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## Beyond divisions and towards internationalism: Social sciences in the twenty-first century

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In recent decades, the dynamics of the world have changed. At one level, the world has contracted. It has opened up possibilities of diverse kinds of trans-border flows and movements of capital and labour and of signs and symbols, often organised in intersecting spatial circuits. While in some contexts and moments these attributes cooperate, at other times they are in conflict with and contest one another. Thus, even though we all live in one capitalist world with a dominant form of modernity, inequalities and hierarchies are increasing and so are fragmented identities. Lack of access to livelihoods, infrastructure and political citizenship now blends with exclusions relating to cultural and group identities, and these are organised in varied spatial and temporal zones. Fluidity of identities and their continuous expression in unstable social manifestations and in new geographical regions demand a fresh perspective with which to examine them. Not only do contemporary social processes, sociabilities and structures need to be perceived through new and novel spaces, prisms and perspectives, it is also increasingly clear that these need to be seen through new methodological protocols. As a consequence, social scientists are in search of a new framework that moves beyond the nineteenth and early twentieth-century social science language and addresses the new challenges posed by contemporary processes.

At one level, the social science theories that were promoted to examine modernisation and modernism across the world in the 1950s and 1960s have little or no purchase. Based on a 'convergence' notion, these theories, in both their liberal and/or their Marxist formulations, argued that the structures, patterns and processes associated with modernisation and capitalism and thus industrialisation and urbanisation (emerging earlier in Europe and later extending itself in the Americas and the Antipodes) were universal models of social change and dynamics of the world. The non-Western world, it was thought, would follow a similar path. Such a thesis cannot be accepted today as it is increasingly evident that there are no singular models of growth or change. At another level, this interrogation has also demanded a reframing of the divisions that organise the geographies of the world, such as the neat partitions of the world into three (First, Second and Third worlds) or two (developed and less-developed countries). Increasingly, it has become clear that there are regions, such as Asia, which are evolving in different ways to other regions. In this chapter, I identify and discuss the various discursive practices of social science that need to be dismantled in order to build the new language that contemporary times demand.

I argue that social scientists have to deconstruct and disassemble epistemic and theoretical models at three levels. In the first section, I discuss the parochialisms and ethnocentrism built into social science scholarship in the form of Eurocentric–Orientalist positions and highlight how the binaries of the universal and the particular have been organised in the context of the geopolitics of global/international/national. In section two, I indicate how this episteme and its binaries continue to organise post–World War II institutional structures such as universities and research institutes both in the global North (including Australia) and in the global South. I discuss how the perspective of methodological nationalism combined with Eurocentrism–Orientalism institutionalised an Atlantic<sup>1</sup> representation of modern society in the disciplines of sociology, political science and economics and a particularistic indigenous one for the nation-states of the global South. In the last section, I discuss the challenges this legacy presents to a country such as Australia, which needs to connect with the territories of its own region.

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'Atlantic' alludes to European and North American social science theories and is used by Walter D. Mignolo (2002).

## Eurocentrism, colonialism and the episteme of the universal–particular

The social sciences emerged in Europe in the context of European modernity. They analysed this birth through a linear conception of time and suggested that it was produced through the values and institutional system that were universalised in Europe in the past 500 years—in its own backyard. This theory incorporated two master narratives: the superiority of Western civilisation (through progress and reason) and the belief in the continuous growth of capitalism (through modernisation, development and the creation of new markets). These master narratives, which Charles Taylor (1995) calls a ‘culturist approach’, are recognised now as ethnocentric in nature. European social sciences assessed its own growth in terms of itself (Europe) rather than in terms of the other (the rest of the colonised world), which was its object of control and through which it became modern. It was a theory of ‘interiority’ (Mignolo 2002)—that is, a perspective that perceived itself from within rather than from without.

