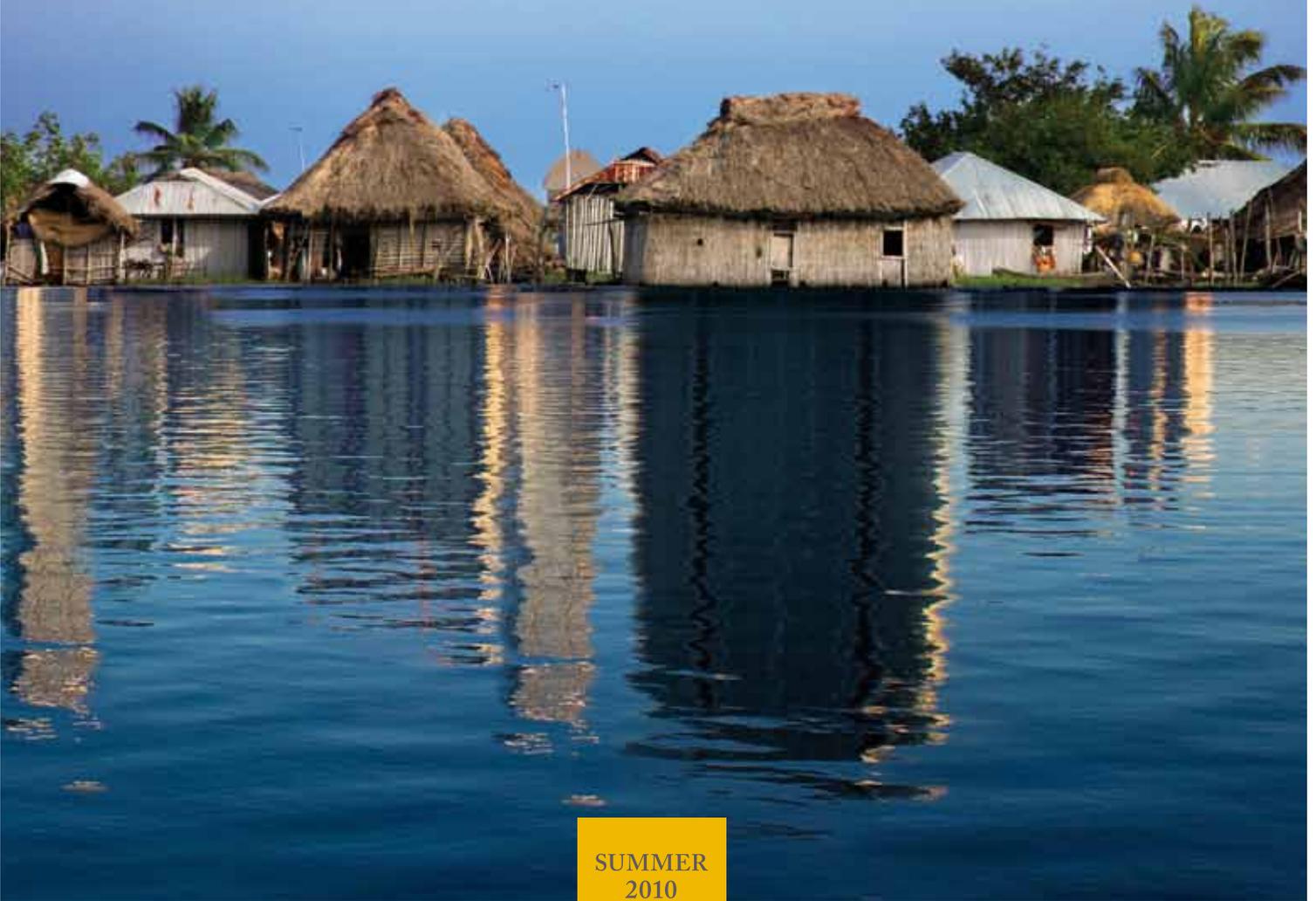


# FORUM

*Discussing international education*

**NORTH-SOUTH DIVIDE**  
**EAIE'S NEW DIRECTOR**  
**SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP**  
**EMMANUEL DAVIDENKOFF**



# NORTH SOUTH DIVIDE

*Is North–South university collaboration caught between conflicting objectives? Henrik Secher-Marcussen and Britha Mikkelsen elaborate on the increasingly challenging situation of sustaining international North–South partnerships.*

Over the past 15–20 years, several European countries have supported university-to-university partnership programmes through their aid programmes. The goal of such programmes is that they develop into equal partnerships while supporting capacity building within universities in the South. The objectives have included the development of research and teaching capacities in the South, which should answer national development needs and at

education, funded by national aid programmes, have generally functioned well and provide numerous benefits to universities in the South. However, the traditional, even orthodox, capacity development measures, such as provision of infrastructure (computers, labs and libraries), curriculum development, establishment of graduate programmes, student and staff exchanges, *etc* – all with the longer-term objective of promoting joint research projects and publica-

### NORTH-SOUTH COLLABORATION IS AT RISK OF COMING TO AN END UNLESS REMEDIAL ACTION IS TAKEN

the same time better position higher education and research institutions to meet the challenges of globalisation. For universities in the North, the motivation for researchers/teachers to get involved has been a mix of international solidarity, idealism and individual commitment rather than seeing such involvement as part of an academic career strategy.

