

Volkswagen Stiftung Symposium
Schloss Herrenhausen | Hannover, Germany
June 29 – July 1, 2020



Call for Papers – Young Researchers

North and South

Forms of Inequality within International Politics of Scientific Production

International Symposium

The debate around the North-South divide, as an expression of a global structure of durable inequalities, accumulates a significant amount of literature since the late 1960s. In the West, the discussion originally referred to spatial representations of wealth and progress, therefore addressing *Geographies of Economic Inequality*. In recent years, the North-South gap has led to a continuum of intellectual dependencies affecting the international political economy of knowledge production and circulation. In this context, most contributions concentrate on the weight of North-Atlantic hegemonic agendas for Humanities at large (theories, vocabulary of analytical categories, methodologies and, fundamentally, epistemologies). For those, the North-South division represents *Geographies of Epistemic Inequality*.

As a concept addressing spatial representations of inequality, the *South* is assumedly relevant for analyzing issues affecting peripheral societies (taken as a derivative effect of the expansion of colonialism and capitalism), but not having much to say about issues considered relevant in societies labeled as 'Northern'. Can the concept of the *South* speak to other aspects of social life outside the framework of development disparities - as those concerning the constitution of the self, for instance? As for knowledge production, the *South* has been suitable to stress the importance of diversity in Humanities, but with presumably less resonance in Natural/Pure Sciences. Can the term help challenge the basic Natural Sciences versus Humanities slit, referring to science and societies at large?

The symposium focuses on the heuristic potential of the *South* to critically observe how hegemonic agendas in science and funding priorities (state or private) impact the lack of diversity in knowledge as a whole - taken from the importance of theoretical diversity, intellectual creativity, gender balance, the role of language, the variety of ontological beings and forms of conviviality, and others, impacting the present world. It is organized by Barbara Potthast (Cologne), Claudio Pinheiro (Rio de Janeiro) and Sinah Kloß (Cologne) and funded by the Volkswagen Stiftung. It takes place from **June 29 to July 1, 2020**, at Schloss Herrenhausen, Hannover, Germany.

Each of the described panels (see below) consists of presentations by established researchers from various disciplines, as well as a young researcher. We currently look for young researchers (PhD candidates and postdoctoral researchers), who would like to contribute with thought-provoking presentations and have the opportunity to enhance their exchange and develop new contacts with peers from various disciplines and multiple backgrounds at an international level. Travel bursaries and accommodation will be provided for the selected participants.

We anticipate your abstracts of max. **350 words, 5 keywords**, and a **short bio-note** in a single pdf file by **July 15, 2019** at north-and-south@uni-koeln.de – Please indicate the panel number for which you apply.

PANEL 1 | North-South Divide and the Dilemmas of Knowledge Production

The current model for global sciences reiterates a *North-South* unequal divide, where the "universal" is constructed through translation and adaptation of *Northern*/hegemonic agendas to *Southern*/peripheral scientific environments. This movement produces and reproduces academic dependency in close association with the consolidation of durable inequalities, hindering horizons of scientific imagination and affecting intellectual creativity, consolidating a regime of inequalities (Costa, 2011) in the production and circulation of scientific knowledge. This panel plans to debate key aspects that influence international knowledge production sustaining durable global inequalities, with implications ultimately affecting science production at large.

PANEL 2 | Language, Translation and Circulation of Science

The dominance of English and Anglophone cultural and literary products reproduces inequalities and asymmetries in global networks of power and knowledge production. Anglophone academic discourses are often regarded as 'the latest' and most 'up-to-date', hence 'leading' in global knowledge production, with other scholars supposedly 'following behind'. Language plays a significant role in the maintenance of this epistemological inequality, with Standard English currently claiming the dominant position. This panel engages with aspects of language and writing such as multilingualism, translation strategies, and inclusive scholarship. Participants analyze them in context to academic dependency and imperialism, gate-keeping practices, and discuss means to create more balanced structures of academic knowledge production.