A notion of linear time affirmed a belief that social life and its institutions, emerging in Europe from about the fourteenth century, would now influence the making of the new world. In doing so, it ‘silenced’ its own imperial experience and the violence without which it could not have become modern. These assumptions framed the ideas elaborated by Hegel, Kant and the Encyclopaedists and were incorporated in the sociologies of Durkheim, Weber and Marx. No wonder these theories legitimised the control and domination of the rest of the world through the episteme of coloniality (Dussel 1993; Mignolo 2002; Quijano 2000).

This discourse of modernity presented a universal set of axioms, in which time as historicity defined its relationship to space. To put it differently, because it saw its own growth in terms of itself and defined it through its own specific and particular history, that which was outside itself (the place) was perceived in terms of its opposite: lack of history and thus inferior. Henceforth all knowledge was structured in terms of the master binary of the West (which had history, culture, reason and science) and the East (which was enclosed in space, nature, religion and spirituality). This binary linked the division and subsequent hierarchisation of groups within geospatial territories in the world in terms of a theory of temporal linearity: the West was modern because it had evolved to articulate the key features of modernity, compared with the East, which was traditional. Dussel thus says:

Modernity appears when Europe affirms itself as the 'centre' of a *World History* that it inaugurates; the 'periphery' that surrounds this centre is consequently part of its self-definition. The occlusion of this periphery ... leads the major thinkers of the 'centre' into a Eurocentric fallacy in their understanding of modernity. If their understanding of the genealogy of modernity is thus partial and provincial, their attempts at a critique or defence of it are likewise unilateral, and in part, false. (Dussel 1993: 65)

This binary opposition constructed the knowledge of the two worlds, the West and the East, and placed these as oppositions, creating hierarchies between them and thereby dividing them in terms of 'I' and the 'other'—positing a universality for 'I' and particularities for the 'other'. 'Maintaining a difference under the assumption that we are all human' (Mignolo 2002: 71) was part of the normative project of modernity and subsequently of its sociological theory. These were the 'truths' of modernity and the modern world; these truths were considered objective and universal (Dussel 1993; Mignolo 2002; Quijano 2000).

Thus Eurocentrism and its twin, Orientalism, are interconnected cultural and epistemic logics of capitalist imperialism. They incorporated themselves in the disciplines of history and sociology to make Europe the central point of a narrative and analysis of the growth of modernity. Not only did they argue that Europe's superiority and its control of the world had provided the conditions for Europe's ascendance, but also they created a scientific language that justified and legitimised this perspective and made it a universal truth (Amin 2010).

Eurocentrism was a style of thought that ontologically and epistemologically divided the 'Occident' and the 'Orient' to create knowledge on and of the Occident and the Orient as distinct. Enmeshed in Eurocentrism were two myths: first, the idea of the history of human civilisation as being a trajectory that departed from a 'state of nature' and culminated in the European experience of modernity. Second, it incorporated a view of the differences between Europeans and non-Europeans as natural, though in actuality these were based on racialised differences. Within Eurocentrism, the colonial experience was present in its absence. No wonder Eurocentrism has also been discussed as the episteme of colonial modernity. 'Both myths', according to Anibal Quijano (2000: 542), 'can be unequivocally recognized in the foundations of evolutionism and dualism, two of the nuclear elements of Eurocentrism'.

These seminal assumptions were embodied in the framing of the disciplines of sociology and anthropology in India in the late eighteenth century. Sociology became the study of modern (European, later to be extended to Western) society while anthropology was the study of (non-European and non-Western) 'traditional' societies. Thus, sociologists studied how the new societies evolved from the deadwood of the old; notions of time and history were embedded in this discourse. In contrast, anthropologists studied how space and place organised

'static' cultures that could not transcend their internal structures to be and become modern. This narrative was affirmed by social scientists within the Antipodes, although they were not part of the European geographical territory. As a consequence, a Eurocentric–Orientalist perspective defined the teaching and learning of the West and the East within the universities in the Antipodes (see also Connell in this volume).

