

Michael Kuhn

**The Social Science of the Citizen Society**

Volume 1: Critique of the Globalization and  
Decolonization of the Social Sciences

# BEYOND THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

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# BEYOND THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

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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.

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# Preface

200 years of critical social science theories, two hundred years of poverty, two hundred years of war, 200 years of colonialism and imperialism, constantly criticized by the professional thinkers of the social sciences—how does this two-hundred-year coexistence of critique and criticized go together?

These two books on the “social science of the citizen society” accuse the latter, which social science theorists do not believe to be possible, of producing not only occasionally, presupposed, that is false theories about the world—wrong, because they criticize the world as a failure of the ideals imputed to it, thereby critically affirming them and thus pursuing the coexistence of critique and the criticized.

The first book on *the “Critique of Globalization and De-colonization of the Social Sciences”* shows that the arguments with which they justify both what globalization and the de-colonization of their sciences are supposed to be are nothing but preoccupied, false justifications legitimizing the concerns of individual nation-state views of the world. The second book on *“The Nature of the Social Science of the Citizen Society—Sketches of a Theory”* shows that in the way in which the disciplinary social sciences create their theories by looking at the practical concerns of citizen society, how it thereby produces preoccupied, i.e., false theories about the citizen society, in particular about their state—with the result of this never-ending coexistence of the critical and the criticized.

Such a project that sets out to criticize social science thinking for not only producing occasional false theories, but for being the nature of this kind of thinking about societies, for producing false theories, false theories that, thanks to their false thought, spread critically affirmative legends about the goals and purposes that govern this world, this project is doomed to failure from the outset—at least from the point of view of this social science thinking.

Thanks to its concept of knowledge, social science thinking is in fact immune to a critique that criticizes wrong thoughts. Social sciences are convinced that thinking about the social—and since the interpretation by the social sciences of T. Kuhn’s book about the natural sciences also the natural sciences’ thinking about nature—cannot produce correct knowledge, but only relative correct

knowledge, relative to the meta-theories, definitions and methods this thinking applies. Social science theories can indeed be criticized, but this criticism cannot be a criticism of a false theory, but a criticism that argues against all the ex-ante definitions, ethical, scientific-theoretical and methodological assumptions, ex-ante decisions about the object of a theory and about the way in which thinking intends to tackle it, ex-ante decisions that social science thinking must make and whose reasoning it must disclose. The critique that a theory creates wrong thoughts is not an option in social science thinking, because theories can only ever be relatively wrong or right theories measured against all their assumptions and definitions.

Nonetheless, since even all the resulting tautological cognitive operations of a critique of theories that are wrong in this relational sense, like any scientific argumentation, require a plausibility, because they are operations of scientific thinking, these tautological operations of relational critique also cannot do without reasoning. No scientific thoughts can do without their reasoning, which explain why a theory thinks what it says.

And this, the inescapability of theories from the reasoning of scientific thoughts is the weak point in the social science immune system against criticism of false theories, because not least of all, this critique immune concept of criticism, immune against the criticism of false theories, must itself also reason why there can be no right and wrong theories and why this theory about the impossibility of criticizing false thoughts, which makes social science thinking immune against criticism, is itself a right theory.

This, the inevitability of reasoning theories, of scientific thought, also of reasoning why it is right that theories can only ever be relatively right, is the reason why it is still worth trying to criticize social science theories for creating wrong theories, although wrong theories—following the social science theories about social science thinking—do not exist in social science thinking.

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# Introduction: The “Globalization” and “De-colonization” of the Social Sciences<sup>1</sup>

Around 50 years after end of World War II, the social sciences next to creating their theories began another round to reflect on themselves. The discourses that the social sciences then conducted around the end of the 20th century across all disciplines and equally worldwide under the title of a “globalization” of the social sciences, countered by a discourse on their “de-colonization” that was as worldwide as it was across disciplines, could not be more paradoxical, if one considers alone the fact that it takes 50 years after the end of the war to discover that the world had become a world of nation states after the colonized part of the world had adapted the very society model of capitalism of the old colonialists and then the alternative society model, called real socialism, had declared to be finished in a very unspectacular way and had also put their societies back to the regime of capitalism.

With these discourses about “globalization” and “de-colonization”, discourses on what their essential tasks and challenges are in a world of capitalist societies, especially when these discourses are discussed in the social sciences around the world and across all social science disciplines, these sciences, thanks to all the paradoxes of these discourses and their theories, provide insights into what makes social science thinking around the world today concerned.