PANEL 3 | Religion Studies and the De-secularization of Social Sciences

Societies assumedly secularized (i.e. wealthy societies) and the theories generated there, understood religion as an autonomous sphere or personal dimension. Conversely, in the *Global South*, religion is either mistakenly understood as being everywhere ("everything is religion", as David Martin stated) and/or is considered as a symptom of pre-modernity, a failure of modern institutions (the church included) or, at best, as a feature of "different/alternative" modernity. This session aims to connect and compare empirical and theoretical discussions focused on the epistemological constraints of debating religion and secularization as a resource to reinforce the North-South divide. This panel may highlight the advantages of comparative research between contexts that present similarity bringing researches from *Global South* experiences; simultaneously the connection and confrontation of their

idiosyncratic experiences may offer interesting pathways to rethinking mainstream theories of religion and the scientific assumptions of Humanities.

PANEL 4 | Ontological Diversity and Politics of Conviviality

South, as used in the West from 1970s on, reflects this longstanding tradition of imagining and making geographies of prosperity and lack thereof, operative in the developmental debate from the end of World War II onwards - addressed through approaches like *area studies* (van Schendel, 2002; Thomas & Slocum, 2003; Miyoshi & Harootunian, 2002), “culture-areas” (Wissler, 1927; Newman, 1971) or “socio-cultural area” (Mintz, 1971). Different from area of studies, the geography of *South* includes moral qualities. This understanding helps addressing another aspect, equally understood as heirs of colonialism in the postcolonial condition: the *ontological dimension*. It referred to the association of backwardness to an ontological condition of “primitive societies” - by then helping not only to justify colonialism as a way to promote social development through *trusteeship* (tutelage) of native groups - but also the organizing asymmetries of societies and beings. The idea of ontological geographies, can also be revealed by revisiting intellectuals of decolonization, like Frantz Fanon, who emphasized that the experience of colonialism helped to subsume other forms of self and, at the same time, forge other ontological conditions, through violence and mimesis to the metropolis and to the conqueror. Under these circumstances, *South* relates to moral geographies and to ontological conditions. This panel discusses if *South* can be a useful tool for reviewing comprehensions of ontological geographies, both affected or not by colonialism and capitalism, but disassociated to inequality as a moral value.

PANEL 5 | Gender, Politics of Ethnicity and Intersectionality

Since the 1990s, postcolonial theory has stressed the importance of gender relations in colonial power structures. Conquests and warfare, especially in culturally and ethnically diverse settings, always carry with them an important gender dimension. In colonial settings, norms of gender and family are important markers of “civilization” and “barbarism” or “backwardness” and “modernity”. Gender relations in the *Global South* were and are generally considered traditional and unequal, and, hence, must be changed in order to modernize societies and economies (Dhawan, 2009). Within the societies of the *Global South*, nationalist projects and anti-western politics heavily draw on gender relations (Chatterjee, 1999). Methodologically, the critique of Western dominance in knowledge production and the concept of intersectionality of several categories, mainly ethnicity, religion, class and gender, are one of the main contributions of *Southern* feminist theory to social sciences, although asymmetries persist. Main questions in this panel will be the relevance of gender relations in the formation of the concept of *South* (and *North*), but also in the processes of overcoming the dichotomies and inequalities inherent to the concept (Lachenmann, 2001; Marchand und Runyan, 2000).

PANEL 6 | Politics of Geographical Imagination and Research Funding

The definition of areas of studies, consolidated after WW II, led to the study of purportedly homogeneous, self-contained units. This process of developing new forms of compartmentalizing knowledge about societies other than North-Atlantic ones had consequences not only for how this pigeonholed world was approached but also for who studied and who financed the research on this new map of global subdivisions (Parmar 2012). Area studies helped consolidate specialized and spatialized academic communities that existed as self-contained dominions (van Schendel 2002). In the case of U.S.

academia, area studies brought competition for renown and research funding, and raised intellectual borders based on a geographical regionalization of the world. This process contributed to a lack of communication between different specialists in area studies and to the creation of borders, rituals and native categories used to define these subdivisions, which came to form academic fiefdoms. This panel seeks to examine the consequences of place-imagining to science funding and to discuss the relevance of the *South* to produce linkages of intelligibility between (peripheral) areas of study - i.e. Asia, Africa and Latin America - normally affected by structural lack of dialogue, what redeems their impact to Social Theory at large.