability for its own definition : a person without an impairment can define himself as normal only in opposition to what he is not- a person with an impairment. Disability is not excluded from normativism; it is integral to its very assertion". This is extremely important, especially at the most micro (field) levels, highlighting the need to engage with

[4] The structural adjustments imposed on debt-ridden countries in the South by the IMF and the World Bank, as conditions for lending (often to furnish other debts), are classic examples of how neoliberal strategies are packaged and promoted as "development", the state to be reached by those designated as "underdeveloped" or "undeveloped", a state determined by those considered "developed" or "superior"- the way of the West. In this case, shifts towards the free market through the removal of import tariffs, subsidies, mass privatisation and the cuts in public goods, continue to impoverish and impose much suffering on poor nations, unable to participate in a global market that never intended to include them on an equal footing in the first place. Instead they remain simply the inferior and exploit social/economic/ cultural "other" against which rich countries continue to assert and measure their prowess.

discourse not restricted to disability, but also to understand the category "non-disabled" within context. One question we could pose is : how are disability/developing/indigenous bound together as related parts of a binary that stands/ sits in direct opposition to the purportedly able/ developed/metropolitan of the global North?

Increasingly globalised ableist processes create a corporeal standard, which presumes ablebodiedness, inaugurates the norm and purifies the ableist ideal :

> Internalised ableism means that to emulate the norm, the disabled individual is required to embrace, indeed to assume, an "identity" other than one's own. I am not implying that people have only one true or real essence. Indeed, identity formation is in a constant state of fluidity, multiplicity and (re) formation [but] the desire to emulate the Other (the norm) establishes and maintains a wide gap between those who are loathed and that which is desired (Campbell, 2009, p. 21)

Goodley (2011, p. 9) argues that poststructuralism demonstrates modernity's privileging of *one* (abled, sighted, independent) over the *other* (disabled, blind, dependent), in which the one is upheld as the transcendental signifier : the ideal sign around which all others can be anchored :

> "Man, Freedom, Democracy, Independence, Authority, Order" (Eagleton, 1983, p. 131). The one becomes the pole around which to expound logocentricism (commitment to reason) and teleology (realising an end point). "Man" constructs "woman" as his opposite. Equally "man is what he is only by virtue of ceaselessly shutting out this other or opposite, defining himself in antithesis to it, and his whole identity is therefore caught up and put at risk in the very gesture by which he seeks to assert his unique, autonomous existence" (Eagleton, 1983, p.132). Discourses of patriarchy retain their potency through advancing man over women. Poststructuralism prises open these binary opposites – these dualisms – to ask how one has become empowered through comparison with, and denigration of, the other :

FIGURE 2 : GOODLEY (2011, P. 104-105)

ONE	OTHER
Man	Woman
Reason	Passion
Normal	Abnormal
Mind	Body
Self	Others
Able	Disabled
Healthy	Diseased
White	Black
European	Oriental
Coloniser	Colonised
Global North	Global South
Science	Chaos

This can be extended to the notion that the non-poor require poor people in order to define themselves, or more broadly how these delineations continue to separate the "First" and "Third World". Therefore, research itself can become "a deconstructive process of contesting and troubling particular forms of foundationalism" (Thomas & Corker, 2002, p. 28), foundations on which disabled people in the global South (other) face erasure by disability studies of the global North (one).

Foucault's (1977, 1979, 1980) conceptualisation of power is critical here. Power is not the exclusive property of an individual, group or institution, but works strategically through multiple structures and relationships. Power is, and comes from everywhere. Our examination of power pushes us to attend to micro levels, to an "ascending analysis of power" (Prasad, 2005, p. 252), as opposed to focusing only on macro and centralised (cascading) forms of power. This includes power through house-

holds, families, groups and communities. Attending to these levels is important in research with poor people in the majority world, because these are often the principal, if not only interactions, because people have little more than other people to depend on, because formal safety nets are virtually non-existent, and because these are contexts where communities and families, for better or for worse, still exist, matter, and remain the enablers of survival (see Grech, 2010, 2012) :

> Look around you, the nothingness, no one comes here, not the government, not the mayor, not anybody, they are the powerful ones, and we are only a vote for them to get rich, not even human... the poor know only each other and their families, these are the two elements that enable you to live...because the government or the rich people do not know us... when you have no one to give you anything, when all you see are poor people, we have to help each other or we die, we help each other to eat, we share the little that we have, and the rest is up to God, because death is always round the corner... the reality of poverty. (Francisco, disabled man Guatemala)