These frames also constructed the academic knowledge of India as elaborated by colonial anthropologists and administrators, who further divided the East that they were studying into separate geospatial territories with each territory given an overarching cultural value. In the case of India, it was religion: Hinduism. The discourse of coloniality collapsed India and Hinduism into each other (Patel 2006). The collapse of India into Hindu India is not new. The genealogy of the collapse goes back to nineteenth-century colonial constructs that assumed two principles. The first assumption was geographical and distinguished between groups living in the subcontinent from the spatial-cultural structures of the West, thereby creating the master binary of the West and the East. Later, those living in the subcontinent were further classified geographically in spatial-cultural zones and 'regionally' subdivided.

The second assumption related to the internal division and relationship between these groups within India. All groups living in the subcontinent were defined by their relationship with Hinduism. Those who were directly related to the constructed notion of Hinduism as now understood, such as castes and tribes, were termed the 'majority' and organised in terms of distinct hierarchies (castes were considered superior to tribes, who were thought to be 'primitive'), while those who were not were conceived as 'minorities'—mainly groups who practised Islam and Christianity (Patel 2006). Evolutionist theories were used to make Hinduism the 'great tradition', anchored in a timeless civilisation, and its margins were the folk cultures, the 'little traditions'.

Anthropologists and sociologists researching South Asian religions have often uncritically accepted this logic, and have thereby become trapped in this discourse. The geographically vast subcontinent of South Asia has thousands of communities with distinct cultural practices and ideas who have lived and experienced existence in various forms of unequal and subordinate relationships with each other. In the nineteenth century, anthropological and sociological knowledge dissolved these distinctions and recategorised them into four or five major religious traditions, thereby constructing a master narrative of the majority and the minority. This logic homogenised distinctions between groups but it also naturalised the Orientalist–Eurocentric language as the only language with which to comprehend the unequal distribution of power and resources.

British civil servants and anthropologists, and later Indian anthropologists, placed the debate of identifying and designating these as 'castes' or 'tribes' within the discussion of 'stocks' or 'races' in relation to other 'stocks' and 'races' in the Western world. In order to formulate these categories, they drew on evolutionary theory and Victorian social thought associated with 'race science'. In this they were aided by a theory of the 'Aryan' (white or fair-skinned) invasion of India, which grew out of the discovery of the Indo-European language family in the late nineteenth century. Hence, linguistic classification merged with racial classification to produce a theory of an Indian civilisation formed by the invasion of fair-skinned, civilised, Sanskrit-speaking Aryans, who conquered and partially absorbed the dark-skinned, 'savage' aborigines.

This theory was critical in producing the basic division of groups in India into Aryan and non-Aryan races, now termed 'castes' and 'tribes'. What is of interest is the fact that while 'castes' were defined in the context of Hinduism as groups who cultivated land, had better technology and high civilisational attributes, 'tribes' were defined in contrast to castes, and were said to practise primitive technology, to live in interior jungles and to be animistic in religious practices. Such classifications and categorisations were not peculiar to India. They also found manifestation in the African continent, as British officials used this knowledge to construct categories of social groups in Africa and retransferred these newly constructed classifications back again to India, as happened in the case of the term 'tribe' as a lineage group based on a segmentary state.

In the process, 'caste' (and 'tribe') was made out to be a far more pervasive, totalising and uniform concept than ever before and defined in terms of a religious order, which it had not always been. In fact, ancient and medieval historiographers now inform us that those whom we identify as castes and tribes were groups shaped by political struggles and processes over material resources. In pre-colonial India, multiple markers of identity defined relationships between groups and were contingent on complex processes, which were constantly changing and were related to political power. Thus, there were temple communities, territorial groups, lineage segments, family units, royal retinues, warrior sub-castes, 'little as opposed to large kingdoms', occupational reference groups, agricultural and trading associations, networks of devotional and sectarian religious communities, and priestly cabals. An internal critique has retrieved these sources to argue how these can be deconstructed and analysed as varied and to analyse how colonial knowledge standardised and homogenised them through an Orientalist perspective.

The thesis of Eurocentrism has posed seminal questions regarding the episteme of the social sciences in a fundamentally different manner. The questions are not about what constitutes the boundaries of the 'social' and how to incorporate new voices and areas of study within the existing ways of doing social sciences.

