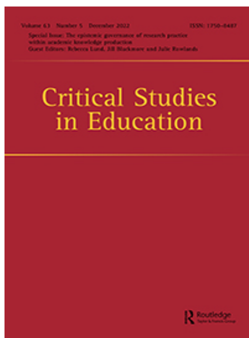

Critical Studies in Education

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rcse20

Epistemic governance of diverse research practices and knowledge production: an introduction

Rebecca Lund, Jill Blackmore & Julie Rowlands

To cite this article: Rebecca Lund, Jill Blackmore & Julie Rowlands (2022) Epistemic governance of diverse research practices and knowledge production: an introduction, Critical Studies in Education, 63:5, 535-548, DOI: 10.1080/17508487.2022.2136226

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/17508487.2022.2136226

© 2022 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.

Published online: 01 Nov 2022.

Submit your article to this journal

Article views: 338

View related articles

View Crossmark data

Full Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at
https://www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation?journalCode=rcse20

CRITICAL STUDIES IN EDUCATION
2022, VOL. 63, NO. 5, 535–548
https://doi.org/10.1080/17508487.2022.2136226

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

EDITORIAL

OPEN ACCESS Check for updates

Epistemic governance of diverse research practices and knowledge production: an introduction

This special issue presents different perspectives of how knowledge making is being governed in ways that produce epistemic injustice. Contemporary conditions of 'post-truth' and 'crisis in trust in democratic institutions' are characterized by misinformation and challenges to established forms of expertise while 'living with Covid', politics and economics have taken precedence over science (Jayasuriya, 2021; McCarthy & Jayasuraya, 2022). This raises significant concern as to whether knowledge-state-society relations can address what are key issues for a sustainable and just global society.

In part, the ongoing destabilization of knowledge-state-society relations is due to their long-term repositioning arising from rampant edu-capitalism in which knowledge (or rather, data) has become a new source of profit and a commodity in which large multinationals (e.g., bio-tech, edu-tech, publishing and the big four consultancy firms – KPMG, Deloitte, McKinsey, EY – now dominate in terms of ownership and distribution (Peruzzo et al., 2022). These multinational corporations are both embedded within the state informing government policy but also beyond state regulation and the reach of state-based forms of epistemic governance (Fontdevila et al., 2021). Edu-capitalism is both undermining and exploiting the unique role of the university as a primary producer, transmitter and legitimator of scientific knowledge, simultaneously changing both the nature and conditions of the field of higher education globally (Marginson & Xu, 2021). While profit making institutions are moving into both competitive and collaborative relations with universities, the tension for universities is that knowledge exchange it is more than about money (Karcher et al., 2022). At the same time, while for profit firms remain deregulated, knowledge making in higher education is experiencing new modes of epistemic governance, as outlined in this issue (Jayasuriya, 2021).

In part, the destabilization of knowledge-state-society relations result from the changed nature of university governance internally. The moral and professional responsibility of academics to be both critic and conscience to the state and society has been undermined. The processes and practices of managerialism, marketization and commercialization in the form of compliance regimes have undermined academic freedom (Kenny, 2009; Parker et al., 2021). Neoliberal reforms of universities have tightly coupled the university to the needs of the state and the economy through the imposition of multiple external accountabilities, measures and rankings (Espeland & Sauder, 2016; Kauppi, 2018). Thus, the crisis of trust in democratic institutions and governance is echoed *within* the academy with evidence of mistrust felt between academics and their managers (Blackmore, 2020). This mistrust is driven by a shift in knowledge-state-society relations from intellectual to managerial capital in terms of who decides with regard to priorities, policy and practice in knowledge making and evaluating what counts (Blackmore, 2022; Krick, 2022; Rowlands, 2013).

That is, the nature of epistemic governance both within and outside the university are changing in terms of which knowledges are valued and by whom, and questions of trust have implications for certain knowledges and knowledge makers. This is due to an assemblage of state-based and non-state-based mechanisms governing knowledge-making practice, changing the conditions of knowledge production in higher education and ecology of knowledge hierarchies generally (Jacob & Hellström, 2018). This special issue addresses how different perspectives together can provide deepened understandings of the sources, role and place of knowledge and the changing nature of knowledge production and of academic work. These perspectives also point towards possible counter-hegemonic practices and policy transformations that would support epistemic diversity. Finally, we consider what democratic governance of higher education would be, what a socially just higher education would look like drawing from these and other perspectives.

Governing knowledges

Epistemic governance is about 'power relations in the modes of creating, structuring, and coordinating knowledge' (Vadrot, 2011, p. 50). More specifically, epistemic governance considers how:

> . . . the interrelation between policy-making and the production of scientific knowledge in defining and addressing socio-ecological problems takes the selectivity of knowledge creation based on power relations into account (Brand & Görg, 2008). The attempt to elaborate a common and shared knowledge base jointly by political actors and scientific communities call for the conceptual framework of "epistemic governance" that allows for the analysis of the re-production of coupled socio-economic and natural systems (Wissen, 2009). Finally, the production and use of knowledge is seen to be linked to questions of relational, structural, and soft power, and to the relationship between science and policy. (Vadrot, 2011, pp. 50-51).

There are two key aspects of epistemic governance that relate to power. First, it encompasses the relationship between policy making and knowledge production through research and how the selection of 'problems' to be researched is not neutral but reflects entrenched and evolving power relations. Second, it recognizes that the generation and application of knowledge produced through scientific research (encompassing the natural and social sciences) cannot be separated from either the relationship between research and policy or wider political, cultural and economic contexts or the effects of multiple forms of relational, hard and soft power. Epistemic governance is also the governance of the production of knowledge *for governance*, how scientific knowledge is communicated on contestable policy issues and establishing boundaries between lay and expert knowledges, a demarcation that has been undermined (Pearce & Raman, 2014).

