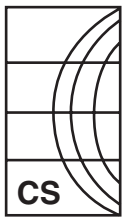

Rejoinder: For a Subaltern Global Sociology?

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abstract: The nine articles in the dialogue divide into two groups: an abstract universalism constituted from above (Burawoy, Martinelli, Wievorka, Smith) vs concrete practices knitted together from below (Shen Yuan, Zdravomyslova, Habib, Baviskar and Braga et al.). In fact, a global sociology has to be constructed from below and the question is whether this is possible. This raises three questions. First, is there a common project that might broadly unite sociologists? Second, is there a community of discourse that would allow us to communicate our different practices? Third, if we do have a common language how can we handle the inequalities within and across nations, regions and the globe? In fact, there is a convergence on the challenges posed by third-wave marketization, otherwise known as neoliberalism. Furthermore, sociologists all recognize different types of engagement: professional, critical, policy and public. We must forge a subaltern universality from the connections among particular sociologies.

keywords: global sociology ✦ marketization ✦ public sociology ✦ subaltern universality

Pierre Bourdieu, the leading public sociologist of the late 20th century, promoted the idea of an 'international of intellectuals', renowned international figures fighting for social justice against the tyrannies of neoliberalism. Aware that such a 'collective intellectual' could be bound by its own corporate interests, Bourdieu nevertheless insisted that certain intellectuals can and must rise above their confining determinations to manufacture a 'corporatism of the universal'. Is this the only way to forge a global sociology – led by celebrated sociologists of conscience? My thesis here is that there is an alternative approach to global sociology that springs not from heaven but from earth, connecting the day-to-day practices of real sociologists responding to the issues they face in their societies. Although not the focus of the preceding articles, nonetheless

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they do form an embryonic discursive community that points to the possibility and even the necessity of forging such a global sociology from below.

While I expect the contributors would all repudiate Bourdieu's college of anointed as a model for global sociology, nonetheless the nine articles do divide into two groups: an abstract universalism constituted from above vs concrete practices knitted together from below. The articles by Burawoy, Martinelli, Wieviorka and Smith make universalistic claims about what sociology should be, whereas those by Shen Yuan, Zdravomyslova, Habib, Baviskar and Braga et al. are skeptical of such universalism, make more particularistic claims and insist on the importance of context. It is no accident that the first set were written, respectively, from the US, Italy, France and England, broadly the global North, whereas the second set were written from China, Russia, South Africa, India and Brazil, broadly speaking, the global South, or in this case the 'semi-periphery'. Is this yet another case of the South contesting Northern domination masquerading as neutrality? Can we make use of the Northern perspectives in Southern contexts?

Contextualizing Sociology and Society

The South is throwing down the gauntlet to the North, challenging us to recognize the particular interests that lie behind our claims to universalism. So let me begin by contextualizing my own vision of public sociology. It sprung from several sources: on the one side, a critique of US sociology as hyper-professional and provincial and, on the other side, an attachment to South African sociology as I found it in the early 1990s, a public sociology critically engaged with the struggle against Apartheid. To professional and public sociology, I added a policy sociology of experts, consultants who develop a sociology oriented to clients. I watched Russian sociologists ply their trade for corporations and politicians after a promising effervescence of public sociology in the twilight of *perestroika*. Policy sociology is found increasingly, in many other countries – the demand for policy relevance, as Amita Baviskar notes. Finally, there is a critical sociology, the conscience of our discipline, the source of values and standpoints. As I shall argue, the eight articles do suggest that the practice of sociology in different places at different times fits into some configuration of these four types of knowledge, configurations that congeal into what I call the division of sociological labor.