Rather the questions raised are primarily about the nature and construct of the corpus of established knowledge regarding the ‘social’ as this was formulated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These are questions about what constitutes its ‘science’, its facticity and its truth. It is about the way this knowledge, which is regarded as ‘truth’, has been designed and devised; it is about the moorings of its perspectives, methodologies and methods—that is, its system of practices. These, it is argued, fail to comprehend and perceive the world in ways that do not and cannot fit in with the episteme of social sciences constituted within and through the Atlantic traditions.

## The geopolitics of travelling theory and the two avatars of methodological nationalisms

Contemporary globalisation has led some social scientists to suggest that what needs to be dismantled is not only Eurocentrism but also methodological nationalism. The sociologist Ulrich Beck (2000), for example, has argued that our attention should be focused on dismantling the principles of nation, nation-state and nationalism that have organised the framing of social theory.

What is methodological nationalism? In its most straightforward usage, methodological nationalism implies coevalness between ‘society’ and the ‘nation-state’—that is, it is an argument that a discussion of modern society (which sociology undertakes) entails an implicit understanding of the nation. Or, in other words, the nation is treated as ‘the natural and necessary representation of the modern society’ (Chernillo 2006). Methodological nationalism is the taken-for-granted belief that nation-state boundaries are natural boundaries within which societies are contained. This ignorance and/or blindness is reinforced through a mode of ‘naturalisation’; sociological theories take for granted official discourses, agendas, loyalties and histories without problematising these. Ultimately this error leads sociologists to territorialise social science language and reduce it to the boundaries of the nation-state. When these positions are exported across the world, methodological nationalism becomes embedded in Eurocentric positions (Gutiérrez Rodríguez et al. 2010).

It is my argument that what were considered ‘methodological errors’ by European sociologists became, in the case of ex-colonial countries, an advantage in the historical moment that defines the decades after independence. Thus, in the case of India, as in other ex-colonial countries, methodological nationalism was a self-conscious embrace of a place/territory to create a set of guidelines with which to confront the colonial discourses of social science. Identification with ‘place’ allowed ‘national’ intellectuals to build intellectual solidarity against dominant colonial knowledge. Second, the recognition of this place-bound

solidarity facilitated the growth of an 'alternative' discourse. This then became the principle for organising the institutionalisation of knowledge systems through a gamut of policies and regulations. These policies determined the protocols and practices of teaching and learning processes, the establishment and practices of research within research institutes, the distribution of grants for research, the language of reflection, the organisation of the profession and the definitions of scholars and scholarship (Patel 2011a).

For example, the initiation of sociology as a discipline (against anthropology) allowed some departments in India to inaugurate the teaching, learning and research of a modern Indian society rather than a traditional one. In this they were aided by the legacy of nationalist ideologies that wished to see India as a modern nation-state. This advantage received a further fillip with the initiation of a nationalist modernist project by the post-independence state and its use of higher education for creating a new India (Patel 2011c).

This sociological knowledge discussed, debated and represented social changes occurring within one nation and territory: India. Sociologists saw their project as that which analyses one's own society (India) in one's (indigenous) 'own terms', without colonial and now neo-colonial tutelage. This project allowed for the institutionalisation of a particularistic *problematic* in a new way—an assessment of how modernity and modernisation were changing India's characteristic institutions: caste, kinship, family and religion. This particularistic problematic also influenced Marxist perspectives as radical sociologists interrogated and set aside 'revisionist' Orientalist theories and elaborated the distinct nature of class and class relations in India and theorised their differential modes of production (Patel 2011b).

These developments took place in a context wherein social sciences were engendered to play a critical role in conceptualising development and planned change. This agenda entailed a need to professionalise the discipline and organise it within the territory of the nation-state. In this context, the two strands of methodological nationalism mentioned above—'territorialisation' and 'naturalisation'—became, in new ways, symbiotically linked with each other to become an integral part of the traditions of sociological thinking in India. Sociology not only interrogated (even if partially) the received inheritance of colonial theories and methodologies, but also promoted a new language with new perspectives and methodologies that defined itself as Indian sociology (Patel 2011c).