Foucault's analysis allows us to engage with power across meso (e.g. local and regional government and municipal authorities) and more macro levels (e.g. global and economic developments). In the case of disability, discourse assuming the almost unavoidable existence of negative attitudes and behaviour towards disabled people, and the consequent powerlessness of the latter, can be too easily capitalised on by national and international Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to legitimise their entry and intervention, obtain funding and move into these areas :

> Subjectivity is a constant social process of generation… the material practices set out for the subject in the context of the institution (be they kneeling down to pray or changing hundreds of diapers) are the production processes of subjectivity… the institutions provide above all a discrete place (the home, the chapel, the classroom, the shop floor) where the production of subjectivity is enacted. (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p.190)

The subjectivities of citizens of the Global North and South are shaped through processes of biopower that experience rapid global expansion through the capitalist "free" market. Biopower regulates life from the interior of subjects, a power which subjects embrace and reactivate from their own accord (Rustin, 2002, p. 453). Ideas from psychiatry, psychology and education, for example, know no fixed boundaries as they are caught up in plural pan-national exchanges of information and communication. *Empire* refers to a *globalised biopolitical machine* (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. 40) – or biopolitical capitalism (Abbinnett, 2007, p. 51) – through which theories and practices of subjectivity spread across the globe : infecting or affecting citizens in every corner of the world. Newly formed diagnoses and impairment labels generated through supranational organisations like the World Health Organisation (WHO) spread across the globe informing citizens. But, more generally, Hardt and Negri share Foucault's view that biopower is productive : giving rise to subjectivities and discourses through which we become-in-the-world (Shildrick, 2009). This analysis of power therefore, enables us "to participate in the politics of everyday life by clarifying the nature of the micropractices that constitute modern power" in a way that allows the "disclosing points of possible intervention and resistance and thus helping to empower others to take advantage of them" (Ball, 1992, p. 30-31). One may question for example : how helpful or indeed useful if at all, is a diagnosis of Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism or dyslexia in rural subsistence level communities in the majority world, where these labels have little or no currency?

Resistance emerges as a critical aspect in Foucault's view of power, because his conceptualisation is one of power as a source of pressure, and that can contemporaneously be challenged. This in turn calls for the need to examine resistance in itself as a diagnostic of power. Methodologically, this implies a con-

scious examination of dynamic and local forms of resistance, not only limited to material ones, but also discursive. Examples include recent popular resistance to neoliberalism and globalisation in Latin America, and more micro and every day resistances for example to local politics and practices within communities. Macleod (2006) for instance looks at silence as a form of resistance in Guatemala by indigenous people, the intention of which is to subvert hegemonic discourses. She observes how not expressing an opinion, not talking, is a strategy adopted when the conditions for them to be heard and respected are not provided. This is their reading of power and how they resist, and which means that reading these silences becomes just as important as learning to listen. Perhaps, and more critically it forces us to look at the resistances by disabled people themselves as well as their families, through whatever means are at their disposal.

Discourse is critical in Foucault's analysis of power, since it is through discourse that power and knowledge are moulded into one another (see Foucault, 1980). The implications for majority world research are again many, including those of looking at the types of knowledge and disciplines that emerge; the power and conditions underlying them; the ways in which these are simultaneously forms of social power. What emerges therefore is the quest to reveal the internal rules governing and structuring discourse - the "order of discourse" (Foucault, 1971). This usefully opens a space for looking into the discourses on poverty and disability and the ideological and practical assumptions, conditions, power relations and institutions under which such discourses arise (e.g. the dominance of the West in academia and intervention in poverty "reduction" and medicalisation through international organisations).

Discourse enables the formation of statements as well as providing the conditions for social action, with the implication that an analysis of discourse also necessitates an analysis of practices. Foucault's work therefore shifts "attention to how changes in discourse correlate with changes in institutional practice" and which lead us to see, and be attentive "to the power of language and ideas, to their imbeddedness in networks of social and political control" (Welch, 1985, p. 16-17). In the framework that we propose, therefore a discursive analysis forces us to look at the ways in which people talk about and construct among others, poverty and disability, their interactions, as well as the institutional or other social locations of interventions and at which power and domination is manifest at both macro and micro levels. Indeed as Escobar (1995) clearly articulates, "there is no materiality that is not mediated by discourse, as there is no discourse that is unrelated to materialities".