This is the first face of contextualization – how knowledge is produced. The second face concerns the object of knowledge. When I reflect back on the countries I have studied over the last 40 years – Zambia, the US, Hungary and Russia – I am struck by the way hopes for a better world have

been dashed by market fundamentalism. Rather than greater freedom and equality, decolonization, deindustrialization and destatization have led to social disintegration, marked by inequality and oppression. The Southern essays point to social catastrophe in China, South Africa, India, Brazil and Russia, while in the hands of Dennis Smith disintegration turns into generalized rage and terror.

A global sociology from below involves a dialogue between a *sociology of globalization* with its context specific effects and a *globalization of sociology*, rooted in context-specific practices. A global sociology involves a double contextualization: on the one hand, the concrete, disparate and connected configurations of the division of sociological labor and on the other hand, the analysis of the social processes that are devastating our planet. The articles contribute to this project in different ways.

Global Sociology as Universalism from Above

Alberto Martinelli's response to my original article warns public sociologists against the putative mistakes of Antonio Gramsci – identification with subaltern groups, dogmatism, elitism and vanguardism as well as romanticizing civil society and demonizing market and state. These warnings – what I have called the pathological forms of public sociology – cannot be repeated too often. Against Gramsci's organic intellectual Martinelli sets up Weber's separation of science and politics, the defense of professional sociology against encroachments of public sociology. With science and politics confined to their rightful places, he envisions a world in which markets, states and society all balance one another in an integrated whole. Instead of a double contextualization (of sociology and society), he offers a double decontextualization – a normative vision that mystifies the real dilemmas of being a sociologist in a world of market fundamentalism. This leads him to an abstract universalism that retreats from the historically specific problems of sociology and society.

Michel Wieviorka takes the opposite view, valorizing public sociology by repudiating the hypercritical intellectual (from Marxism to Bourdieu) and the expert. For Wieviorka, public sociology involves not only the professional sociologist engaging in deliberation with publics but specifically a sociological intervention wherein science is co-produced with actors. Far from retreating into the protected arena of the academy, the sociologist enters into an unmediated relation with actors. The danger, as Bourdieu and Martinelli might say, is that without the perspective of the critical sociologist and the rigor of the professional sociologist, the public sociologist becomes a propagandist beholden to the social actor. Sociological intervention, an exemplary form of public sociology, makes sense, in my view, only in dialogue with the other sociologies – professional, critical and policy. It cannot stand alone.

Sociological intervention actually reflects the conditions and possibilities presented by the porous academic field in France where such public engagement is not frowned upon. It has, of course, been used in other parts of the world where similar conditions pertain, especially in Latin America. Wieviorka's decontextualization of the sociological field follows a decontextualization of society. While sociological intervention has had much to say about social movements of diverse types – from terrorism to race, from student to anti-nuclear movements – Wieviorka gives us little sense of the specificity of French or global society. We discuss later how Shen Yuan recontextualizes his sociological intervention for China.

Dennis Smith adopts a very different approach. Far from being mired in the division of sociological labor, he leaves behind the conditions of production to focus on the nature of global society. Decolonization and weak political authority combine with globalization to produce a deep sense of humiliation leading to cycles of victimization, fear and revenge. The diagnosis of our times is clear and powerful, examples abound, but what does this mean for sociological practice, the division of sociological labor? Smith does say that his sociology of humiliation must be brought to various groups, yet how to convince people of its validity? How to convince the enraged that they are victims of deeper historical social forces rather than of US occupation, or of a local dictator or of immigrants threatening their jobs? How to convince people that the source of their rage is decolonization when all around they experience recolonization? How to convince suicide bombers that weak political authority is to blame for their oppression rather than terrorist states? What sort of intervention is called for here? As with Wieviorka, are the unattached militants in social movements the ultimate court of appeal? Or should we become policy experts, advisors to the prince, but then which prince? Answers to these questions can be found in the articles that follow, but they are carefully contextualized answers.

