

Michael Kuhn | Shujiro Yazawa (eds.)

**Theories about and
Strategies against
Hegemonic Social Sciences**

BEYOND THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

Edited by Michael Kuhn, Hebe Vessuri, Shujiro Yazawa

ISSN 2364-8775

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Theories about and Strategies against Hegemonic Social Sciences
ISBN 978-3-8382-0586-1

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ibidem-Verlag
Stuttgart

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über <http://dnb.d-nb.de> abrufbar.

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

This book was initially published by the Center for Global Studies (CGS), Seijo University, Japan. Permission for this republication was kindly given by the CGS.

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Gedruckt auf alterungsbeständigem, säurefreiem Papier
Printed on acid-free paper

ISSN 2364-8775

ISBN-13: 978-3-8382-0586-1

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Stuttgart 2015

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Printed in the EU

BEYOND THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

The social sciences, what do they let us know about the world's social, a place of war, of poverty, *and* of wealth? Certainly, one cannot make them responsible for what is going on in the world. Is there any spot on the globe that is not somehow involved in a war? Is there any place in the world, where the growth of wealth does not exist next to the growth of poverty? Certainly, war, wealth, and poverty are the major essentials of "modernity" and they have been in the forefront of social concern for more than 200 years. The social sciences have been researching the social world with a multitude of professional thinkers also for over two centuries. Has the knowledge they gained helped to make anything better, or at least helped to reduce wars and poverty? Obviously not. Or is even the opposite is the case? Again, one cannot accuse the social sciences for this, knowledge is knowledge, but what is their impact upon the world? Not much, one must conclude, considering the fact that we still live in a world of war, wealth, and poverty. Hence, we have to raise the question what social thought under the regime of the social sciences is all about then.

The book series "Beyond the Social Sciences" publishes social thought and invites readers and writers to reflect on the social sciences and their approach to social thought, the theories they contribute to understand the social world, and how to go beyond the social sciences' way of thinking about the world.

It particularly invites contributions that critically reflect upon:

- the disciplinary structure of social sciences
- key theories founding global social science theorizing
- epistemological and methodological issues of global social sciences
- institutional aspects of global social sciences
- international collaboration practices
- the global social science structure
- international discourse practices
- international science policies
- alternative approaches to social thought

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Foreword

From the beginning of the 1990s onwards, irrespective of individual terminological preferences, we have been living in a new age of the world, namely "The Era of Globalization." Whether we take it positively or negatively, we have to acknowledge that the overwhelming wave of globalization in the fields of economics, politics, society, culture or whatever arena we take into consideration has been connecting every corner of the world and shrinking the globe.

At the same time, we also recognize that globalization has more often than not brought about and strengthened the power imbalance between "the center," i.e. Euro-American developed countries, and "the peripheral," i.e. mostly non-Euro-American developing countries. That is why some opponents of globalization criticize it for being nothing more than "Americanization" or "McDonaldization." The field of social sciences is no exception to this criticism in that its theories, methods, presumptions, objectives, scopes have long been based on, (re)produced within, and dominated by Euro-American traditions.

Accordingly, those social scientists who are sensitive to undesirable situations in the present globalized world are strenuously addressing the issues of Euro-American-centric hegemonic social sciences. The World Social Sciences and Humanities Network (World SSH Net) is one of the most active networks of social scientists problematizing the hegemonic social sciences in the era of globalization. According to the mission statement articulated on its

website (<http://www.worldsshnet.org/home>), the World SSH Net 1) aims to develop a world social sciences and humanities community, beyond the hegemonic patterns of Western science, 2) reflects on social phenomena worldwide, beyond the theoretical frameworks of nationally confined societies, and 3) promotes dialogue and cooperation between scholars from the social sciences and the humanities, beyond the boundaries of disciplines.