Post/neocolonialism

The second part of our framework blends elements of postcolonial theory with what we refer to as neocolonialism. Postcolonialism draws on various epistemological positions, in particular on poststructuralism as well as Marxist political economy. This is manifest in the postcolonial emphasis on representation, identity, history, decentering, suspicion of metanarratives and questioning of authority (see for example Said, 1978, 1993). More broadly, postcolonial theory is concerned with the impacts and legacies of colonialism (discursive and material), and the subjugation and domination of non-European peoples by European imperial powers (notably British and French), the ideological foundations legitimising this domination (race and culture), and the colonial lineages from which contemporary modes of imperialism flow. Colonialism is perhaps the only experience that ties the countries of the global South, even if the timelines, dynamics and many other aspects of conquest differ (Grech, 2011, 2012). Importantly, it provides perhaps the most important landscape against which the contemporary settings that draw researchers to the global South in the first place (in particular the disproportionate presence of poverty and extreme poverty) can, and indeed must be understood. This includes the contemporary renegotiations of colonial processes and power disparities, of a globalisation buttressed by institutions such as the World Bank and IMF, which maintains the hegemony of the West, and reinforces and creates new forms of imperialism (e.g. neolibera-

lism). Postcolonial theory can therefore provide a useful perspective on : the construction and contestation of power relationships; the globalisation agenda and its linkages to contemporary global power disparities and the latter's historical lineages to Western imperialism; the often less visible and negative impacts of globalisation (economically, socially and culturally); as well as the local forms of resistance to these hegemonic forces (see Prasad, 2005). But these forms of imperialism are found at national and local level, and hence at more micro levels, and engaging local authors in maintaining domination (e.g. the urban elite and associated oligarchies), which means postcolonial theory helps cross cut the macro (e.g. globalisation) and the more micro and objective realities and impacts, because these are the spaces where the "conflicting pulls of forces which are globalizing and fragmenting" are experienced (Childs & Williams, 1997, p. 21).

Postcolonial theory also persists in its endeavour to challenge Eurocentrism, defined as "the unshaken belief (shared by people of *both* European and non-European descent) that European ideas and institutions constitute the bedrock of civilization and should be adopted by the rest of the world" (Prasad, 2005, p. 270, italics in original). This forces us to question the epistemologies and methodologies that we adopt, their provenance, and the implications for those we use them with, or perhaps more aptly, impose them on.

Edward Said's (1978) seminal work on "Orientalism", highlights modes of imagining and representing other cultures and peoples, and the institutionalization of these images. Said's work extends beyond material violence in the process of domination, to look at the ways in which certain places and people are represented, and these images institutionalised. As Said puts it : the "system[s] of discourse by which the 'world' is divided, administered, plundered, by which humanity is thrust into pigeonholes, by which 'we' are 'human' and 'they' are not" (1976, p. 41). These images are created through televised media or the internet, and with disability more specifically, Western academics and international organisations. National organisations and elites in Southern contexts also continue to contribute to the proliferation of images. Grech (2009) for example argues that there is a discernible pattern in the representation of disabled people as invariably oppressed, hidden or neglected in the global South that has more to do with the homogenised view of these countries as undeveloped, perhaps even inhuman, unable to care "like we do", even when these communities and families single-handedly permit the survival of their disabled people in the harshest of living conditions. Usefully, postcolonial elements enable us to question our own representations of these non-Western subjects, whether in our own writings, discourse, and/or the words we adopt (e.g. to refer to disabled people) when actually conducting our own fieldwork. Importantly, they push us to at how these representations interact with, are influenced by those of others (for example gatekeepers who are sometimes wealthier and from other areas), and importantly interact with, contradict, impose on, or are simply discredited by the people's representations of themselves and their communities.

