

## **Learning with and from the global South: Emerging insights from decolonial disability work**

**Editors: Xuan Thuy Nguyen & Nandini Ghosh**

Despite calls to decolonize Western disability studies over recent years (Goldman, 2016; Puar, 2023; Soldatic & Abay, 2024; Chataika & Goodley, 2024; Onazi, 2024), there has been limited engagement with crucial questions: What can be learned from the lives and struggles of disabled people in the global South? How might insights emerging from disability studies and social movements in the South contribute to a more critical understanding of disability theories, discourses, and praxis? Furthermore, how can we meaningfully engage with Southern disability epistemologies and practices as forms of epistemic struggles? What is required to disrupt the colonial power structures within the Western epistemic paradigm that have shaped disability politics? Finally, how can we re-center Southern epistemologies and geopolitics as an alternative approach to understanding disability and intersectional oppressions?

This proposed project aims to explore how Southern theories, discourses, and practices can be critically examined through emerging intersectional and decolonial perspectives in disability studies. Building on a partnership project, funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, entitled [\*Learning with and from the global South: Opportunities for Engaging Young Women and Girls with Disabilities\*](#) (ENGAGE) and the Reviews of Disability Studies special themed issue, [\*Conversations with/Across the Global South: Towards Decolonial Disability Futurities\*](#), this book aims to: 1) invite scholars and activists to explore stories of disability in the global South as sites of epistemic and socio-political struggles; 2) examine the tensions and challenges arising in these contexts, considering how they may create alternative spaces for understanding the global South as a source of knowledge production; and 3) explore how decolonial thinking about disability in the global South can disrupt coloniality and foster activist alliances that build solidarity and drive transformative change.

*Learning with and from the global South* denotes epistemic struggles to unsettle the hegemonic structures inherent in Western disability studies by working to reclaim and reposition intellectual and activist projects from the South on an equal basis with the Northern metropole. We use the term “global South” to refer to distinct spaces of epistemic, cultural, and geopolitical struggles where alternative knowledge and praxis are generated, often by marginalized and disadvantaged communities through various sites of resistance (De Sousa Santos, 2018). Decolonial disability studies provides a transgressive way of telling such stories, as it recognizes and embraces epistemic and socio-political tensions as sites for knowledge production (Nguyen et al., 2024). Decoloniality encourages us to think *from* and *with* standpoints and from the Southern spaces as ways of reclaiming knowledge that have been invalidated by the Empire

(Mignolo & Walsh, 2018) and, in so doing, re-imagine stories of disability in ways that recognize more equal and inclusive futures of disabled people in the South.

The contributors are invited to approach and conceptualise decolonial disability studies from a variety of dimensions: histories, epistemologies, methodologies, and knowledge/praxis, and to reflect on how their research can offer alternative approaches to understand disability epistemologies and praxis in the global South. We encourage authors to critically interrogate ways in which Western disability studies may have ignored, erased, or marginalized disability in the global South through epistemic, cultural, historical, and geo-political projects developed by the western Empire and/or through local knowledge systems that buttress unequal power relations with and among disabled people and their communities. Additionally, we seek to create spaces for intersectional and activist knowledge/praxis to amplify the voices and activism of Indigenous, Black, queer, transgendered disabled women, minorities, children and youth who have been invisible from the disability rights movement in the global North. How can research with and by marginalized disabled people in the global South be recognized as a part of decolonial praxis which works with and against dynamic power structures in their own spaces?

Methodologically, we encourage the contributors to critically reflect on their theories, approaches, and methodologies and to consider how decolonial approaches may inadvertently work to produce/reproduce coloniality in specific contexts, and how researchers and activists may work together to reinvent moments of decolonial resistance without reinforcing ableism in such spaces. We also invite the contributors to re-imagine what might be learned and unlearned from their research, as well as how their work may create an alternative option for social change in the Global South.

### **Tentative submission timelines**

- Abstract submission: September 7, 2024
- First draft submission: June 30, 2025
- Feedback from editors: July 31, 2025
- Revised chapter submission: August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2025