One-Sided Contextualization: Approaches to China and Russia

Shen Yuan starts from China after 30 years of state-regulated economy, followed by 30 years of market reform, he now calls for 30 years of producing society. Third-wave marketization, however, makes the production of society difficult. Sociologists, therefore, have a role to play as midwife of society, requiring a deepening of Touraine's (and Wieviorka's) notion of sociological intervention. Where there are already movements, especially around urban land expropriation, often led by emergent middle classes, a weak intervention by a multidisciplinary team of interlocutors may be adequate. But migrant workers require stiffer medicine. Isolated in household factories

under atrocious working conditions, subjugated to constant supervision, long hours and poor pay demand a much stronger intervention – the organization of medical services, a night school and embryonic labor centers. In other words, a strong society calls for weak intervention whereas a weak society calls for strong intervention.

We have here a radical contextualization of sociological intervention to reflect the specificity of Chinese conditions, but what can we say about the possibilities of generalizing such a sociology among the rapidly expanding cohorts of Chinese sociologists? Here Shen Yuan is silent. With his team of young and brilliant sociologists at Tsinghua University – the MIT of China – he sets a remarkable example. But how propitious is the overall academic context with its division between the Academy of Sciences and the universities, with its proclivity to import mainstream US sociology, and with sociology's continuing ideological role on behalf of the party state?

Shen Yuan's extroverted public sociology, focused on China's market catastrophe and building civil society, is the opposite of Elena Zdravomyslova's introverted analysis of the state of Russian sociology. She too insists on the importance of contextualization, but this time from the side of the history of sociology. Soviet sociology had always been in the service of the state, what I would call a policy sociology. Only in the late *perestroika* did sociology spring into the public sphere, galvanizing and galvanized by an incipient civil society. With a weak legacy of professional sociology, post-Soviet sociology, based on research, quickly retreated from the disappearing civil society to serve markets and politics. Today, it is a deeply fractured discipline with four weak national associations. The titans of Soviet sociology are still vying for influence, divided between the statists and the reformists. There are new divisions between cosmopolitans looking outwards to the West and locals looking inwards for nationalist inspiration. In this context, public sociology itself becomes a terrain of struggle among nationalists, reformers and cosmopolitans. Ironically enough, Zdravomyslova sees public sociology as a movement for the defense of an autonomous professional sociology, typified by the struggle of students at Moscow State University against their dictatorial administration.

The legacy of the Soviet era is a linguistic deficiency, a missing vocabulary to analyze sociology's own accelerated entry into a capitalist world. The literal translation of 'public sociology' has a negative connotation, stemming from the denigration of the very meaning of public. There is not even a word for 'policy sociology' that separates it from 'political sociology' – a branch of professional sociology – let alone from public sociology. As part of Soviet ideology, public, policy and professional sociologies were all the same, leaving only critical sociology as a possible, separate, dissident alternative. This is an extreme case, but it underlines the importance of context, and the difficulties of translation.

Russia's unregulated transition to the market created the involutionary disintegration of society, peeling away the very foundation of sociology. Given its rampant but still regulated market expansion, China's sociology is more extroverted. We might say that in Russia sociology and society are in mutual retreat, whereas in China they are advancing toward mutual confrontation. We need such two-way contextualizations: understanding the possibilities of national sociologies and their distinctive division of labor requires an understanding of the world that shapes them, just as the understanding of society depends on an analysis of positionings within the academic field. The articles on South Africa and India move toward such a double contextualization.

Two-Sided Contextualization: Perspectives from South Africa, India and Brazil

Like Michel Wieviorka, Adam Habib takes policy experts and romantic critics to task, positioning himself as a critically engaged public sociologist – 'subvert[ing] power in favor of the agenda of subaltern groups'. But he does so with a very context-specific analysis. In the struggle against Apartheid, sociology easily took as its critical target the state, but it was closely allied to the subaltern power brokers such as leaders of trade unions, civic associations and the ANC (African National Congress). In the post-Apartheid era, prominent sociologists continued to service those same power brokers, who are now part of the ruling alliance. According to Habib, many sociologists could not break away from the policy role they inherited from the anti-Apartheid struggles. Other sociologists reacted against such a policy orientation with what Habib considers romantic critique, denouncing the new national bourgeoisie in the name of oppressed classes.