Contemporary epistemic governance is marked by metrics and the results of this are a strengthening of existing global North/South divisions of academic labour (Connell, 2014, 2019; Rowlands & Ngo, 2018) and knowledge hegemonies (Marginson & Xu, 2021; Palser et al., 2022). This dominant position in terms has not been left unchallenged. China is rapidly overtaking the USA knowledge production in the form of scientific publications (D. Lu, 2022). Scientific collaborations between American and Chinese academics have reduced (as evident in reduced joint publications) as geopolitical tensions have escalated since 2019. These are, among other things, connected to Indo Pacific and Western concerns over Chinese soft power being mobilized through influencing

international students and research collaborations and Confucius institutions (Luqui & McCarthy, 2019).

Yet, despite this, the continued Euro-American domination in the content of science is regulated by an inside/outside binary which reproduces the old North/South and West/East hierarchies. Global science is characterized by homogenous knowledge cultures and inequality in which Anglo-American language, institutions, disciplinary and publication regimes, agendas and topics are setting the agenda and standards upon which all are measured. In this special issue, Melanie Walker & Carmen Martinez-Vargas' article 'Epistemic governance and the colonial epistemic structure: Towards epistemic humility and transformed South-North relations' seeks to theorize the relationship between colonial/neo-colonial institutional orders and agency in the global production of knowledge. More specifically, they unpack the colonial and neo-colonial epistemic injustice and power relations between Northern and Southern researchers produced by the dominance of Western-centric epistemology and theory, and the related silencing of race and racism. The authors point forward by suggesting the need for higher education institutions and actors to even out the playing field of academic knowledge production, by nurturing the capacity for epistemic humility and ethical responsibility in the global North and promoting epistemic agency and participation of scholars and institutions in the global South.

At the same time, the shifting ecology of knowledge production and evaluation is also informed by increased activities of multinational edu-businesses which are increasingly shaping the research field at the expense of academics (Williamson, 2018). Academics as scholars are expected to publish or perish, and a core principle guiding quality and professional ethics in academic knowledge making is peer review (Blackmore, 2010). On the one hand, academics are reluctant to swap peer review for example, citation indexes, as it is peer review that makes academic work distinctive from, for example, consultancy work. On the other hand, in retaining peer review as a valued principle, academics gift their labor to their universities, the state and profit-making publishers. They edit books, handbooks and journals; review papers, research grants and proposals; and referee promotion applications; none of which is included in the workload and funding models made by universities or government, nor paid for by publishers. Indeed, with the move to open access publishing – justified by governments as a way of ensuring value for public investment in research – academics are expected to pay for publication, thus requiring a funding source that varies according to whether the individual has won research funds or their university can allocate funding for this. This again works against the humanities and social sciences where research funding has been decreasing (Blackmore, 2022). New hierarchies of knowledge inequality are therefore arising with the commercialization and financialization of academic work (Williamson & Hogan, 2020).

Of the existing scholarship on the relationship between epistemic governance and higher education as a central producer of knowledge (see, Campbell & Carayannis, 2012), much of what exists considers epistemic governance in the context of higher education systems, such as with rankings or research funding policies (see, Jacob & Jabrane, 2018; Thomas & Nedeva, 2018). However, epistemic governance shapes the practices of academic researchers through which knowledge is produced. Considering this relationship enables us not only to consider how knowledge production is governed and to what effect, but also what knowledge is (and is not) recognized, where and by whom, and how knowledge is (and is not) produced. These questions are central to the changing nature of academic work and its increasingly precarious and tenuous forms (Brew et al., 2018).

In exploring this ecology of knowledge management, scholars have explicated how research practice is governed and organized by various national research assessment schemes, metrics, data governance and academic workload models and other means (Blackmore, 2010; Lund, 2012; Lund & Tienari, 2019; Rowlands & Gale, 2019; Wright, 2014), and the implications of this for academic work.

> The fascination with bibliometrics merely reproduces the inside/outside binary: all of those conducting scientometric research and the university rankings based on bibliometric data are complicit in the fiction that the knowledge stored in the commercial repositories of Web of Science and Scopus is all that needs to be known (Marginson & Xu, 2021, p. 5)

Furthermore, new inclusions and exclusions emerge in this ecology of knowledge hierarchies with gatekeepers external to academia determining what knowledge counts. Research assessment, with its focus on engagement and impact, has spawned yet another profit-making industry offering academics (on a fee scale) how to make their academic papers more consumable and therefore to have an impact. Research assessment has pushed academics on the margins in non-English-speaking nations but also marginal to the center of academic publication in the US and UK, to publish in highly ranked journals regardless of whether these journals are interested in 'peripheral' knowledges or the journals are read or accessible within their nation state (X. Lu, 2022; Rowlands & Wright, 2020).

In this issue, Julie Rowlands & Susan Wright's article 'The role of bibliometric research assessment in a global order of epistemic injustice: a case study of humanities research in Denmark' unites Raewyn Connell's *Southern Theory* (2007) and Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice (1980, 1982) to unpack research assessment as a form of academic governance that (re)produces geopolitical knowledge inequality and epistemic injustice. Empirically, the authors focus on the impact of the Danish system of bibliometric research assessment (BFI) on humanities research, showing how the assessment regime colonizes research practices, and thereby limits academic pluralism. In science particularly, but also in some areas of the humanities (e.g., philosophy), journal editorship is male dominated, which leads to lack of diverse knowledges being published (Fox et al., 2019).