## Globalization

Social sciences call this world of states and market economies “globalization” and at the latest at the beginning of the new century, this discovery of a “globalization” leads to a comprehensive self-critique and social science thinking makes, if one follows the worldwide debates of the social sciences, a discovery and accuses itself of having so far been a “zombie science” in its previous history, because it has

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1 In this book, the concept of a plurality of “social sciences” refers to the disciplinary social sciences and thus to the specific form of social science theories of citizen societies. Their nature and their current progresses in theory building is the subject of the book “The Social Science of Citizen Society 2, The Nature of the Social Sciences—Sketches of a Critique”.

closed itself to thinking about the “globalized” social and as a consequence of this self-critique propagates, as social sciences would call it, a “paradigm shift” of its thinking, so to speak a complete revolution of its theory creation. Globalization’ is the keyword that signals the overthrow also in the social science theory production and this ‘globalization’ is—according to the view of the social sciences—not only the hitherto wrongly ignored, all-shaping characteristic of the social, but also the reason for the necessity to fundamentally transform social science thinking itself and to ‘globalize’ the social sciences themselves in order to finally produce theories about the world instead of their previous “Zombi-science.”<sup>2</sup>

This self-critical judgment of the social sciences and the “paradigmatic” transformation it heralds raises a few questions about this program of transformation, even before one takes a closer look at this project of a globalized science, because it contains at least two errors of thought and a meaningful confession—bought with a discreet lie—a confession that allows a few insights into the nature of thinking in the social sciences.

To start with the latter: The fact that the social sciences are currently highly busy arguing about the necessity of a “globalization” of thinking is as strange as it is informative, because it confesses that thinking about everything social beyond state-constructed societies does not constitute for social scientific thinking an object of social scientific thinking, i.e., for social scientific thinking all state-constructed societies and the social are identical. For this self-critical confession cannot be without the mistake that today’s discovery of a “globalization” claims that the social was not globally, i.e., worldwide, constructed before the observed “globalization”. Just as if there had not been a “global” social in the period preceding “globalization”—colonialism—the discovery of a “globalized” social only makes sense from the point of view of a thinking, if this thinking equates all state-constructed societies with the nature

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2 A “zombie science” is the social science thinking according to Beck, because it practices a “methodical nationalism”. This accusation of a “methodical nationalism” does not criticize nationalist thinking, but wants to say that thinking must be “cosmopolitan”, i.e., directed at the world beyond individual national societies, and this cosmopolitanism is perfectly compatible with nationalist thinking, yes, as we will see later, it is the more clever nationalism praised by Beck. (See also chapter 5 in this book) <http://www.ulrichbeck.net-build.net/index.php?page=cosmopolitan>.

of society, a discovery because it is beyond state-constructed societies, with which the social sciences obviously deal quasi naturally, for this thinking obviously only with the de-colonization, i.e. only with the worldwide establishment of state-constituted societies, a worldwide social exists, with which to have to deal theoretically social scientific thinking as a new task of the social sciences only discovers when the world is a world of state societies.

Obviously, therefore, the model of state societies had to be implemented worldwide in order for social science thinking to discover the existence of a social world at all. A social world that is not a world of nation-state societies, one must conclude from the current discovery of societies alongside one's own national society, is not a "global" world for the social sciences. As strange as it may sound, it is only the postcolonial transformation of the world into a world of nation-states that allows social science thinking to discover that there is a world beyond its own national society, so for social science thinking, everything social begins with state societies.

And this, the abstruse insight that sociality should only exist after the world has become a world of nation states, contains on top of it a small, equally paradoxical lie of the social sciences about itself: the social sciences knew and know very well a social world beyond nation-state societies before the de-colonization, i.e., before the transformation of the colonies into the very state societies of the colonizers. Social science thinking had even created a special social science discipline, anthropology, a discipline that was responsible for thinking about the "uncivilized social", that is, for thinking about everything social that is not nation-state societies, and which, now that the world consists of state societies, has found a new disciplinary task with the establishment of cultural studies. And it is as paradoxical as it is telling that, with the exception of anthropology, which was reserved for thinking about the non-state social and which today, after the worldwide "civilization" of the world as state-constructed societies, puzzles over what its object might be, for the social science thinking of all other social science disciplines a social world was non-existent until it was transformed into a world consisting of nation-state constructed societies, only to then demand the "globalization" of their thinking.