Understanding such subjects and places in terms of hybridity, also offers possibilities. While much doubt and contradiction surround this term, its definition, and usage, the only point of agreement is that hybridity's origins lie in the movement of colonisers to the locations they colonised, the migration of colonised people to territories of the colonial powers in postcolonial times, and the increasing global capitalism and associated transnational flows of people, information, commodities and capital (Ashcroft et al., 2006). The latter is what Hardt and Negri (2000) refer to as Empire. Hybridity problematises boundaries and totalising forms of cultural understandings and notions of national identity, place and space both historically and in contemporary times. It recognises interdependent processes involving mutuality, impacting both coloniser and colonised, and where elements of both survive and perpetuate themselves (see Bhabha, 1994).

When recognising a hybridized culture, we can move beyond the essentialised notions of a fixed, pure and authentic culture. García Can-

clini's (2005) work on cultural hybridity from the field of cultural studies emphasises the heterogeneity not only of Latin America and its regions, but above all of the cultural mixtures or hybridizations between the old (the traditional) and the new (the modern). This provides powerful analytical power to the condition of many contexts in the global South at the intersection of the global and the local, while acknowledging the persistent inequalities. Arias (2008) stresses how a simplistic view of an "authentic" Maya identity in Guatemala, one that existed prior to the conquest by the Spanish, is not only inauthentic, but ignores the fact that Mayas and their identities reflect the influence of modern technology and globalization. The indigenous Maya in Guatemala, blend and live in spaces that epitomise multiple hybridities : Catholic-Mayan beliefs; economic hybrids combining elements of natural and market economies; hybrid clothing; hybrid tools and food. The insight that García-Canclini urges us to seek alternative ways of conceptualising, representing, reading, and researching contexts at various crossroads of a hybrid modernity. These are the places "where traditions have not yet disappeared and modernity has not completely arrived", where "what is modern explodes and gets combined with what is not modern; it is affirmed and debated at the same time" (2005, p.1, 266) and where a multiplicity of groups adopt elements peculiar to their own situation, country, region or sector. Grech (2008) illustrates how in Guatemala, rural disabled people often utilised herbal medicines, and resorted to natural healers *(curanderos),* prior to or even alongside ordinary medicalisation, as a strategy to try and "cure" the impairment. These practices satisfy both cultural as well as economic purposes, with many poor Guatemalans unable to access to adequate health care and medication.

Hybridity leads to us to question and challenge our own limited epistemologies and ideas (including definitions of disability), to be open to and consider the many alternatives that emerge in complex local contexts and cultures. Importantly, it alerts to the fact that the spaces and people we are talking about, are not impenetrable to global influences nor simply assimilated or antagonistic to global processes. Importantly, hybridity points to a state of affairs, where local people do not necessarily want to revert to whatever is perceived as pre-modern, pre-industrial, or even pre-capitalist (indeed if these exist at all), but may instead borrow, negotiate, and adapt what works for them, in the perpetual process of transculturation. This has in fact led to the popularisation of the term "glocalization" in recent years, especially in the business sector (see also Appadurai, 1996). These have serious implications for research on disability, because these are the spaces that disabled poor people inhabit, and where our own, and especially fixed conceptual frameworks, may meet contexts that defy our understandings, either because they are different to Western ones, or because we are not flexible to considering the possibility of alternatives. These hybrid spaces may also be sites of resistance at the most micro levels. Exploring these resistances is crucial not least in the ways in which households and communities offer potential for critical support to disabled people.

Hybridity is no nirvana. Hybrid spaces are indeed unequal spaces. Critics such as Brah and Coombes (2000, p. 1) in fact describe hybridity as an "uncritical celebration of the traces of cultural syncretism which assumes a symbiotic relationship without paying attention to economic, political, and social inequalities". Therefore, similar to critics such as Nederveen Pieterse (2001), we acknowledge that hybridity is not detached from, but instead remains bound to the history of colonialism, notions of boundaries, and may risk returning to its hegemonic colonial roots of separation and segregation. These relationships are many on the ground : those between poor families and communities and wealthier members, local and national politicians, and so on. But also even within poor communities, we would need to look at those marginalised on the basis of race, ethnicity, and many other strands, and which in turn problematises even further the often homogenised category "disabled".