With governments prioritizing the impact of research and its potential for commercialization we have witnessed a flourishing of the instrumentalist language of usefulness, a focus on the practical, the doable, the measurable and returns-on-investment (Williamson & Hogan, 2020, p. 191). The discourse of usefulness evokes a utilitarianism which focus on the ends and not the means, the outcome not the process, where what constitutes useful knowledge is predetermined. By default, the discourse of usefulness which in the contemporary research economy tends to favor STEMM (Science, Technology, Engineering. Mathematics and Medicine) fields and devalue HASS (Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences) fields. Consequently, with the pressures of research assessment and national prioritizing of what research counts, HASS scholars have been required to justify the 'use-value' of their disciplines – how HASS contributes to cultural and social as well as economic development, but often also reduced to how HASS can 'service' STEMM through interdisciplinarity (Nussbaum, 2010; Small, 2013). This is an approach to research that works against serendipity, the unexpected findings and 'blue skies' research which is invaluable.

The question arises: if research has no immediate or potential use value as determined by criteria such as applicability – is it useful research? Focusing on use value in research also filters down into use in the form of economic instrumentalism as the primary criterion on which judgment is made. This is a fictional market created by an assemblage of measures – student demand, student evaluations, research assessment, citation indices, journal rankings, etc., which then creates hierarchies of what knowledges are valued more than others (Small, 2013). This not only changes research practice but also leads to a differential valuing of the people who do the research and creates psycho-social economies in higher education fueled by anxiety and competition between individuals, disciplines and institutions (Espeland & Sauder, 2016). It also excludes those knowledges which a not deemed useful thereby denying the existence and value of the pluralism of knowledges.

In this issue, Helene Aarseth´s 'The Implicit Epistemology of Metric Governance. New Conceptions of Motivational Tensions in the Corporate University' explores a way of theorizing how the metric university limits pluralism, not in terms of identity categories, but in terms of ways of knowing and doing academic work. Through employing a psychosocial lens on the academic practices within the metric university, Aarseth is able to draw attention to how ways of being invested in the world, the motivational drives behind creative academic pursuits, are in more or less alignment with the competitive logics and audit culture that dominate the field of contemporary higher education and beyond. As such, Aarseth offers a theoretical vocabulary that moves beyond epistemic structures and hierarchies to explain what drives the epistemic investments that ultimately position people differently within the metric university.

The dilemma we face as academics and as institutions is that to reject the discourse of usefulness a discipline can positioned as useless, but to draw on the discourse of usefulness we become entrapped within its reductionist instrumentalism. Small (2013) argues that it is difficult in the current context to be strongly anti-instrumentalist because 'modern universities have become so dominated by their government's economic instrumentalism that not conceding something to political economy would be institutionally suicidal' (Small, 2013, p. 68).. Within that context, academic work practices are driven by at least three different commitments which are, because of the conditions under which they work, often in conflict. A commitment to survival in a massively competitive environment characterized by precarity and a discourse of usefulness; to making an academic and intellectual contribution to knowledge and their specific academic field; and to social justice and ethics. Some of these commitments, it seems, are nurtured more than others within contemporary academia (Blackmore 2021; Aarseth, 2022). The literature has shown the way that these connect to diverging academic identities (e.g., Billot, 2010; Ylijoki & Ursin, 2013) and people are not equally energized by and within an increasingly competitive environment which they experience as exclusionary and physically and mentally soul destroying (Sutherland-Smith et al., 2011). Research has shown that the increase in bullying, toxic stress, mental health and other related problems are directly connected to the increased performance pressure (THE 2018). But research also shows that people move between these different modes of being an academic- both undertaking the performative work and seeking to make a difference to their field and being ethical to the point that academics experience the performative exercise causing ethical dilemmas and compromise in their practices and values, (e.g., Brennan et al., 2022; Hattam et al., 2009). The question then being whether and, if so, how people create spaces from which they can pursue contributions to knowledge and social justice.

Epistemic diversity

The conditions for epistemic diversity and counter-hegemonic knowledge through the humanities and social sciences, and through critical, feminist and postcolonial perspectives, is shaped in by epistemic governance and the generalizing logics informing higher education reform across the globe.

De/anti-colonial and antiracist scholars have emphasized how scholarship on race as well as institutional action against racism often lack legitimacy and related how Western knowledge both now and has previously engaged in 'epistemicide' (De Sousa Santos, 2014): 'the killing of other knowledge systems' (Hall & Tandon, 2017, p. 6). They argue, that '*there exists a stubborn refusal to acknowledge that academia itself might be complicit in the (re) production of racial injustices . . . constructed in a tangle of stratifications, exclusions, privileges and assumptions*' (Warmington, 2018, vi–vii). Responding to these issues such scholars from across the globe (e.g., R. A. Shahjahan et al., 2021; Andreotti et al., 2015; Arday & Mirza, 2018; Mamdani, 2016) point towards educational change through practices of widening participation, decolonizing curriculum, and antiracist academic leadership that draws inspiration from existing social justice movements and spaces of contestation.

Responding to issues of structural racism in global and local center-periphery relations, with a specific focus the context of Brazil, Joel Austin Windle & Érica Fonseca Alfonso in this special issue identify further strategies for building anti-racist epistemically heterodox higher education. In their article 'Building anti-racist education through spaces of border thinking' they offer a way of responding to what they name the 'hidden' colonial and racist 'underbelly' of the universalist project of modernity that has shaped contemporary Brazil and Brazilian higher education. In line with Walker & Martinez-Vargas they argue that center-periphery relations, both globally and locally, are a result of colonialism and are perpetuated through the denial of racial divisions and delegitimization of anti-racist movements. Windle & Alfonso mark their own racialized positions as a white immigrant scholar and a black scholar, and through their 'cross-peripheral' collaborative writing practices they seek to create an 'anti-oppressive' border-crossing 'epistemologically and politically disruptive space' for challenging the center-periphery divide, generate new knowledge and new artistic expressions.