This concept of a "globalization" characterizes this picture of a strange discovery of worldwide existing societies by the social sciences after the creation of a world of nation-state societies, just as if

there had not been a world until now, i.e. the discovery of a world consisting of state societies, just as if this, the world as a world of states, was the final completion of the social nature of the world, and offers to social scientific thinking only with this world of states its object of thinking, frees the world so to say from its untheorizable non-social spots. “Globalization”, this worldwide spatial spread of something that neither knows a subject that operates this global spread nor wants to name an object, a something that is spread globally, and a concept that does not reveal which subjects are responsible for the mysterious global spread of this subject—an objectless something, nor for what reasons and for what purposes it spreads, is therefore the appropriate synonym of social science thinking for the discovery of a world, under the condition that it is a world of nation states, because for this thinking the world has finally become, quasi by itself, for this thinking, what it has always had to be as its very nature: Everything social in the world has thus matured quasi naturally towards its nature as citizen societies, has somehow come to itself. That is why the idea of a “globalization” of the social needs neither a subject that pursues this globalization, nor an object that this subject wants to bring about. It is to be imagined with this monstrous concept of a “globalization” that the social as a state constructed social develops quasi naturally into what it has always wanted to be as its very nature.

One must therefore conclude from the fact that the social sciences today proclaim the necessity of globalization that it took 200 years of social science thinking in the imperial world before, with the decolonization and transformation of colonized societies into state-constructed societies, a social world beyond the imperial world of states was discovered.

And this discovery also reveals what social science thinking is coming to terms with the nature of the formation of state societies in the imperial world of states. As if the emergence of imperial states was not the result of their colonial oppression and exploitation of the world, an exploitation of the colonized world which created the economic foundations for the economic wealth and political power of the imperial world in the first place, as if the creation of a world of states and their imperialism subjecting the social world to their domination purposes was not the way to build and live the world of nation-states, the social sciences realize, more precisely, the social sciences in the imperial world, the existence of a social world beyond their own national societies, and this only then and because

and only after the science policies of their imperial states have discovered science as a new lever for global competition for economic growth and for global political power and therefore also drive the social sciences to extend their activities to the social world beyond their national societies. The fact that it was indeed the national science policies in the imperial states that, together with science as a whole, had to motivate the social sciences to do more international work tells all about the thinking about the social world in the social sciences of the imperial states of the world. It obviously needed and still needs such political instructions so that after 200 years of the social sciences, social science thinking can discover an era of “globalization”, almost as if the world until then had consisted of national social biotopes sealed off from one another and having nothing to do with one another.<sup>3</sup>

For the social sciences, especially in the imperial states, their discovery of the existence of a social world beyond their national societies, after their politics have pushed them there, is therefore still a trip to an in this sense categorically exotic elsewhere. Despite all the debates about the necessity of globalizing or internationalizing social science thinking, the essential part of social science theory production continues to produce knowledge that not only continues to cultivate the unworldly notion of theories about nationally isolated societies as the basis of its theorizing, but that also continues to produce social science knowledge that arises from perspectives that interpret everything social through the particular, mostly historical, forms of the construction of nationhood of the imperial world of states and, as will be shown later, bring in these nationally constructed theories from the imperial societies as their contribu-

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3 It is not by chance that the social sciences in the imperial state that supervises all imperial states, the USA, make an exception here. Long before the discussions on the necessity of a globalization of the social sciences started, the social sciences in the USA knew about the world beyond their national society with the rise of their country to the global world power and developed the idea of “area studies” that do not make a big fuss about their imperial missions. The unworldly idea of a social world established as a world of states, of wanting to imagine itself as a social world of social units untouched by each other, is the privilege of the social sciences in the imperial states, which under the global supremacy of the USA practice their imperial policy above all as global economic policy, and which must therefore receive a wake-up call from their national science policy, to “internationalize” their science, after their economic policy had noticed that science had become a new lever in the global struggle of capital for markets.

tion to their globalization. Theories which, in their search for explanations for social phenomena of national societies, encounter the necessity of having to study the world of states, or which even recognize the phenomena practically defined by state sovereignty as practices of national politics and in order to do so therefore direct their social-scientific thinking towards the world of states as a whole, elsewhere also called imperialism, remain an exception and enjoy a reputation of scientific exoticism, despite, or rather because of, all the debates about a “globalization” of the social sciences. And that this, the nationalization of social science thinking, that this is what constitutes its “globalization”, will be shown later along the products of its “globalized” theory-building.

Less inspired by their intellectual curiosity about what is happening in the world, not to mention the discovery of theoretical necessities to be able to understand social phenomena only by thinking about them as an imperially made world, social sciences that are challenged and urged by their national political elites, of course not to analyze the social world as a whole beyond the national islands, but to participate in presenting the national knowledge resources as an attractive resource for investment seeking global capital, this rather mundane task, to prepare science as a source for international business investment, to present this as a new challenge of a discrete “globalization” as a virtually purposeless, purely scientific, self-critically presented imperative of a globalization of the social sciences, cleansed of all political and economic calculations, reveals nevertheless that the theoretical preoccupation with a nation-state constructed world beyond the individual nation-state societies is obviously a hitherto unknown phenomenon and field of activity for the social sciences, especially for the social sciences in the imperial world of states beyond the USA.