This book, *Theories about and Strategies against Hegemonic Social Sciences*, represents one of the recent results of the World SSH Net's endeavors to materialize its mission. On 12/13 May 2012, the World SSH Network held a "thinkshop," entitled "Theories about and Strategies against Hegemonic Social Sciences," in Tokyo, which was co-sponsored by the Center for Glocal Studies, Seijo University, Japan, and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Portugal. The papers presented at the thinkshop were elaborated afterwards by their respective contributors by incorporating the outcomes of the discussion and published in this book.

The Center for Glocal Studies (CGS) is a research center established just four years ago at Seijo University for 1) formulating and establishing a new research field, "glocal studies," and 2) promoting this new field. Refining the concept of "glocalization," which was introduced by the British sociologist Roland Robertson in the middle of the 1990s, the center has tried to formulate "glocal studies" in order to shed light on hitherto inadequately examined socio-cultural dynamics within myriad "contact zones" between the "global and local," the "central and peripheral," and the "external

and internal" realities of various different groupings and/or communities. In conducting glocal studies, the CGS focuses on developments that symmetrize what is thought of as an asymmetrical socio-cultural power balance between Euro-American and non-Euro-American nations. In this sense, the Center for Glocal Studies shares the same interests as the World SSH Net and the contributors to this book.

Since its establishment, the CGS has organized and held many symposiums, workshops and lectures on glocalization. Meanwhile, one of our colleagues, Prof. Shujiro Yazawa, and the president of the World SSH Net, Dr. Michael Kuhn, suggested to us that the center would be a co-sponsor of a thinkshop focusing on changing scientific concepts and paradigms in the era of globalization. As we share the same interests and views, the center wholeheartedly agreed and decided to co-sponsor the thinkshop as part of our research endeavors.

At the subsequently held thinkshop, 17 social scientists from Europe, Africa, South/East/Southeast Asia and Central America came together and presented their expertise and discussed theories about and the strategies against the hegemonic social sciences. At the thinkshop, I, as one of its participants sometimes witnessed heated debate over sensitive issues, such as the concept of human rights. The debate sometimes became so hot that short cooling-off breaks were needed. As a whole, however, the thinkshop effectively functioned as a "platform" for revealing less visible reflections on the world social science system.

I am confident that the accomplishments published in this present book represent a small but invaluable step forward for every social scientist willing to face up to one of the most irresolvable challenges in the era of globalization; developing theories about and strategies against the hegemonic social sciences.

Professor Tomiyuki Uesugi
Director
Center for Glocal Studies (CGS)
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Preface

This book is a publication of the project "Social Sciences in the Era of Globalization," conducted by KNOWWHY GLOBAL RESEARCH in collaboration with the World SSH Net, funded by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. The aim of this project is to engage a group of international and interdisciplinary scholars about the challenges the social sciences are facing in the era of globalization.

Since the publication of the Wallerstein Report in 1996, substantial changes in world conditions have dramatically altered the social sciences and the way social scientists view their discipline. These have affected the social sciences more than any paradigmatic shift of theories within a given approach to science ever could do. To mention only a few:

First, the transformation of the only real alternative society system, the project of socialism in the Soviet Union, later followed by China, into globally acting market economies, the very society model the Soviet Union, China, and their allies around the world had opposed for almost a century.

Second, together with the dissolution of this alternative society model, the abolishment of an alternative science system and of an alternative approach to social science thinking has transformed Historical Materialism, the set of theories fundamentally opposing the science model of capitalism and their representative democracies and its scientific interpretations of the world, into a mere vari-

ation of the multiplicity of relativized theories within the Western science system.

This, the transformation of the whole world into an arena for the competition for power between nation-states and using the growth of global capital to exploit this growth for their global political power, called "globalization," has shifted the battle between antagonistic science approaches into a competition about theories within the Western model of science reflecting about a widely unified world—and into a "battle of cultures" with a newly emerging opposition. Overcoming the threat of a war between the two world society systems and the unification of the world under the regime of global capitalism has replaced the threat of a 'hot' war between the two world powers by a world of wars.