Feminist scholars have placed emphasis on sexist and intersecting structures of inequality at the level of organizing, leadership, culture and epistemic status (e.g., Vacchani & Pullen 2019). In this issue, Jill Blackmore's contribution 'Governing knowledge in the entrepreneurial university: a feminist account of structural, cultural and political epistemic injustice' offers, as the title indicates, a feminist perspective on the epistemic implications of the neo-liberalized knowledge economy and entrepreneurial university. Blackmore bases her article on a substantial qualitative study of 'numerically feminized fields', Humanities and Social Sciences, in Australian universities. She shows how these fields, that tend to provide social and critical knowledge, including feminist knowledge, become systematically disadvantageously positioned within a politically conservative climate. This is a climate dominated by a narrow positivist Anglophone perception of science and society that privileges particular disciplines (Science, Technology, Engineering, Medicine) and ways of knowing. This is a tendency that is dangerous for feminist scholarship, but also in a broader sense for liberal education, and ultimately for democracy.

The articles in this special issue touch upon the epistemic implications of changed institutional and organizational conditions produced by narrow conceptions of 'knowledge' and 'good science' and relations between them at the level of colonial and geopolitical relations, as well institutional processes, practices, and agency. While there are emergent tendencies towards limiting academic freedom through modes of compliance in universities based within democratic societies, the conditions for academic freedom and resistance still exist to wide extent. An important contribution to the special issue, however, explores the position and significance of critical knowledge within an explicitly authoritarian (as well as neoliberal) regime.

In Serhat Tutkal's (2020) article 'Power, knowledge and universities: Turkey's dismissed academics for peace' we learn how universities are both enablers of and resist authoritarian limitations of academic freedom and the dismissal of critical scholars. As the title indicates, Tutkal specifically focuses on the position of 'academics for peace'; scholars that have publicly supported a peace process and solidarity with the Kurdish people. In response to the Turkish government's dismissal of more than 6000 academics in 2016 (which included confiscating their passports and banning them from holding any kind of public office), justified through 'counterterrorist law', some dismissed academics set up 'solidarity academies'. Based on qualitative interviews with anonymous dismissed academics, Tutkal (2020) shows that these academies served two purposes. Firstly, as political resistance to authoritarianism and as a means to maintain professional identity, intellectual activity and knowledge production in the face of dismissal. Secondly, as resistance to the neoliberalism of Turkish academia by rejecting limited individualistic, instrumental and output-based perceptions of knowledge, and expanding it to collective knowledge construction enabled in symposia, workshops and conferences. As such, Tutkal's article speaks to the role of social and critical knowledge in any society, and the risk involved in being the proponent of such knowledge within an authoritarian society, thereby showing how epistemic injustice can be used to further undemocratic political agendas.

Conditions and practices nurturing epistemic justice

The challenges and epistemic hierarchies explored in this special issue arise from the conditions that limit the possibilities for doing critical, ethical and creative knowledge production – shaped by national governance (democratic or authoritarian), academic capitalism, the role of science in societal institutions and the particular cultural sensibilities informing state-society-knowledge relations.

First, we need mutually supportive relations between state, society and knowledge to build sustainable and socially just future societies. Epistemic diversity is ensured not least through enabling possibilities for creative and deep thinking within humanities and social sciences (Tutkal, 2020; Rowlands & Wright, 2020; Blackmore 2021; Aarseth, 2022), but also through critical, feminist (Blackmore 2021) and post-/anticolonial research (Walker & Martinez-Vargas, 2020; Windle & Fonseca Afonso, 2021). With the rise of authoritarian states globally, academics and journalists who offer critique are the first to be targeted by authoritarian rulers.

Even in previously considered strong democracies, the state itself is being challenged from within due to disregard for rule-governed behavior (e.g., Trump, Johnson, Morrison).

Developing knowledge-state-society relations for a more democratic and socially just future requires, firstly, restoring trust in the knowledges of the state, expertise and a democratic public, and secondly, recognition that while knowledge-state-society are strongly related and dependent of each other, relative autonomy (and tension) is required to maintain a dialogic and dynamic relationship between them. Key for a democratic future, in which we can respond adequately to the challenges we face at the level of society and humanity, is that academics restore their role as critics and conscience of government and society.

Second, there is emergent literature documenting alternative modes of organizing the academy aiming to change university governance and consequently epistemic governance (e.g., Wright & Lund, forthcoming; Wright & Shore, 2017). As a consequence of the university's corporatization and academic disenchantment with university managers due to work intensification and their disenfranchisement from decision-making which impacts on their work and life, there is emerging academic activism. Academics are now organizing how they work collegially and collaboratively with the aim of protecting and promoting academic freedom and academic involvement in university governance. This is evident in the free university movement, cooperative universities (e.g., Boden et al., 2012, 2015; Wright et al., 2011), as well as alliances being created such as the Public Universities Australia alliance between student and academic associations and unions) (NAPU). Changes in university governance to return to a stronger academic voice would raise questions about the social and public responsibility of the university and therefore which knowledges are valued, the diversity of knowledges and knowledge makers.

