

Handbook of Post-Western Sociology: From East Asia to Europe

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Toward Post-Western Sociology

Laurence Roulleau-Berger

The social sciences and particularly sociology have long been almost entirely monopolized by Western cultures. Western hegemonies received criticism from non-Western and Westernized intellectuals living and working in the heart of the West. The “Westernization” and “de-Westernization” of knowledge have often gone hand in hand in showing that weapons against Western domination were manufactured in the Western empire (Brisson 2018). The political decline of colonial empires failed to recognize knowledge developed outside the “imperial” borders. In East Asia, Korea and Japan were undergoing partial and gradual Westernization processes for several decades. We offer a glimpse beyond the “East” and the “West” by opening the horizons to a wealth of self-directed narratives by societies worldwide, thus laying the foundations for a post-Western space. From the production of an epistemology shared with European and Chinese sociologists for 15 years, more recently with Japanese and Korean sociologists, a *post-Western sociology* enables a dialogue—held on an equal footing—on European and Asian theories, to consider the continuities and discontinuities, the conjunctions and disjunctions between knowledge spaces situated in different social contexts. From this ecology of knowledge we can observe, on the one hand, the multiplication of epistemic autonomies vis-à-vis Western hegemonies, and, on another hand, epistemic assemblages between European and Asian sociologies. This groundbreaking contribution is to coproduce a post-Western space in a cross-pollination process where “Western” and “non-Western” knowledges do interact, articulated through cosmovisions, as well as to coproduce transnational fieldwork practices.

1 Where Are the *Wests*?

While scientific thought has been constructed as an element of Western societies, this phase in global sociological reasoning has challenged the conditions for creating universalizing and tautological accounts in Western social sciences. There is also a plurality of Easternisms and semi-Easternisms situated in different epistemic spaces and ordered into hierarchies according to differentiated political, historical, and civilizational contexts. Westernisms

form graduated, plastic, and moving hierarchies that rapidly become elusive. According to Raewyn Connell (2019), the academic canon was essentially formulated in the United States, where social science was viewed through an imperialist lens in the second half of the 20th century. The institutional and academic dependency of certain researchers in the global South on Western social sciences encouraged the replication of theories conceived in the United States, Great Britain, France, and Germany. These mimetic processes have stymied reinterpretations, reformulations, and the production of knowledge in other societies, most notably in Asia.

The debate of post-colonial, decolonized, or non-hegemonic sociology has been very active for the last decade in the “West” (Go 2013; Reuter and Villa 2015) and in the East for 30 years (Kim, Li and Yasawa 2014). According to Raewyn Connell (2019) we are invited to think sociologically on a world scale and to be inscribed in a global economy of knowledge, formed in the context of empire and the global Metropole. If the theory of the coloniality of power and knowledge from Quijano (2000) is fundamental to make visible a diversity of local spaces of knowledge outside the Metropole, a multiplicity and a hierarchy of peripheries and semi-peripheries still do exist and the conditions to access them, in each place, must be renegotiated. In 2014, Kim Seung Kuk wrote, “the decline of the West is becoming a reality in which the rise of East Asia becomes a new reality”. For 30 years Chinese, Korean, and Japanese sociologists have established epistemic networks in order to produce sociological theories emancipated from hegemonic Western paradigms.

Hegemonies are produced by complex processes, never static and constantly reconfigured; today, *reimagined Westernisms* are produced by integrating fragments of non-hegemonic thinking while retaining epistemic frameworks derived from hegemonic frameworks. In this global turn some scholars are reimagining a new West. A new Eurocentric standpoint appears with new bifurcations. For example, Jobin, Ho and Hsin-Huang (2021) are advocating for an understanding of the Anthropocene theory beyond its current Western focus; for them, in other words, the theory of the Anthropocene discourse is another version of the capitalist white male who finds in this narrative a renewed way to impose his neo-colonial domination (Simangan 2020; Simpson 2020), and so he advocates for a post-Western repolitization of the Anthropocene. We have noticed in China, for example, the theory of Anthropocene is not used by sociologists. We can consider new Eurocentric standpoints and new bifurcations that involve epistemic lines between the Wests and the rest of the world have emerged (Alatas 2003) and refer to a relational position with global hierarchies forged from imperial relations (Go 2016).