What alternative does Habib propose? Neither romantic critic nor policy advocate, he calls for 'a human-oriented strategy of development' that would involve electoral reform, breaking with the alliance, forging a new left party, abandoning corporatist policies, developing a plural civil society and a foreign policy built on a multiple alliances and curbing US power. But where is the strategy rooted, who would advance it? For it to be a public sociology, it needs to have a public. There is a real dilemma in South Africa and in many other countries – the cultivation of publics is a luxury that few can quite literally afford. University salaries require supplements from consulting – projects funded by corporations, NGOs, trade unions and the like. The question then becomes whether one can rescue a space of independent critique and public accountability *within* the framework of policy sociology. Public sociology is not only a luxury but becomes less feasible as post-Apartheid civil society is in retreat – its leaders absorbed, its activities subject to surveillance, its resources depleted, its energy dissipated. Where

public sociology is hard to sustain, the temptation of policy sociology is more difficult to resist. The conclusion is that critical, public and policy sociologies must sustain a dialogue with one another in a tense but nonetheless collaborative project for which the university and its professional sociology is still the best possible terrain.

This is also the conclusion of Amita Baviskar. She sets out from the devastation wrought by third-wave marketization in India – land expropriations, enclosure movements to create Special Economic Zones. Multinational capital colludes with a profiteering state, no longer even aspiring to social justice but instead promoting, violently if necessary, economic liberalization. And yet India is also the scene of powerful social movements, resisting the commodification of land, water and air. But the strength of those movements may also result in despair – strong though they are, they still cannot reverse the tsunami of third-wave marketization that washes over protestors, burying them in the quicksand of their human rights. Not only Indian democracy but also its civil society has its dark side, specifically in the reactionary religious movements of violence – the uncontrollable rage that Dennis Smith writes about.

Many Indian sociologists are on the barricades, but an organic public sociology is difficult to sustain. Movements want their spokespeople, they want 'their' sociologists to trumpet their righteous cause. They are less interested in dialogue than policy. Within the university, the same is true: administrators reward policy-relevant research, while colleagues frown upon involvement, whether policy or public. Baviskar, therefore, ends up calling for the transformation of the academy, but not, as in Russia, to make way for professional sociology, but to make way for more critical perspectives. Baviskar and Zdravomyslova are right, we have battles to fight on our own terrain as well as in the public sphere beyond. And, as they both say in their different ways, the task is to enjoin those twin battles.

However despondent and against whatever odds, sociologists – and that includes Amita Baviskar as well as all the other contributors – do manage to sustain a public as well as a professional presence. Despite and sometimes because of political and academic obstacles, many sociologists develop a deeply public habitus that leads to all manner of sacrifices for a public sociology. Often these sorties are invisible, or dissociated from academic life, *pace* Martinelli, but naming them as 'public sociologies' legitimates them, brings them to light, allows the exchange and accumulation of experiences, and thereby contributes to a movement within and across national boundaries.

In this connection, the biographies of two of Brazil's most distinguished sociologists, Florestan Fernandes and Francisco de Oliveira, is both inspiring and illuminating. Ruy Braga, Sylvia Gemignani Garcia and Leonardo Mello e Silva trace the succession of orientations as different combinations of policy,

public, professional and critical sociology. Florestan Fernandes sets out with a belief in sociology's public mission to bring about a rational order that eliminates discrimination, exploitation and all the other woes of contemporary society. Theory, research and social transformation are inextricably interwoven. He goes on a public campaign for the defense of free and universal public schooling. Fernandes turns in a more critical direction as he realizes the limits of Brazil's structural dependence on the North, and when, in 1969, the military dictatorship expels him from the university. Adopting a Marxist lens, he sees how capitalism, and the technical rationality it promotes, block the radical potential of sociology.