Third, this special issue raises questions concerning the role of researchers and educators in contemporary society in terms of knowledge-state-society relations and what levels of trust is ascribed science. More specifically, it requires recognizing the significance of the interpretive humanities and social sciences as key to understanding how epistemic governance and particular forms of epistemic injustice come about the way they do (see, Rooney, 2011; Urry et al., 2007).

Fourth, R Shahjahan et al. (2017) argue that we need to decolonize rankings just as Connell (2014) has argued we need to de-colonize Eurocentric/Global North social theory. Drawing on *Dagara* (a West African indigenous group populated in what today is Burkina Faso and Ghana) it would mean realizing that

> rankings are symptomatic of a much broader crisis shaking the ontological securities of modern institutions and that it is only through the loss of our satisfaction with these securities that we can start to imagine otherwise. (R Shahjahan et al., 2017, p. 63)

R Shahjahan et al. (2017, p. 51) consider that global rankings perpetuate a 'monoculture of the mind (i.e., a singular imaginary of higher-education purpose and knowledge' and privilege research institutions in ways that marginalize the role of public universities. These measures act as a '"politico-ideological technology" that serves a transnational elite class' (Amsler & Bolsmann, 2012) and creates transnational comparisons between the incommensurable at the institutional and individual level to the detriment of the national public interest. *Dagara* offers a reflexive capacity to delink modern/colonial knowledge systems within Western academia' by foregrounding 'hidden existential choices, intellectual fore-closures, and the circularity of afforded possibilities (including the circularity of Western critique)'. They argue that Western critique of rankings, for example, with all

their ontological and epistemological assumptions, 'narrows the imaginary of universities and human relationships in general, limiting the possibilities of knowledge and being'. Because such critiques still use the onto-grammar which defines 'what is real, ideal, desirable, and intelligible' (R Shahjahan et al., 2017, p. 52).

Fifth, it is not just what counts as knowledge but how it is produced, valued and disseminated. Moreover, the intended and unintended effects of 'what counts' on academic practices, preferences and identities, as well as the psychosocial effects and affective dimensions of epistemic injustice. Indeed, 'what counts' shapes how academics feel about their work and to what they invest their time and energy.

As a catch-all solution to the problems of inequality and lack of diversity in academia there has long been focus on establishing numerical goals for equality and diversity. The logic is that the culture will adjust itself if only we recruit people who fit certain identity categories (Blackmore, 2022; Lund, 2020). However, when recruitment is simultaneously based on criteria that reproduce specific narrow epistemic practices and epistemic hierarchies there is a real risk that equality and diversity goals serve as justifications for an academic monoculture (see e.g., Aarseth et al., 2022; Magnussen et al., 2022). When considering how to further equality and diversity in academia, we should therefore look beyond numerical goals towards the resources of feminist epistemology. Here, we are specifically inspired by the notion of situated knowledge as developed by American-Italian philosopher Helen Longino (Longino, 1990, 2002) and her calls for developing democratic practices of knowing (Anderson, 1995). In this, 'critical interrogation' of multiple perspectives is key for objectivity (Grasswick, 2021, p. 203).

Making a critical interrogation of multiple perspectives and democratic dialogue work to enable non-commodified academic plurality requires that critical scholars also interrogate the limits of their own critique (e.g., Felski, 2015). Feminist theorist Eve K. Sedgwick (1997) pin pointed more than two decades ago that critique within various kinds of critical theory has largely become synonymous with the mood and method of suspicion, perceived as the mandatory approach to criticism rather than 'a possibility among other possibilities' (Sedgwick, 1997, p. 125). This is a method rooted in Marx, Freud and Nietzsche and it involves the search for 'hidden causes, determining conditions, and noxious motives' (Felski, 2015, p. 12) and is ultimately, Sedgwick argues, a practice that privileges 'paranoia' (Sedgwick, 1997, p. 125). While such readings have been key in social justice research and noble agendas, we currently see that these forms of critical reading have been (perhaps counter intuitively) adopted and adapted, with great success, in post-truth and extreme right-wing agendas that undermine democracy and the trust in academic expertise. Thus, while suspicious readings are sometimes warranted and can bring about necessary insights, we *also* need 'reparative' methods (Sedgwick, 1997) and practices of 'acknowledgement' (Moi, 2017) that enable establishing mutual grounds for meaningful conversation. Acknowledgement is never universal, given 'once and for all', it is individual and particular, relating to each particular case and specific context, situation and person, and it requires 'humility [and] self-knowledge' (Moi, 2017, pp. 208–209). We all should strive to ask: What is actually being conveyed, what is the intention, why is it being said like this? This requires, we believe, turning to the highly controversial notion of *intention*. To take intention seriously, does not require a homogenous, unified picture of the subject, nor does it involve a perception of intention as being formed in the mind *prior to* a given

speech-act. Rather, intention involves asking for the reasons to speak and act in a particular way, in *retrospect*. It is a practice that enables us to learn something new from each other.

> Beauvoir speaks of "the taste of another life" . . . Martha Nussbaum calls it the "ability to see the world from another creature's viewpoint" *empathy*. Hannah Arendt thinks that critical thinking – political thinking – requires us to learn to "think with an enlarged mentality", which means "train[ing] one's imagination to go visiting." Iris Murdoch speaks of "compassion" and a "just loving gaze". All these thinkers stress the moral or political importance of being able to share the point of view of another person, to see what she sees. (Moi, 2017, p. 220)

Readings and conversations that practice acknowledgement, should involve a plurality of acknowledgements. How we acknowledge is necessarily based on how we are socially situated. We do not acknowledge the same things. Key here is that to enable a democratic and knowledge-informed debate, that is not polarized and can repair epistemic injustice, we need to embrace a wide range of critical methods.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on contributors

Rebecca Lund. Lund, Title of Docent, is a Postdoctoral scholar at the Centre for Gender Research, University of Oslo, Norway. Her research interests include feminist theory and epistemology, post-positivist methodology, capitalism, modernity, theories of emotion and affect, higher education policy and restructuring, knowledge production and academic work.