- Neocolonialism

Spaces of the global South are well described as neocolonial contexts (rather than postcolonial). The Eurocentric global capitalism initiated by colonialism, continues its trail of hegemony and unequal distribution between and within countries, with racial differentiation sustaining its logic and path. As Moraña et al. (2008, p. 11-12) articulate when speaking about Latin America, "both globalization and neoliberalism stand as new incarnations of neocolonialism, and capitalism continues to be the structuring principle which, by ruling all aspects of national and international relations, not only allows for but requires the perpetuation of coloniality". The consideration of the neocolonial becomes critical because postcolonial studies (with its almost unmoveable focus on the colonial period in British and French colonies), remains substantially disengaged from contemporary or post-independence imperialism and associated political, cultural and economic domination, or more aptly the neocolonial process. McClintock (1994) is emphatic : "post-colonialism is unevenly developed globally... Can most of the world's countries be said, in any meaningful or theoretically rigorous sense, to share a single 'common past', or single common 'condition', called the 'post-colonial condition' or 'post-coloniality'" (p. 294). She goes on to remind us that "the term 'post-colonialism' is, in many cases, prematurely celebratory" (p. 294). While Ashcroft et al. (2006, p. 5) state that "perhaps the ultimate and unavoidable future of post-colonial studies, lies in its relation to globalization", this statement reads more as an apology than a statement of intent. Indeed, there remain huge gaps in postcolonial theory when it comes to engaging with the effects of globalisation and contemporary domination and the linkages to the colonial, perhaps evident in the lack of engagement with and use of the term "imperialism" (other than the work of Edward Said). The rise of the United States (US) as an international hegemonic power (through domination of international markets, imperial foreign policy, and political and military interventions; the establishment of the "development" sector post World War II and its agencies (e.g. the World Bank, the WTO and the IMF); and a plethora of trade and monetary policies (notably the neoliberal globalisation project) are clear examples. These neocolonial practices have led countries of the South into extraordinary debt, inflicted much suffering, and continue to maintain the threat of foreign intervention an impending reality. These and many more mechanisms (including conflict and wars), continue to ensure the hegemony of the West, reinforcing and creating new forms of imperialism (see for example Hardt and Negri, 2000). As McMicheal (2008, p. 274) clearly articulates, "colonialism became historically illegitimate", but "global power relations did not disappear; they transmuted". In this process of transmutation, as Coronil (2008, p. 416) suggests there has been a shift from Eurocentrism to "globalcentrism, a process that 'dissolves the West' into the market and crystallize it in less visible transnational modules of concentrated financial and political power". Many of these were in fact concerns articulated much earlier by dependency theorists in Latin America in the 1970s (for example Frank, 1966, Dos Santos, 1970), who stated that underdevelopment was a result of an international system of political, economic and trade structures favouring the rich countries (core), through exploitation and extraction of surpluses of the poor countries (the periphery) largely through multinational corporations (the process of development itself), leaving no profits for reinvestment.

The emphasis on neocolonialism is critical in our framework, first of all in pushing us to look at the contemporary forms of domination, in particular globalisation and the way it diffuses into the most micro of levels, and hence to explore the linkages of these. Importantly, it enables us to look at other mechanisms such as international discourse around disability and poverty, the authors (e.g. development and disability studies academics), the means of transmission (e.g. international NGOs), how this discourse is adopted/imposed on Southern partners, the funding mechanisms that encourage these, the roles of Western knowledge (and assumptions about it) and academia in maintaining the power of Western discourse, interactions with discourse and strategies at even community levels, and how the latter are

often discredited as charlatanry or "not expert enough". Overall, the focus on a state that we articulate as neocolonial, still allows us to root our analysis of power in one that has long lineages, that has never gone away, and forces us to keep on looking at continuous modes of subjugation and its perpetuation.

Conclusions

In this paper, we have tried to develop a framework engaging poststructuralism, post and neo-colonialism and notions around empire that opens critical spaces for looking at disability in the global South. We emphasised that the key word is "open", and which means that this framework is far from complete, and does not intend to. We indeed start off with the premise that we are engaging with a debate that still struggles to be afforded the space to occur, a debate about which we often know too little (but assume we know more), a debate about spaces (geographical, cultural, social, economic, epistemological, ontological) too complex to be distilled. More specifically, this is a space that continues to see more than its fair share of ideas and methodologies developed in other spaces and places, and transferred indiscriminately.