Thirdly, probably based on the same Western model of science, the emergence of new science universes, have eroded the global scientific monopoly and theories, so far mainly created in Europe and the United States. It is evident that significant and powerful science arenas are emerging in countries like China, India, Brazil, South Africa, Korea, and Mexico. Namely, both the sciences in China and India are growing rapidly and have the potential to become global scientific superpowers.

Fourthly, and less visible than the changing scientific world power architecture, but certainly more significant in effect, are changes related to scientific concepts and paradigms that guide social thoughts. While Euro-American sciences have, to a great extent, set the global scientific standards for the social and human

science knowledge productions during the last century, the era of globalization created a space for developing new approaches to social science thinking, which question the monopoly of European paradigms and concepts. Academics in the former colonies of Europe, as well as in other newly created states, have started expressing their grievances about their work as being victims of "Western" scientific colonization that still colonizes their forms of thoughts and reflections. Social scientists that have had little or no colonial experience, likewise, complain about imposed knowledge concepts and agendas, and claim a new role in the globalizing scientific practices and discourses. Some Asian scholars entirely refuse to accept the Western knowledge concepts any longer, and propose "Islamic" or "Hindu" social sciences based on their indigenous religious-cultural backgrounds, incorporating an explicit opposition to Western knowledge paradigms. Academics in Africa experience a similar shift, divided between those who defend a catching-up strategy aiming at a deeper inclusion inside the existing science world and those who reject collaborations with Western-dominated sciences and defend a refuge into indigenist and nativist alternatives. Latin American scholars, who have had a longer history of defending a genuine "Latin-American" thinking, combine local knowledge with radical rereadings of Western scholarship to challenge the Western intellectual knowledge monopoly.

Aspiring for a nonhegemonic science world, the group of scholars gathered in this project, together with other invited colleagues

who have participated in a series of three international thinkshops, reflect on the effects these changes in the world have on the world's social science system and its ways of theorizing.

The first thinkshop took place in Tokyo in May 2012 under the title "Theories about and Strategies against Hegemonic Sciences." The second thinkshop will take place in Mexico City in February 2013 and focuses on "Multiple Epistemologies: Science and Space—Science and Culture—Science and Society." The third thinkshop will take place in Zwickau, Germany, in September 2014 and will focus on "The Global social science world : Beyond the 'Western' universalism."

The outcomes of these reflections on all thinkshops will be published in a report with the working title "Social Sciences in the Era of Globalization."

This book with the title "Theories about and Strategies Against Hegemonic Social Sciences" is the first publication of the project group. It publishes the outcomes of the first thinkshop hold in Tokyo at the Seijo University, Center for Glocal Studies.

This book presents its findings in three sections. Section 1 offers thoughts about "Theories about Globalization" and "Hegemonic Sciences." With contributions from scholars from Europe, Africa, and East Asia, it discusses whether the existing theories of hegemonic sciences allow us to understand how they were and are constructed and if the strategies implied in these theories are appropriate for building a nonhegemonic science world. Section 2, "Counter Strategies," presents thoughts from colleagues from East

Asia (Korea and Japan), Europe, India, and Latin America. These deepen the debate from section 1 with alternative ideas about the challenges and ways of transforming the universalization of the Western model of science into nonhegemonic sciences. Section 3 contains two chapters, jointly written by colleagues from in East Asia (China and Korea), that invite the readers to consider alternatives ways of theorizing about the issues of human rights and individualization.

On behalf of the project group and all other thinkshop participants the editors of this book want to express their gratitude to Seijo University and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. Saying this is not just a matter of politeness. International science collaborations are, last but not least, also very costly. Without the engaged support of such innovative and creative foundations and universities, social science thinking would more and more drown in the circular reproduction of mainstream theorizing. We also want to thank Helen Jardine and Jack Rummel for editing the chapters, all written by nonnative English speakers, into proper American English.

Editors: Michael Kuhn and Shujiro Yazawa
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