Jill Blackmore AM FASSA is Alfred Deakin Professor in Education, Faculty of Arts and Education, Deakin University, Australia. Her research interests include, from a feminist perspective, globalization, education policy and governance; international and intercultural education; educational restructuring, leadership and organisational change; spatial redesign and innovative pedagogies; teachers' and academics' work.

References

Aarseth, H. (2022). The implicit epistemology of metric governance. New conceptions of motivational tensions in the corporate university. *Critical Studies in Education*, 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/17508487.2022.2037680

Aarseth, H., Bråten, B., & Lund, R. (2022). Kjønnsbalanse i Tellekantenes tid: Epistemisk Mangfold eller Monokultur på Speed? In I. Owesen & H. Aarseth (Eds.), *Kjønn og Akademia: På Vei Mot BALANSE?* 2022. Fagbokforlaget. [Gender Balance in the Age of Research Assessment: Epistemic Diversity or Monoculture on Speed?]. 1–15.

Amsler, S., & Bolsmann, C. (2012). University ranking as social exclusion. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *33*(2), 283–301. https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2011.649835

Anderson, E. (1995). Feminist epistemology: An interpretation and a defense. *Hypatia*, *10*(3), 50–84. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.1995.tb00737.x

Andreotti, V., Stein, S., Ahenakew, C., & Hunt, D. (2015). Mapping interpretations of decolonization in the context of higher education. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, *4*(1) , 21–40. https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/des/article/view/22168

Arday, J., & Mirza, H. S. (Eds.). (2018). *Dismantling race in higher education: Racism, whiteness and decolonising the academy*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Billot, J. (2010). The Imagined and the real: Identifying the tensions for academic identities. *Higher Education Research and Development*, *29*(6), 6, 709–721–. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2010.487201

Blackmore, J. (2010). Research assessment: A calculative technology governing quality, accountability and equity. In J. Blackmore, M. Brennan, & L. Zipin (Eds.), *Re-positioning university governance and academic work* (pp. 67–83). Sense.

Blackmore, J. (2020). The carelessness of entrepreneurial universities in a world risk society: A feminist reflection on the impact of Covid 19 in Australia. *Higher Education Research and Development*, *39*(7), 1332–1336. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2020.1825348

Blackmore, J. (2021). Governing knowledge in the entrepreneurial university: A feminist account of structural, cultural and political epistemic injustice. *Critical Studies in Education*, 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/17508487.2020.1858912

Blackmore, J. (2022). *Disrupting leadership in entrepreneurial universities: Disengagement and diversity in higher education*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Boden, R., Ciancanelli, P., & Wright, S. (2012). Trust universities? Governance for post-capitalist futures. *Journal of Co-operative Studies*, *45*(2), 16–24. https://hubble-live-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/uk-society-for-cooperative-studies/file_asset/file/420/S3-BodenCiancanelliWright-135.pdf

Boden, R., Greenwood, D. J., Hall, B., Levin, M., Marshall, J., & Wright, S. (2015). Action research in universities and higher education worldwide. *The Sage Handbook of Action Research*, 281–290. https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781473921290.n28

Brand, U., & Görg, C. (2008). Post- Fordist governance of nature: The internationalization of the state and the case of genetic resources–a Neo-Poulantzian perspective. *Review of International Political Economy*, *15*(4), 567–589. https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290802260647

Brennan, M., Mayes, E., & Zipin, L. (2022). The contemporary challenge of activism as curriculum work. *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, *54*(3), 319–333. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220620.2020.1866508

Brew, A., Boud, D., Lucas, L., & Crawford, K. (2018). Academic artisans in the research university. *Higher Education*, *76*(1), 115–127. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-017-0200-7

Campbell, D., & Carayannis, E. (2012). *Epistemic governance in higher education: Quality enhancement of universities for development*. Springer.

Connell, R. (2007). *Southern theory: The global dynamics of knowledge in social science*. London: Routledge.

Connell, R. (2014). Using southern theory: Decolonizing social thought in theory, research and application. *Planning Theory*, *13*(2), 210–223. https://doi.org/10.1177/1473095213499216

Connell, R. (2014). Using southern theory: Decolonizing social thought in theory, research and application. *Planning Theory*, *13*(2), 210–223.

Connell, R. (2019). *The good university: What universities actually do and why it's time for radical change*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

de Sousa Santos, B. (2014). *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against epistemicide*. Routledge.

Espeland, W. N., & Sauder, M. (2016). *Engines of anxiety: Academic rankings, reputation, and accountability*. Russell Sage Foundation.

Felski, R. (2015). *The limits of critique*. University of Chicago Press.

Fontdevila, C., Verger, A., & Avelar, A. (2021). The business of policy: A review of the corporate sector's emerging strategies in the promotion of education reform. *Critical Studies in Education*, *62*(2), 131–146. https://doi.org/10.1080/17508487.2019.1573749

Fox, C., Duffy, M., Fairbairn, D., & Meyer, J. (2019). Gender diversity of editorial boards and gender differences in the peer review process at six journals of ecology and evolution. *Academic Practice in Ecology and Evolution*. https://doi.org/10.1002/ece3.5794

Grasswick, H. (2021). Feminist Epistemology. In Hall & Asta (Eds.), *Oxford handbook of feminist philosophy* (pp. 198–212). Oxford University Press. P.