The question is why and how are *reimagined Wests* reforming? Does the COVID-19 context influence this process? As a result of the circulation and globalization of knowledge, new hierarchies have emerged, giving rise in turn to new competitive environments in which innovative knowledge is being produced. Anyway, we can consider what Connell (2007) called a “mosaic” theory of multiple knowledge, then remember all social knowledge is situated and that there is no truly “universal” sociology (Go 2016) in order to reveal transnational spaces that bring into the light of day a tissue of knowledge that is still partially concealed, and even in some cases invisible.

2 Towards a Non-Western Centric Sociology

After the theory of the provincialization of Europe by Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000), various theories have been advanced: Arif Dirlik (2007) proposed the theory of global modernity, Ulrich Beck (2006) introduced the theory of cosmopolitanism, and Shmuel N. Eisenstadt (2000) produced the theory of multiple modernities using a comparative civilizational perspective to describe the plural forms of modernities in diverse historical and structural contexts. Also, Göran Therborn (2003) has demonstrated how such contexts are *entangled* with each other in various ways. However, following in the footsteps of Shmuel N. Eisenstadt and Göran Therborn (2003), Ulrich Beck and Edgar Grande (2010) have studied the varieties of modernity and non-modernity and considered not only how they coexist and challenge each other but also how they are embedded.

More recently, we must consider the construction of *non-Western Wests* by certain Western scholars in the social sciences (Bhambra 2014; Brandel, Das and Randeria 2018; Dufoix 2013; Koleva 2018; Roulleau-Berger 2011, 2016; Santos 2014). Epistemologies of the South have been produced by social scientists based in the global South and the global North to recognize an epistemic, cultural diversity. Epistemic injustice also invites us to consider an epistemology of non-visible knowledge. This requires “a decolonial break” from Eurocentric epistemologies to include a plurality of knowledge spaces (Savransky 2017). Boaventura De Sousa Santos (2014) proposed the development of an *Epistemology of the South* that concerns the production of ecologies of knowledge anchored in the experiences of resistance in the anti-imperial South. He invites us to move from an *epistemology of blindness* to an *epistemology of seeing* based on the creation of solidarity as a form of knowledge and the mutual recognition of the Other as equal. Thus, a definition is required

of an anti-imperial South space that embodies a plurality of epistemological Souths structured around counterknowledge born out of struggle (Bhambra and Santos 2017). Bhambra (2014) proposed *connected sociologies* in arguing for recognizing historical connections generated by scientific hegemonies, colonialism, dispossession, and appropriation; so, she purposed that we perform a double displacement—empires of domination or conquest and colonialism—to “decolonise” the concepts they have bequeathed to us (Bhambra and Holmwood 2021). At the University of Cambridge Ali Mehghi (2021) considers sociology did not “become” colonized, it was always colonial to begin with.

In 2011, I published in French the book *Dewesternization of Sociology: Europe in the Mirror of China*; the first title was “Decolonizing the Sociology”, but the publisher preferred “Dewesternization of Sociology”. In this book I showed that there has been a kind of ethical and political epistemic indecency in the Western worlds to ignore non-hegemonic social sciences. I proposed to think less about the plurality of the “provinces of knowledge” than about the continuities and discontinuities, the arrangements and disjunctions between places of knowledge located in different parts of the world that are likely to allow transnational spaces to form. As global entanglement and interconnectedness are the conditions required to understand the assemblages and dis-assemblages between Western and non-Western societies (Hanafi and Yi 2020; Roulleau-Berger and Li 2012), we can take into account new forms of methodological cosmopolitanisms. We have introduced post-Western sociology in a context of a variety of *compressed modernities* (Chang 2010, 2017). The question is to understand how the conjunctions and disjunctions between different regimes of compressed modernities are creating new conditions to produce sociological knowledge.