Francisco de Oliveira follows a similar trajectory, only he begins his career in the Planning Ministry under the military dictatorship, before developing a fusion of his professional-critical perspective with support for the opposition party at the time (the Brazilian Democratic Movement – MDB). With the end of the dictatorship, Oliveira collaborates with the workers' movement and the Workers' Party (PT), but when Lula assumes power, he moves further left to become an assertive public but independent Marxist. As in South Africa so in Brazil, the waning of dictatorship unleashed a wealth of civic organizations, trade unions and parties that were then absorbed by the new democratic state and dissipated by market pressures. In the resulting growth of policy research, however, the voices of public and critical sociology never disappeared.

Three Challenges to a Global Sociology from Below

So what are the possibilities of a global sociology? As I have argued, a global sociology constructed from above as a universal sociology, paying no attention to the specific context of different countries, will be ignored or it will justify particularistic reactions and isolationist projects. A global sociology has to be constructed from below, but it has to be asked whether this is possible. This, in turn, raises three questions. First, is there a common project that might broadly unite sociologists? Second, is there a community of discourse that would allow us to communicate our different practices? Third, if we do have a common language, how can we handle the inequalities within and across nations, regions and the globe? Let me end by addressing these three questions.

Rereading the foregoing articles, I think there is a convergence on the challenges posed by third-wave marketization, otherwise known as neoliberalism. I agree with Baviskar that my formulation is quite inadequate and her attempt to demonstrate the interweaving of struggles around land, labor and money, as well as the intermingling of local, national and global scales of protest underlines the importance of context. Still, it is the case that the environment,

whether land, water or air, at the heart of a new form of primitive accumulation, plays an ever more central role in struggles. The forces are global, but the struggles are local and the question is whether the latter can be connected. Nor should we think that the new round of primitive accumulation is confined to the 'South' – to China, Brazil, India, South Africa. The same processes can be found in the US, as we saw so vividly in the abandonment of African Americans in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. The effects of market tyranny and state despotism have local manifestations everywhere, presenting sociology with specific but connected challenges.

To turn to the second question: do we have a common language with which to talk about our different ways of practicing sociology? Notwithstanding translation problems, as we saw in Russia, these articles do suggest that sociologists recognize different types of engagement: professional, critical, policy and public. The purpose, however, is not to label in order to denounce, but to label in order to validate and legitimate these different ways of doing sociology. In recognizing the different configurations of the four types of sociology, we will see how much we have to learn from one another: where the US has experience in professional sociology, the Scandinavian countries illuminate the challenges of policy sociology, the semi-periphery (especially India, South Africa and Brazil) instruct us in public sociology and the French, if we believe Michel Wieviorka, are well endowed with critique. We will need all these knowledges, bound together in (di)visions of sociological labor, to meet the challenges of third-wave marketization.

Finally, how can we cope with the massive global inequalities among national sociologies? We should not forget that China, Russia, India, Brazil and South Africa stand like colossuses over their regions, and that many countries barely have a sociology. Their existence would depend upon being linked into regional associations. Here the Association of Latin American Sociologists (ALAS) and its various offshoots stand as a remarkable example of cooperation and collaboration. Then there is the broader domination of the North with its material and symbolic resources and superior working conditions that attract sociologists from all over the world. Northern 'standards' become the benchmark for evaluating Southern sociologists, drawing them away from local issues. Corporatization and privatization afflict the university everywhere. Through these means, Northern sociology exercises hegemony. Contesting domination at all levels depends on the valorization of local, national and regional sociologies, allowing voices from the periphery to enter into debates with the center. A common endeavor requires forging a subaltern universality from the connections among particular sociologies, a universality held together, despite division and inequality, by the common challenges we face in defending society, the very grounds of sociology but also of humanity.

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