**TRADITIONAL UNIVERSITY COLLABORATION PROGRAMMES CHALLENGED**  
North–South collaboration programmes in research and higher edu-

tions – are currently being challenged in the North as well as in the South.

With policies changing in the North and contexts of partner countries changing in the South, this collaboration modality is at risk of coming to an end unless remedial action is taken. This was the conclusion of a recently conducted evaluation in Norway of two programmes – the Norwegian Programme for Development, Research and Education (NUFU) and Norad's Programme for Master Studies (NOMA).

### CHALLENGES IN THE NORTH (NORWAY)

Norwegian universities, like many other universities in Europe, are faced with the implementation of a university reform, which entails new output- and results-based funding mechanisms and less core funding. A positive bottom line is required and, in order to stay in business, universities, faculties and departments need to be earning money as separate profit centres. The individual researchers, likewise, need to focus on their own academic careers in order to remain in business, through publications, generating external funding, bridging to society and societal needs in general, appearing in public, promoting and disseminating research results, *etc*. The unfortunate implications are extensive in the European university context. But in Norway, additional challenges apply.

In Norway, a particularly complex organisational structure reflects more fundamental issues and problems. One of the most intriguing and unresolved problems is who 'owns' the collaboration programmes between the Norwegian and Southern universities – the Ministry of Education and Research, or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs/Norad? The funding of the programmes is derived from the aid budget of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and is handled by Norad, who again has outsourced this programme component to an independent institution – SIU (The Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Higher Education). The latter is administered under the aegis of the Ministry of Education, who nominates members of the SIU Board, but with no funding attached.

### AID POLICY PRIORITIES OR ACADEMIC PRIORITIES?

The organisational complexity in this case may be specific but it illustrates a more general issue, namely whether North–South university collaboration is established in order to meet objectives set by the overall Norwegian aid policies and priorities, or whether it is set by the Ministry of Education and its 'clients', the universities, and according to university standards and requirements. Or both!

The organisational confusion and unsettled conflict of objectives are placing the otherwise relatively well-functioning

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## WHERE'S SOUTH?

The term 'South' has entered the international development cooperation jargon – *ie* poorer countries subject to development aid from countries in the North. In concrete terms our field work for the evaluation included Ethiopia, Malawi and Nepal – all 'South' countries and chosen by Norad for the evaluation cases.

## WHAT IS NORAD?

Norad stands for 'Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation.' Visit [www.norad.no](http://www.norad.no) for more information.

programmes in jeopardy. Such programmes, so appreciated in the South, are at risk of coming to an end. Continued involvement of the Norwegian researchers might not be sustained; incentives are disappearing due to teachers/researchers not being financially rewarded or compensated for conducting development work. Norad only covers direct expenses in aid programmes. Compensation paid by the Ministry of Education and Research only materialises if students are attracted from the South to enrol at Norwegian universities. Student enrolment in the programmes in Norway, however, only happens in a few cases as it contradicts the overall policy that capacity building must take place in the South. This is the explicit goal of the NOMA programme, which funds the establishment of Master programmes in the South.

Adding to these challenges is the increasingly complex development agenda, where aid policies are part of foreign policy, encompassing aid in its more traditional sense, but also security, international migration, global financial and trading issues, food security, climate change, *etc.* In all of this, research and education collaboration programmes remain critically fragmented.

This greater diversity that is evolving within the Southern university landscape calls for a more flexible, diverse and varied form of collaboration modality, where the demands from the South reach beyond the orthodox form of support for capacity development.

Universities in the South who have moved up the ladder of research and higher education capacity tend to express their priorities for external support differently. Many can handle Master programmes themselves and are no longer interested in support from the North. They may want to promote their university and their position scientifically and attempt to move up the ladder by giving priority to conducting basic research. Or they may wish to embark upon programmes that target how best to address the globalisation challenges and opportunities.

These new developments are gradually surfacing and challenge Northern universities by requiring much more flexible responses to demands, for which the current capacities, funding mechanisms and organisational structures in the North may not be well suited. This was another of the conclusions in the evaluation of the two Norwegian programmes.

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## DEMANDS FROM THE SOUTH REACH BEYOND THE ORTHODOX FORM OF SUPPORT FOR CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

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### CHALLENGES FOR THE SOUTH

After decades of more traditional forms of support to universities in the South, Southern universities have moved forward. Some – but far from all – are now in a position where Southern researchers are publishing internationally. They are internationally recognised and in certain cases are in the lead within their specific field. They have also developed their own capacities to conduct post graduate training, though mainly at the Master's level. In other words, the picture in the South is much different from that of the past; a few universities have made impressive leaps forward, while others are still in great need of assistance from the outside.

### FLEXIBLE, DIFFERENTIATED SUPPORT

With the increasing differentiation in the South presenting a much wider and more varied picture, the demands from the South are also being voiced more strongly. It is requested that future collaboration arrangements go beyond Northern policy priorities, in this case Norway's, and even beyond the tying of aid to universities/researchers in Norway.

The remedies needed in order to clarify objectives and identify new collaboration modalities should not, however, stand in the way of continuous support to international university collaboration. The role of higher education and research in development is as important as ever in this complex, globalised world in which we live. **E**