Sari Hanafi (2021) and Chin-Chun Yi very recently also focused on how different national and regional sociologies can circulate, exchange, co-construct, and enter into dialogue and controversy to stress global recognition beyond the dominant West; if they are discussing the power structure in knowledge production, they do introduce the concept of domination, not through the former problematic on the relation between the centers and the peripheries but around concepts such as multicultural sociology, postcolonial global sociology, cosmopolitanism, and multiple modernities. Sari Hanafi also argued that the postcolonial approach is not sufficient to create new conditions for sociologies to be in dialogue; he considers that it should be supplemented a “post-authoritarian approach”, which means the impact of local authoritarianism in the Arab world. In Latin America Anibal Quijano (a Peruvian

sociologist), Walter Mignolo (an Argentinian sociologist), and Enrique Dussel (an Argentinian philosopher) are the first to theorize the concept of coloniality; Walter Mignolo introduced the concept of coloniality of knowledge. In the sociology of BRICS with the process of the internationalization of Brazilian sociology a new dialogue was opened with China that started in 2004 with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) and the University of Peking. Then, sociologists from Brazil, Russia, India and China (BRICS) produced the *Handbook on Social Stratification in the BRIC Countries*, including changes of social stratification, the working class, peasants, the middle class, and income inequality. Then, in 2018 *The Handbook of the Sociology of Youth in BRICS Countries* included the history of concepts into research on youth; identity and generation; family, marriage, and sexuality; and education and employment. And Brazilian, Chinese, Indian, and Russian sociologists have defined sociology in the BRICS to produce an understanding of similar and dissimilar social and economic processes in each context through a comparative approach. BRICS sociology should contribute to making sociology a much more international discipline (Dwyer and Martins 2020). In the sociology of BRICS new East–South assemblages have been established outside the North–East connections.

Some scholars open their theoretical spaces in Western countries, separate from Western hegemonic knowledge and breaking the dichotomy between the North and the South, between the West and the non-West, and between modernity and tradition. Thus, in the sense of Lisa Tilley (2017), any decolonial knowledge production must involve consideration of a political economy of knowledge based on a plurality of societal narratives and epistemologies. If there is a diversity of Westernisms and semi-Westernisms, social scientists in Central Europe (Blagojevic 2010) do reject being classified as proponents of exotic Eastern theories and believe that theories should be evaluated on the basis of their heuristic value and not the location of their emergence (Wessely 2020). In Eastern and Central Europe, Svetla Koleva (2018, 2021) has developed non-hegemonic sociology in reestablishing continuities with the past of the discipline, and she argues the view of existing unity in the totalitarian experiences of Eastern European sociologies.

In Latin America Roberto Briceno-Leon (2020) is speaking about a Mestizo (metis) sociology as a result of four traditions: (1) the philosophical sociology of lawyers; (2) the scientific sociology and modernization; (3) the mestizo sociology of dependency (cf. theory dependency); (4) the rejection of miscegenation via Marxist theory. The diversity of contemporary sociology is structured around four tendencies: the miscegenation between sociology and politics, the adoption of multiple influences in a pluri-paradigmatic perspective,

inductive sociology by combining qualitative and quantitative methods (survey and life stories), and finally contributing to a “public sociology”—in the sense of Michael Burawoy—in giving political meaning to sociology. But for Roberto Briceño-León there is a risk, such as falling into the temptation of global centrism.

So, we are invited to think sociologically on a world scale and to be inscribed in a global economy of knowledge; it means sharing our diverse theoretical and empirical perspectives among sociologists with publics across the world, elaborate assemblages and connections between different local knowledges in a decolonized world's perspective. A non-Western sociology is quite different from global sociology in the sense of Dennis S. Erasga (2020) being emancipated from the issue of “modernocentrism which denies non-Western practices and experience of their inherent value as cultural facticity or ushers a form of palliative indigenization where unbidden respect for local realities is afforded”.