Rather than restricting an understanding of international sociology, nationalist sociologies from ex-colonial countries have enlarged it. Many newly independent countries have used this strategy, such as Nigeria, India and those in Latin America. Raewyn Connell's book *Southern theory* (2007) documents the many

positive outcomes that can be realised by attempting this pathway. This type of project has, however, promoted varied but uneven intellectual traditions within different nation-states as scholars discuss, debate and represent social changes occurring in their countries. It has also allowed nationally oriented intellectual infrastructural resources to be created, including universities, research institutes and laboratories, as well as journals, publishing houses and professional norms and ethics. These have asserted alternative ways of assessing contextual processes, thereby underlining the many particularities that have structured the world and, on the other hand, have highlighted the inequalities that structure international sociology. This heritage has relevance today and cannot be washed away (Patel 2011a).

In a large number of post-independent nation-states, however, nationalist social sciences have become closely associated with official discourses and methods of understanding the relationship between nation, nation-state and modernity. As a consequence, other contending perspectives have become marginal. If the social sciences of the Atlantic region promoted Eurocentrism through methodological nationalism, those of newly independent countries valorised the elite notions of nation and the state and, in many instances, the visions of its upper sections became the frames for doing social science. This continues to be true for many intellectual inquiries. Contemporary social science has remained silent on the political moorings of this project, failing to examine its close linkages with the metropolitan (advanced capitalist) hegemonic orientation and consequently the dynamics of capital accumulation on a world scale.

Hountondji (1997) has argued that these remain culturist projects; he refers to 'ethnoscience' and suggests that these projects remain part of the colonial and neo-colonial binaries of the universal-particular and the global-national. Farid Alatas (2003) has proposed that in the post-World War II period social science culture in ex-colonial countries is marked by academic dependencies of six kinds: dependence on ideas, dependence on the media of ideas, dependence on the technology of education, dependence on aid for research as well as teaching, dependence on investment in education, and the dependence of Third World social scientists on demand in the West for their skills.

Social scientists have thus argued that the two avatars of methodological nationalism formulated in the context of post-World War II internationalism have introduced and reproduced academic dependencies in new ways. The Malaysian sociologist Syed Hussein Alatas (1972) and the African philosopher Paulin Hountondji (1997) have discussed these as the 'captive mind' and 'extraversion' respectively. They argue that the syndrome of 'captive mind' and 'extraversion' can be seen in the teaching and learning processes, in the way curriculums and syllabuses are framed; in the processes of research, the designing of research questions and the methods and methodologies used;

as well as in the formulation of criteria for accepting articles for journals and books, and ultimately in defining what and where one publishes, and what is academic excellence.

The two kinds of methodological nationalism have justified and legitimised an intellectual culture wherein Northern social science is held out as a model for the rest of the world. The consequence of this dependence is the ‘infantilisation’ of scientific practices within non-Atlantic regions. Not only are these at an incipient stage of growth, but this very condition encourages brain drain and further intellectual dependencies. It is backed by the sheer size of Northern social science and its intellectual, human, physical and capital resources—the infrastructure necessary for its reproduction. This includes not only equipment, archives, libraries, publishing houses and journals, but also the evolution of a professional culture of intellectual commitment and engagement that connects the producers and consumers of knowledge, embedded in relationships between Northern and Southern universities and students, as well as Northern nation-states and global knowledge-production agencies.

How does one move forward in this matter given the deeply embedded inequalities that organise the global production of knowledge?