The framework we propose, is little more than a willingness to emphasise uncertainty, reflexivity and continuous questioning, because a *Critical Global Disability Studies* (Grech, 2011, 2012) though much needed, is yet to emerge. The way we do research may be a start. Decolonising research necessitates attention to complexity, heterogeneity, and the dynamic nature of these spaces, because the transference of epistemologies and methodologies from the West to the rest will not do, because the starting point is the decolonisation of research, but this necessitates first the decolonising of our own epistemologies, perhaps our own minds. A critical global disability studies constitutes a space to tackle static colonial certainties and offer in their place dynamic neocolonial uncertainties, lessons, questions and ambivalences.

References

ABBINNETT, R. (2007). Untimely agitations : Derrida, Klein and Hardt and Negri on the idea of Capitalism. *Journal for Cultural Research, 11*(1), 41-56.

ALATAS, S. H. (2006). *Alternative discourses in Asian social science : responses to Eurocentrism*. Delhi : Sage.

APPADURAI, A. (1996). *Modernity at Large : Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minnesota : University of Minneapolis Press.

ARIAS, A. (2008). The Maya Movement : Postcolonialism and Cultural Agency. In M. Morana, E. Dussel and C. A. Jauregui (Eds.). *Coloniality at Large : Latin America and the Postcolonial Debate* (p. 519-538). US : Duke University Press.

ARTHUR, S., & ZARB, G. (1995). *Measuring Disablement in Society : Working Paper 3. Disabled People and the Citizen's Charter.* Retrieved May 1st 2009 from http://www.leeds.ac.uk/disability-studies/archiveuk/Zarb/meas%20work%20paper%203.pdf

ASHCROFT, B., GRIFFITHS, G., & TIFFIN, H. (2006). Introduction to the second edition. In B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths & Tiffin, H (Eds.), *The Post-Colonial studies reader* (p. 6-9). London : Routledge.

BALL, T. (1992). New Faces of Power. In T. E. Wartenberg (Ed.), *Rethinking Power* (p.14-31). Albany : State University of New York Press.

BHABHA, H. K. (1994). *The location of culture*. London : Routledge.

BRAH, A., & COOMBES, A. (2000). *Hybridity and Its Discontents : Politics, Science, and Culture*. London : Routledge.

CAMPBELL, F. K. (2009). *Contours of Ableism : Territories, Objects, Disability and Desire*. London : Palgrave Macmillan.

CHILDS, P., & WILLIAMS, W. (1997). *An introduction to postcolonial theory*. London and New York : Prentice-Hall.

CORKER, M., & SHAKESPEARE, T. (2002). Mapping the Terrain. In M. Corker & T. Shakespeare (Eds.), *Disability/Postmodernity : Embodying Disability Theory* (p. 1-7). London : Continuum.

CORONIL, F. (2008). Elephants in the Americas? Latin American Postcolonial Srudies and Global Decolonization. In M. Moraña, E. Dussel & C. A. Jauregui (Eds.), *Coloniality at Large : Latin America and the Postcolonial Debate* (p. 396-416). US : Duke University Press.

DAVIS, L. J. (1995). *Enforcing Normalcy : Disability, Deafness, and the Body*. New York : Verso.

DERRIDA, J. (1978). *Writing and Difference*. London : Routledge & Kegan Paul.

DOCHERTY, D., HUGHES, R., PHILLIPS, P. CORBETT, D., REGAN, B., BARBER, A., ADAMS, P., BOXALL, K., KAPLAN, I, & IZZIDIEN. S. (2005). This is What We Think. In D. Goodley and G. Van Hove, G. (Eds.), *Another Disability Reader?*

Including people with learning difficulties. (p. 17-30). Antwerpen : Garant Publishers.

DOS SANTOS, T. (1970). The Structure of Dependence. *American Economic Review*, *60*(2), 231-6.

ESCOBAR, A. (1995). *Encountering Development : The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton : Princeton University Press.

FANON, F. (1976). *The wretched of the earth.* London : Penguin.

FANON, F. (1993). *Black skins, white masks* (Third edition). London : Pluto Press.

FOUCAULT, M. (1971). The *Order* of Things. London : Tavistock.

FOUCAULT, M. (1977). *Discipline and Punish : the Birth of the Prison*. London : Allen Lane.

FOUCAULT, M. (1979). *The History of Sexuality, vol. 1. An Introduction.* London : Allen Lane.

FOUCAULT, M. (1980). Power/Knowledge : Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977. In C. Gordon et al. (Ed.). New York : Pantheon.

FRANK, A. G. (1966). *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America*. New York : Monthly Review Press.