Together with Chinese sociologists we have proposed the development of cross-cultural perspectives on sociological knowledge and theoretical methodology in Europe and Asia and the production of a common conceptual and methodological space within which dialogue and intellectual innovation can take place (Roulleau-Berger and Li 2012, 2018; Xie and Roulleau-Berger 2017) in a new dialogue and mutual learning.

3 From the “Re-Easternization of the Westernized East”

In East Asia, the creation of the East Asian Sociologists Network (EASN) in 1992 by Chinese, Japanese, and Korean sociologists to produce connected sociologies represented a major challenge (Kim, Li and Yazawa 2014). Then the East Asian Sociological Association in 2002 started to promote academic exchanges in East Asia and held international conferences several times in Japan and Korea. The 2nd Congress of the East Asian Sociological Association at Pukyong National University, Busan, South Korea, was held on October 29–30, 2021, on *Social Transformation in Asia: Before and After Covid 19*.

Since 1979, diverse Chinese sociology theories have been developed from different perspectives, attesting to a real internationalization of the discipline and the solidification of new boundaries. Chinese sociology gained epistemic autonomy before 1949 and since 1979 outside the dichotomy between the “West” and the “non-West”, the colonist and the colonized, outside post-colonial sociology (He Yijin 2018a, 2018b). Sociology in China has been reconstructed since the end of the 1970s around the increasing importance attached to the

effects of Chinese civilization, both past and present, and the idea of producing paradigms free of any form of cultural hegemony (Li, Li and Ma 2008; Roulleau-Berger et al. 2008). Therefore, contemporary Chinese sociologies appear to stand within a mosaic of constructivisms against backgrounds of historical or civilizational contexts (Li and Qu 2011; Xie 2012a, 2012b). Chinese sociologists agree with the idea that Western sociologies should not be considered antagonistic to Chinese sociology. Western and Chinese sociologies are not analyzed in a mutually exclusionary relationship. Li Peilin and Wei Jianwen (2018) considered “post-Western sociology” as neither a weapon to deconstruct the hegemony of Western discourse in the post-colonialist discourse nor the further “ideologicalization” in the concept of “East”. Instead, they attempt to construct a sociological knowledge system beyond the binary opposition of the West and the non-West.

Then, starting in 2000, the major wave of the sinicization of sociology defined itself in contrast with hegemonic Western thought and indigenization in the international academic environment. In Chinese sociology, we can consider a historic epistemic autonomy refers to the re-establishment of continuities with epistemic frameworks constructed before 1949 and then forgotten. In Europe, most intellectuals ignore renowned pre-1949 Chinese sociology. In *A History of Sociology in China in the First Half of the Twentieth Century*, Li Peilin and Qu Jingdong (2011, 2016) demonstrated how Chinese sociology flourished in a context of intellectual blossoming comparable to that of the spring and autumn periods and to that of the warring states (Qu 2017a).

From a perspective of an alternative epistemic autonomy, He Yijin (2018a, 2018b) considered whether the tense relationship between the West and post-colonial sociology could be found in the Chinese context and whether Chinese sociology has produced historical materialism as its own counterpart. He Yijin analyzed how the sinicization of sociology has been proposed by native scholars to indigenize Western sociology and how Chinese interpretations of Western sociology have been changed.

The issue of epistemic autonomy vis-à-vis Western sociology was first raised in the 1930s by Sun Benwen (Wen and Wang 2012). In 2019, the publication of two articles, written by Xie Yu (2018) and Zhou Xiaohong (2020), sparked controversy and stirred a passionate debate in Chinese sociology. Indeed, this allowed for the questioning of American hegemony, which imposes standards of international scientific legitimacy, such as the necessity to publish in the *American Journal of Sociology* as a supra-norm of scientific recognition. According to Xie Yu, who considers the indigenization of sociology a non-issue, Zhou Xiaohong (2020) defines the indigenization of sociology as the involving issue of a Western hegemonic power in the output of the discipline and as