Consequently, and this is the next paradox of “globalized thinking”, the internationalized or globalized social science knowledge that deals with the newly discovered world of states consists, as before, of always nationally constructed knowledge: The most common way of reflecting on the newly discovered global social, which comes to mind in social science thinking, consists of comparing nationally constructed units of knowledge about social phenomena that are always a priori strictly nationally defined. From this it must be concluded that the social sciences, confronted

with the task of dealing with the world beyond their theoretical constructs of a world of social phenomena sealed off by the state, simply cannot think of anything else to reflect on the world other than to multiply what they have always done, that is to theorize about a multiplicity of societies always presented nationally, that this thinking about the world of state societies is thus only able to imagine these comparisons as the mere parallel existence of nationally constructed theories. Just as if it were not the interrelationship of states that makes societies within states what they essentially are, when the social sciences look at the world of states comparatively, nothing else seems to come to their mind but to additively juxtapose theories about individual state phenomena, just as if these state societies of the world of states had nothing to do with each other.

## **De-colonization**

Next to the discourse on the “globalization” of social science, there is another worldwide discourse, again 50 years later than the transformation of the colonized parts of the world into nation states and market economies, the discourse on the “de-colonization” of the social sciences, which is opposed by social scientists from the so-called developing countries to the discourse on “globalization” and in which these scientists insist that social science thinking, which creates its theories about the social world from the perspective of the imperial world, is an image of the world that only social sciences can develop in the imperial world.

In fact, for social sciences in countries where there is not a single social phenomenon that does not derive its characteristics from the dependence of these countries on the imperial world, it must be a strange idea of that “zombie” science which assumes that the social in a country could be thought of as an entity untouched by the world of states and which is only able to register the social world beyond its nationally defined societies after these in turn have become state societies.

From the point of view of thinking about the societies in these countries, which are formally also nation-state societies, but which are nation-state societies in which the political as well as economic substance of their societies is under the command of imperial states and which are entirely constructed to serve the imperial states, one might think it must be, at any rate, that it is a strangely illusionary

idea to want to imagine their societies as societies exclusively shaped by an individual state and untouched by other states, just as the social science globalized thinking in the imperial world wants to make it its own in its juxtaposition of comparative theories that make no comparison.

Nevertheless, instead of causing any irritation about the explanatory power of social science theories that create such illusory images of the social world, and then instead of therefore examining their theories, the advocates of a de-colonization of social science thinking not only fail to refute the theories of the sciences from the imperial world, but they in turn claim to develop theories that, in their own way, juxtapose equally nationally inspired views of their societies with the theories about the national societies of the imperial countries.

It must be the case that social science thinking, even in these countries, simply does not seem to know how social science knowledge, which is not determined by the view of state definitions of what nation-state societies are, could otherwise be such thinking about the world of state societies. It seems that the nature of social science thinking involves equating thinking about nation-state societies with thinking through the view of the social constructs, primarily through the view of the state itself, of such nation-state societies, and that the only form of this kind of thinking about this world of state societies is thinking as imagining a world of nation-state societies no differently than the mere addition of theories about such social biotopes.

The postcolonial debates, with their contributions and concerns, make these discourses even more paradoxical. If one takes a look at the critical contributions to the debate from the “de-colonized” social sciences, which come from the former colonized countries, then one has to conclude that their word-radical objections, such as those about “scientific power”, about scientific “inequalities”, a “scientific imperialism” and similar objections, are even more paradoxical, that all these critical contributions, for their part, do not always also operate with nationally constructed scientific subjects, be it the idea of a scientific world consisting of a “North” versus a “South”, or of a “local versus global”, or of a Eurocentrism or Occidentalism, all these subjects and objects of their theory-building constructed by the post-colonial debates turn out to be constructions of the same social science-trained thinking of those globalization debates which, as in those debates, consist of an agglomeration of national societies, instead of articulating any doubts

about them, that the social science theories about the world of state societies operate with their a priori assumption that they can understand them as biotope societies separated from the world of nation states, in order to reject such theories as obvious false images of imperial world views.