Hall, B. L., & Tandon, R. (2017). *Decolonization of knowledge, epistemicide, participatory research and higher education*, *1*(1), 16–19. https://uclpress.scienceopen.com/hosted-document?doi=10.18546/RFA.01.1.02

Hattam, R., Brennan, M., Zipin, L., & Comber, B. (2009). Researching for social justice: Contextual, conceptual and methodological challenges. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, *30*(3), 303–316. https://doi.org/10.1080/01596300903037010

Jacob, M., & Hellström, M. (2018). Epistemic governance and the conditions for knowledge production in HER institutions. *Studies in Higher Education*, *43*(10), 1711–1717. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2018.1520413

Jacob, M., & Jabrane, L. (2018). Being there in the flex: Humanities and social science collaborations with nonacademic actors. *Studies in Higher Education*, *43*(10), 1718–1729. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2018.1520414

Jayasuriya, K. (2021). COVID-19, markets and the crisis of the higher education regulatory state: The case of Australia. *Globalisations*, *18*(4), 584–599. https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2020.1815461

Karcher, D., Cvitanovic, C., Shellock, R., Hobday, A., Stephensen, R., Dickey-Collas, M., & Putten, I. (2022). More than money - The costs of knowledge exchange at the interface of science and policy. *Ocean & Coastal Management*, *225*, 106194. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ocecoaman.2022.106194

Kauppi, N. (2018). The global ranking game: Narrowing academic excellence through numerical objectification. *Studies in Higher Education*, *43*(10), 1750–1762. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2018.1520416

Kenny, J. D. (2009). Managing a modern university: Is it time for a rethink? *Higher Education Research & Development*, *28*(6), 629–642. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360903206934

Krick, E. (2022). Participatory governance practices and the democracy-knowledge nexus. *Minerva*,*1*(1), 1–21. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11024-022-09470-z

Longino, H. E. (1990). *Science as social knowledge: Values and objectivity in scientific inquiry*. Princeton University Press.

Longino, H. E. (2002). *The social dimensions of scientific knowledge*. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/scientific-knowledge-social/

Lu, D. (2022) *China overtakes the US in scientific research output*. The Guardian. Retrieved 11 August from https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/11/china-overtakes-the-us-in-scientific-research-output

Lu, X. (2022). What drives Chinese scholars to publish in international journals? Motivations and implications. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *41*(6), 1977–1991. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2021.1971162

Lund, R. (2012). Publishing to become an “ideal academic”: An institutional ethnography and a feminist critique. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, *28*(3), 218–228. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scaman.2012.05.003

Lund, R. (2020). Becoming a professor requires saying ‘No’: Merging equality and quality agendas in a Norwegian gender balance project. In H. L. Smith, C. Henry, H. E. H, & A. Poulovassilis (Eds.), *Gender, science and innovation* (pp. 35–57). Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Lund, R., & Tienari, J. (2019). Passion, care, and eros in the gendered neoliberal university. *Organization*, *26*(1), 98–121. https://doi.org/10.1177/1350508418805283

Luqui, L., & McCarthy, J. (2019). Confucius Institutes: The successful stealth ‘soft power’ penetration in American Universities. *Journal of Higher Education*, *90*(4), 620–643. https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2018.1541433

Magnussen, M. L., Lund, R. W., & Mydland, T. S. (2022). Uniformity dressed as diversity? Reorienting female associate professors. In G. Griffin (Ed.), *Gender inequalities in tech-driven research and innovation: Living the contradiction* (Vol. 109, pp. 109–123). Bristol University Press. https://doi.org/10.51952/9781529219494.ch007

Mamdani, M. (2016). Between the public intellectual and the scholar: Decolonization and some post-Independence initiatives in African higher education. *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, *17*(1), 68–83. https://doi.org/10.1080/14649373.2016.1140260

Marginson, S., & Xu, X. (2021). Moving beyond centre-periphery science: Towards an ecology of knowledge. Working Paper, Published by the Centre for Global Higher Education, University of Oxford: https://www.researchcghe.org/perch/resources/publications/working-paper-63.pdf

McCarthy, G., & Jayasuraya, K. (2022). The pandemic and the politics of university governance. *Higher Education and Research Development*, 1–15. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2022.2106947

Moi, T. (2017). *Revolution of the ordinary: Literary studies after Wittgenstein, Austin and Cavell.* Chicago University Press.

Nussbaum, M. (2010). *Not for Profit. Why democracy needs the humanities*. Princeton U.P.

Palser, E., Lazerwitz, M., & Fotopoulou, A. (2022). Gender and geographical disparity in editorial boards in psychology and neuroscience. *Nature Neuroscience*, *25*(3), 272–279. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41593-022-01012-w

Parker, L., Martin-Sardesai, A., & Guthrie, J. (2021). The commercialized Australian public university: An accountingized transition. *Financial Accountability and Management*. https://doi.org/10.1111/faam.12310

Pearce, W., & Raman, S. (2014). The New Randomised Controlled Trials (RCT) movement in public policy: Challenges of epistemic governance. *Policy Sciences*, *47*(4), 387–402. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11077-014-9208-3

Peruzzo, F., Ball, S. J., & Grimaldi, E. (2022). Peopling the crowded education state: Heterarchical spaces, EdTech markets and new modes of governing during the COVID-19 pandemic. *International Journal of Educational Research*, *102006*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2022.102006

Rooney, P. (2011). The marginalisation of feminist epistemology and what it reveals about mainstream Epistemology 'proper. In H. Grasswick. (Ed.), *Feminist Epistemology and Philosophy of Science* (pp. 3–24). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-6835-5_1