taking differentiated shapes in different historical periods. Chinese sociologists agree with the idea that Western sociologies should not be considered antagonistic to Chinese sociology. Unlike postcolonial studies, which invite a de-Westernization of colonial knowledge, Western sociologies and Chinese sociology are not analyzed in a mutually exclusionary relationship. Then, starting from the year 2000, the main wave of the sinicization of sociology defined itself in contrast with hegemonic Western thought and excessive indigenization to find a strong place in the international academic environment. For instance, Liu Neng and Wu Su (2019) argue that social and cultural practices in China are in part universal, and they refuse the idea of an exaggeration of the Chinese exception. Xie Lizhong (2021) presents a similar perspective by classifying the indigenous sociologies developed in a non-Western country like China into four possible types: “object-transformed indigenization”, “supplemented-modified-renewed indigenization”, “theoretical substitution indigenization”, and “theoretical-methodical substitution indigenization”.

In South Korea, Shin Kwang-Yeong (2013) identified three modes of hegemonic social sciences constructed in a double indigenization of social sciences: the development of paradigms in the West; the dominance of located concepts and theories associated with institutional power; and the contested hegemony that refers to unavailable alternative theories. Kim Seung Kuk (2014) spoke of an “East Asian Community (EAC)” and introduced the idea of the invention of an “East Asianism” to propose the orientalization of an East Asia Westernized from hybridizations of “Western” and “non-Western” knowledge, and to move towards a cosmopolitan society by constructing transnational regional identities. For him we were rapidly entering into the world of hybridization which has proliferated over time and space. Kim Seung-Kuk, to break the continuing myth of Orientalism in the name of liberating Easternization or East Asianism, considered, on the one hand, one round of hybridization through the Easternization of a Westernized East Asia, and, on another hand, a second round of hybridization between an emerging non-Western West and an Easternizing East Asia. In opening a dialogue with Bhabha about cultural hybridization, with Antonio Negri about politico-economic hybridization, with Jan Nederveen Pieterse about social hybridization, and with Hwa Yol Jung about transversality and hybridization, he defined East Asian hybrid cultural forms in a cosmopolitan way. Han Sang-Jin (2019) introduced the notion of paradoxical modernity in linking Confucianism as an Asian tradition and reflexive modernity, which came from Europe, particularly from Beck’s theory; he demonstrated that reflexive modernity and reflexivity in East Asia differ from the paradigm focused on the global South and a de-colonial or postcolonial way out of their colonial experiences. In a perspective of a theory for reflexive

modernity in a cosmopolitan way Han Sang-Jin opened a dialogue with Ulrich Beck on “how to live in a global risk society”, with Scott Lash on “reflexive sociology to aesthetic reflexivity”, and with Anthony Giddens on “from tradition to reflexive modernization”.

For Yazawa Shujiro (2014), Western sociology was diffused in Japan in the context of a process of cultural translation adapted to the Japanese academic field. Until the 1960s, in the context of the development of capitalism, Japanese sociologists were subjected to the influence of American positivism, then to the thinking of Parsons and Marx. This author then explained that after 1980, a postmodern Japanese sociology was developed, with the reappearance of forgotten prewar authors, such as Takada Yasuma and Suzuki Kensuke, and an indigenous sociological theory began to form. For Nomiya Daishiro (2019), if Japanese sociology started from the importation of Western sociology, the incorporation of varied sociological tradition has laid the foundation for the development of Japanese sociology; now, she is providing from sociological imaginations and empirical knowledge multiple perspectives on a global scale.

From a perspective of hybridization Yama Yoshiyuki combines the Western sociological theory of ritual by Durkheim, the Japanese Confucianist theory of ritual by Ogyu Sorai (1666–1728), and the narrative theory of Motoori Norinaga “knowing an empathy toward things” to produce a non-Western hybrid or sociology of narration and narrative. Japanese sociologists, such as Keiichi Sakuta, Akira Kurihara, and Kenji Munesuke Mita, also have developed their own concepts to elucidate the structural and cultural features of Japanese society that cannot be explained by Western traditional sociological theory.