Without even looking at the arguments of the debates about what the de-colonization of the social sciences should be, the categories central to the accusations against “globalized” thinking already show that the opposite is the case: Committed to opposing the newly discovered scientific challenge of that “globalization” of social science thinking with their discourse of de-colonization, these critical objections with their de-colonization debate interpret their objections as a plea for more “local” theories, for a more nationally contoured thinking as congenial contributions from the former colonized countries, and with this strange criticism they claim to be able to participate in the creation and debates about a new global thinking with contributions that are recognized as equal to their own nationally constructed theories about their always nationally constituted societies.

The alternative debate on the “globalization” of the social sciences, which contrasts this with its “de-colonization debate”, does not know how to present this demarcation of the social sciences in the formerly colonized world with its accusation of “Eurocentrism” against the theories from the imperial world in any other way than to liberate its thinking from theories that are first explicitly attributed the explanatory power for European societies, and which then, however, for the explanation of the national societies of the former colonial world demands theories tailored to their national societies, i.e. the principle of viewing the world as individual national societies, which in “globalized” thinking are viewed through nation-state perspectives, does not reject them as a pipe dream or even as errors of the social sciences of the imperial world, but explicitly develops them further, thus confirming this nation-specific view with its critique, which does not want to criticize any of these nationally inspired theories.

But that’s not all: In order to produce their post-colonial social science theories, they themselves, like “globalized” social science thinking, hypostasize not only nationally contoured questions of inquiry in thinking about their societies, decolonized social science thinking, thinking in the former colonized world that would have

every reason to do so after its transformation into states, to look at the world of states and their imperialism, because their societies are all too obviously only what they are through the imperial states, the advocates of a de-colonization of social science thinking go one step further towards a nationally predetermined thinking by propagating this thinking as a thinking about nationally contoured objects and research questions, which is supposed to be able to construct its theories only through theoretically exclusive “local” perspectives, “local” views that are only accessible to those who share this exclusive, national view, thanks to their affiliation with these national societies—with the result that this kind of locally exclusive theory production, called indigenous sciences by post-colonial thinking, on nationally preconfigured social phenomena interpreted by nationally biased thinking, with such explicitly nationally inspired theories makes its contribution to that globalized scientific world as a post-colonialized theoretical contribution to theory formation—and thus finally turns this post-colonial thinking into a questionable theoretical matter.

When even renowned masterminds of this de-colonization project from the former colonial states, such as Aimé Césaire in his “Discourse on Colonialism,”<sup>4</sup> morally scourge the imperial states for their misdeeds, in order to work their way through this moral condemnation to the most stubborn advocates of the humanistic ideals of the state idea, as if the moral self-portraits of states, which social science thinkers and poets like Césaire like to attach to them, were ever the yardstick for any state policies, then these products of post-colonial thought are certainly among the bleak highlights in the history of social science thought and raise the question of what this decolonized thinking is all about, which is dedicated to the state ideas of those states which, under the title of these state ideals, with their old colonialism and their new imperialism, are responsible for the misery in these states and which, with their wars, ensure the maintenance of their sovereignty over this decolonized part of the world of states.

All these peculiarities of “globalized” and “postcolonial” theorizing in the social sciences are reason enough not only to take a closer look at these debates and to ask what characterizes the theories produced under the maxims of these two postwar debates, but

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4 Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, Monthly Review Press, New York 1972.

also to raise the question of what is actually the nature of social science thinking, which not only produces such debates, but also discovers the necessity of directing its thinking towards the world only when the world has become a world of states; and that is a thinking that then obviously seems unable to think about the world of state societies in any other way than that in which the world of these state societies, contrary to all everyday experience, is conceived as national biotopes untouched by each other, in order to reflect on these societies thus preconstructed in this “globalized” as well as in “post-colonial” thinking with nationalist perspectives.

The results of these reflections are presented in two volumes under the title “The Social Science of the Citizen Society”.

In the first book on “Critique of the Globalization and De-colonization of the social sciences”, these central post-war discourses of social science thinking and their legacies for science are discussed in the following five chapters:

1. The “globalization” of the social sciences—the introduction of nationalist thinking into social science thinking
2. The worldwide implementation of the social science of the citizen society through its “de-colonization”
3. Comments on life in a world of citizen societies and its social science idealizations
4. Knowledge that endows national identity—contributions to the ideological armament of states
5. The final highlights of the masterminds of the globalized post-colonial thinking
6. Old and new errors and their sources: Theoretical legacies of the globalization and de-colonization debates under the preparatory work of Historical Materialism

Book 2, entitled “The Nature of the Social Science of Citizen Society—Sketches for a Theory” analyzes the characteristics of the nature of social science thinking in four chapters:

1. Architecture and conceptual foundations of disciplinary thinking
2. Forms of teleological thinking—progress of social scientific theorizing about itself
3. The discourse on and progress of social science knowledge
4. Beyond social science thinking