Rowlands, J. (2013). Academic boards: Less intellectual and more academic capital in higher education governance? *Studies in Higher Education*, *38*(9), 1274–1289. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2011.619655

Rowlands, J., & Gale, T. (2019). National research assessment frameworks, publication output targets and research practices: The compliance-habitus effect. *Beijing International Review of Education*, *1*(1), 138–161. https://doi.org/10.1163/25902547-00101011

Rowlands, J., & Ngo, M. T. (2018). The north and the south of it: Academic governance in the US, England and Australia. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *37*(7), 1501–1514. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2018.1498462

Rowlands, J., & Wright, S. (2020). The role of bibliometric research assessment in a global order of epistemic injustice: A case study of humanities research in Denmark. *Critical Studies in Education*, 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/17508487.2020.1792523

Sedgwick, E. K. (1997). Paranoid reading and peperstive reading, or, You're so paranoid, you probably think this introduction is about you. In E. K, *Sedgwick Novel Gazing: Queer Readings in fiction* (pp. 1–37). Duke University Press.

Shahjahan, R. A., Grimm, A., & Allen, R. M. (2021). The "LOOMING DISASTER" for higher education: How commercial rankers use social media to amplify and foster affect. *Higher Education*, 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-021-00762-z

Shahjahan, R., Ramirez, G., & Andreotti, V. (2017). Attempting to imagine the unimaginable: A decolonial reading of global university rankings. *Comparative Education Review*, *61*(S1), S1. https://doi.org/10.1086/690457

Small, H. (2013). *The value of the humanities*. Oxford University Press.

Sutherland-Smith, W., Saltmarsh, S., & Randell-Moon, H. (2011). 'Inspired and assisted' or 'berated and destroyed': Research leadership and academic performativity in troubled times. *Ethics and Education*, *6*(3), 293–306. https://doi.org/10.1080/17449642.2011.632722

THE (2018) Bullying 'endemic' at Sussex, report warns. in Times Higher Education: https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/bullyingendemic-sussexreport-warns

Thomas, D. A., & Nedeva, M. (2018). Broad online learning EdTech and USA universities: Symbiotic relationships in a post-MOOC world. *Studies in Higher Education*, *43*(10), 1730–1749. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2018.1520415

Tutkal, S. (2020). Power, knowledge, and universities: Turkey's dismissed 'academics for peace'. *Critical Studies in Education*, 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1080/17508487.2020.1783335

Urry, J., Dingwall, R. G., Ormerod, I., Massey, P., Scott, J, D., & Thrift, N. (2007). What is 'social' about social science?, Twenty-First Century Society. *Journal of the Academy of Social Sciences*, *2*(1), 95–119. https://doi.org/10.1080/17450140601108924
Vachhani, S. J., & Pullen, A. (2019). Ethics, politics and feminist organizing: Writing feminist infrapolitics and affective solidarity into everyday sexism. *Human Relations*, *72*(1), 23–47. https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726718780988
Vadrot, A. B. M. (2011). Conceptual framework for "Epistemic Governance". *International Journal for Social Ecology and Sustainable Development*, *1*(2), 44–53. https://doi.org/10.4018/jsesd.2011010104
Walker, M., & Martinez-Vargas, C. (2020). Epistemic governance and the colonial epistemic structure: Towards epistemic humility and transformed South-North relations. *Critical Studies in Education*, 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1080/17508487.2020.1778052
Warmington, P. (2018). Forword: Dismantling Racial Inequality within the Academy. In J. Arday & H. Mirza (Eds.), *Dismantling race in higher education: Racism, whiteness, and decolonising the academy* (pp. v–ix). Palgrave Macmillan.
Williamson, B. (2018) *Edu-business as usual-Market-making in higher education*. *Code Acts in Education*. retrieved October 25, 2022, from https://codeactsineducation.wordpress.com/2018/06/21/edu-business-as-usual/
Williamson, B., & Hogan, A. (2020). *Commercialization and Privatization in/of education in the context of Covid 19*. Education International. https://eprints.qut.edu.au/216577/
Windle, J. A., & Fonseca Afonso, É. (2021). Building anti-racist education through spaces of border thinking. *Critical Studies in Education*, 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1080/17508487.2021.2000000
Wissen, M. (2009). Contested terrains: Politics of scale, the national state and struggles for the control over nature. *Review of International Political Economy*, *16*(5), 883–906. https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290802529843
Wright, S. (2014). Knowledge that counts: Points systems and the governance of danish universities. In D. Smith & A. Griffith (Eds.), *Under new public management: Institutional ethnographies of changing front-line work* (pp. 294–338). University of Toronto Press.
Wright, S., Greenwood, D., & Boden, R. (2011). Report on a field visit to Mondragón University: A cooperative experience/experiment. *Learning and Teaching*, *4*(3), 38–56. https://doi.org/10.3167/latiss.2011.040304
Wright & Lund. (forthcoming). *University Futures*. Berghahn Books.
Wright, S., & Shore, C. (Eds.). (2017). *Death of the public university?: Uncertain futures for higher education in the knowledge economy* (Vol. 3). Berghahn Books.
Ylijoki, O. H., & Ursin, J. (2013). The construction of academic identity in the changes of Finnish higher education. *Studies in Higher Education*, *38*(8), 1135–1149. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2013.833036

Rebecca Lund
Centre for Gender Research, University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway

r.w.b.lund@stk.uio.no

http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7068-6090

Jill Blackmore and Julie Rowlands
School of Education, Deakin University, Geelong, VIC, Australia

© 2022 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way.
https://doi.org/10.1080/17508487.2022.2136226