## Strategies for creating new discourses

I would like to initiate this discussion by first addressing the two challenges we must confront. The first challenge is of an epistemic nature. Some social scientists have argued that the best way out of this epistemic and methodological difficulty is to particularise the universals of European thought. They suggest that we need to provincialise the hegemonic social sciences of the Atlantic region and understand how deeply structured are the inequalities of academic production (Connell 2010). Some have argued that this is a project for the Atlantic region, which concerns universities and research institutes, publishing houses and journals, scholarship and its professional norms. It involves an interrogation of the syllabuses and curriculums, research questions and methodologies of doing research and involves a self-conscious effort to decolonise its academic moorings. In this context, for example, Immanuel Wallerstein has argued that:

Europe in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries did transform the world, but in a direction whose negative consequences are upon us today. We must cease trying to deprive Europe of its specificity on the deluded premise that we are thereby depriving it of an illegitimate credit. Quite the contrary, we must fully acknowledge the particularity of Europe’s reconstruction of the world because only then will it be possible to transcend it, and to arrive hopefully at a more

inclusively universalist vision of human possibility, one that avoids none of the difficult and imbricated problems of pursuing the true and the good in tandem. (Wallerstein 2006: 106–7)

Dipesh Chakrabarty, the historian of subaltern studies, has made a similar argument. He coined a new methodology, called ‘provincialisation’, and explained its quest:

To ‘provincialize’ Europe was precisely to find out how and in what sense European ideas that were universal were also, at one and the same time, drawn from the very particular intellectual and historical traditions that could not claim universal validity. (Chakrabarty 2000: xiii)

This is indeed a laudable strategy and needs to be juxtaposed with the second challenge, which is to understand how similar universals dominate and determine nation-based projects for creating new social sciences. As mentioned above, these are part of the projects to create nationalist social science in ex-colonial countries, which include many nation-states within Asia. In this context, we need to ask whether its legacy—that of creating and institutionalising a nationalist and an anti-colonialist social science—can be dismissed arbitrarily, especially in the context of the epistemic and institutionally unequal division of academic resources. More significantly, we need to ask how we can ensure and assure the constitution of a critical global social science language once we displace these structures.

Certainly, these challenges need not be seen as independent of each other; they are mutually embedded within each other. If the discursive practices of knowledge institutions have to be interrogated, it has to be done jointly and collaboratively by drawing on intellectual resources from all parts of the region. This is a project for the global social science community within and outside the Atlantic region and can be initiated within the Atlantic region without difficulties. How does one do so?

I suggest this can be done at two levels. The first step is to work out how we can go beyond the contextualising of the particular ‘content’ that asserts that truth claims are not universal. While it is important to deconstruct the explanations that these universal theories offer and the narratives they construct (which are European in genealogy), there is also a need to analyse their very ‘form’—that is, the concepts through which explanations become possible, as well as the very idea of what counts as explanation. I am suggesting that we understand the collective heritage of social sciences and not simply designate them as ‘European’ or non-Western and then associate truth claims with them. An argument that justifies these divisions has little relevance, given that we remain within one world capitalist system. The task, in contrast, is to recognise that they often

provide only partial and sometimes flawed understandings. We need not reinvent the wheel. There is, however, a necessity to generate explanations that are relevant for different contexts.

To do so there is a need to change institutional practices of doing social science and to make it competitive rather than monopolistic as it is now. There is a necessity to open up the market of production, distribution and consumption of knowledge to new audiences, institutions and processes across the region. Social science needs to articulate itself in many expressions at different sites (other than academic) and engage with the ways these define their distinctive culturist oeuvres, epistemologies, theoretical frames, cultures of science and languages of reflection, as well as sites of knowledge production and transmission. In addition to classrooms and departments, together with syllabus formulations and protocols of professional codes, this type of move can also include campaigns, movements and advocacies. Thus, its production involves a creative dialectic within and between activists, scholars and communities assessing, reflecting on and elucidating immediate events and issues that intervene to define the research process, as well as the organising and systematising knowledge of the discipline in long-term institutionalised processes central for teaching and learning.

The second way is to build intellectual networks across institutions and scholarship among and between scholars of the region. This is what the Asian region needs to initiate. Horizontal linkages between localities and nation-states can substitute for existing vertical hierarchical linkages between imperialist and ex-colonial countries or between that of core and periphery in the production, distribution and consumption of knowledge. This type of initiative will help us reflect collectively on the common and relevant themes that structure the experience of being part of the region. Through this type of process and intent, it will be possible to outline an Asian perspective.

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