GARCIA CANCLINI, N. (2005). *Hybrid Cultures : Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity.* Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press.

GHAI, A. (2002). Disability in the Indian Context : Postcolonial perspectives. In M. Corker & T. Shakespeare (Eds.), *Disability/Postmodernity* (p. 88-100). London : Continuum

GOODLEY, D. (2004). *Ethnography : a teaching resource.* Retrieved August 4, 2010 from http://www.leeds.ac.uk/disability-studies/archiveuk/goodley/Ethnography.pdf

GOODLEY, D. (2011). *Disability studies : An interdisciplinary introduction.* London : Sage.

GOODLEY, & RUNSWICK-COLE (2011). (forthcoming). Decolonizing methodology : disabled children as research managers and participant ethnographers. In A. Azzopardi & S. Grech (Eds.) (forthcoming), *Inclusive Communities : A Reader*. The Netherlands : Sense Publishers.

GRECH, S. (2008). Living with disability in rural Guatemala : exploring connections and impacts on poverty. *International Journal of Disability, Community & Rehabilitation, 7*(2).

GRECH, S. (2009). Disability, poverty and development : critical reflections on the majority world debate. *Disability & Society*, *24*(6), 771-784.

GRECH, S. (2010). A space for "development" : engaging social capital in reflecting on disability in the majority world. *Journal for Disability and International Development, 1*(August), 4-13.

GRECH, S. (2012). (forthcoming). Disability, the majority world and the neocolonial : debating the "global" in critical disability studies. In D. Goodley, B. Hughes & L. Davis (Eds.), *Disability and Social Theory : New developments and directions*. London : Palgrave Macmillan.

INGSTAD, B., & WHYTE, S. R. (Eds.) (1995). *Disability and Culture.* Berkeley : University of California Press.

INGSTAD, B., & WHYTE, S. R. (EDS.) (2007). *Disability in Local and Global Worlds.* Berkeley : University of California Press.

HARDT, M., & NEGRI, A. (2004). *Multitude* : *War and democracy in the age of Empire*. London : Penguin Books.

HARDT, M., & NEGRI, A. (2000). *Empire.* Cambridge, MA : Harvard University Press.

MACLEOD, M. (2006). *Historia, memoria y representaciones : encuentros, desencuentros y debates entre los intelectuales mayas y sus múltiples Otros.* Colección Monografías, Nº 27. Caracas : Programa Cultura, Comunicación y Transformaciones Sociales, CIPOST, FaCES : Universidad Central de Venezuela.

MCCLINTOCK (1994). The angel of progress : Pitfalls of the term "post-colonialism". In P. Williams & L. Chrisman (Eds.), *Colonial discourse and post-colonial theory* (p. 291-304). New York : Columbia University Press.

MCMICHAEL, P. (2008). *Development and Social Change.* Los Angele, London, New Delhi, Singapore : Pine Forge Press.

MILES, M. (2007). *International Strategies for Disability-related Work in Developing Countries : historical, modern and critical reflections*. Retrieved August 24, 2010 from http://www.independentliving.org/docs7/miles200701.html

PRASAD, P. (2005). *Crafting Qualitative Research* : *Working in the Post Positivist Traditions.* London : M. E. Sharpe.

MORAÑA, M., DUSSEL, E., & JAUREGUI, C. A. (2008). Colonialism and its Replicants. In M. Moraña, E. Dussel & C. A. Jauregui (Eds.), *Coloniality at Large : Latin America and the Postcolonial Debate* (p. 1-20). US : Duke University Press.

NEDERVEEN PIETERSE, J. (2001). Hybridity, so what? The anti-hybridity backlash and the riddles of recognition. *Theory Culture & Society*, *18*(2-3), 219-46.

SAID, E. (1976). Interview. *Diacritics, 6*, 30-47.

SAID, E. (1978). *Orientalism.* New York : Random House.

SAID, E. (1993). *Culture and Imperialism.* New York : Knop.

SPIVAK, G. C. (1985). Three Women's texts and a critique of imperialism. *Critical Inquiry, 12*(1)*,* 243-261.

TUHIWAI SMITH, L. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies : Research and indigenous peoples.* New York : St. Martin's Press.

WELCH, S. (1985). Communities of Resistance and Solidarity : A Feminist Theology of Liberation. New York : Orbis.