After the Fukushima disaster, Saburo Horikawa (2012) proposed theoretical answers by re-interrogating the notion of “damage” by dealing with its subjective dimension and by inviting the development of a theory of the commons; Torigoe Hiroyuki (2014) developed the theory of life environmentalism by focusing on the existence, the experience, and the ways of life of individuals in communities and common spaces. We can see how the Fukushima disaster has produced new areas of situated knowledge and forms of epistemic autonomy.

The global economy of knowledge is structured around epistemic inequalities, hegemonies, and dominations. A clear division of scientific practices has developed within academic “peripheries”, “semi-peripheries”, and “cores”. Based on the production of an epistemology shared with European, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean sociologists, I am proposing a post-Western sociology to describe an ecology of knowledge and enable a dialogue between *the Western-West*, *the non-Western-West*, *the semi-Western West*, *the Western East*, *the Eastern East*, and *the re-Easternized East* situated on an epistemological continuum. For 20 years Chinese, Korean, and Japanese sociologists have

already established epistemic networks in order to produce sociological theories that are far from hegemonic Western paradigms. We have proposed the development of cross-cultural perspectives on sociological knowledge and theoretical methodology in Europe and Asia, and the production of a common conceptual and methodological space within which dialogue and intellectual innovation can take place.

4 The Fabric of Post-Western Sociology

From the epistemology of the Souths and the “re-easternisation of the westernised East” (Kim 2014), we have already introduced the idea of the multiplication, complexification, and hierarchization of new epistemic autonomies vis-à-vis Western hegemonies in sociology, and new epistemic assemblages between European and Asian sociologies (Roulleau-Berger 2016, 2021; Roulleau-Berger and Li 2018). So, on an epistemological continuum, located knowledges coexist in *the Western-Wests*, *non Western-Wests*, *semi Western-Wests*, *Eastern-Easts*, and *non Eastern-Easts*; and the challenge for post-Western sociology is to establish a real dialogue between them through discursive pluralism (2020). However, to progress toward global critical sociology, we have opened trans-epistemic spaces for active dialogue between Western and non-Western sociologies (Roulleau-Berger and Li 2012).

Post-Western sociology refuses term-for-term structural comparisons and favors intersecting viewpoints concerning registers of understanding, agreement, and disagreement as well as the scientific practices. Post-Western sociology can also be defined as global critical sociology. In post-Western sociology, we are producing an ecology of knowledge in which diverse forms of knowledge may interact, articulated through cosmovisions of the world and civilizations, as well as emancipatory and creative practices (Pleyers 2011). This paradigm is developing in a continuum of assemblages, tensions, and the cross-pollination of different segments from this ecology of knowledge. Sociological practices are viewed as relationships of equivalence in the post-Western space. While the processes of cross-pollination and hybridization are particularly manifest in non-Western sociologies, Western sociologies are only slowly integrating situated knowledge produced by other intellectual, scientific, and cultural traditions.

Post-Western sociology does not use the differences but the gaps/intervals between the perspectives, practices, and concepts of Chinese/Asian and European sociologies to coproduce new knowledge, which is the starting point of the construction process of post-Western sociology. Thus, it precedes

the conception of theoretical and methodological combinations and assemblages. International sociology and global sociology do not imply this erasing of epistemological boundaries: this is precisely where the distinctions among post-Western sociology, international sociology, and global sociology lie (Li and Roulleau-Berger 2018).

Drawing on European and Asian experiences, we analyzed how a post-Western space has come into being in which sociological knowledge is produced that is both specific and shared and in which theoretical methodologies are gathered based on very different histories and traditions. We have reconstructed the trajectories of given sociological knowledge in Asia and Europe, identify some loci of controversy in the production of knowledge linked to methodological theory, and used controversy as an instrument to analyze the boundaries between conceptual spaces and methods deployed. It means examining those forms of knowledge that appear to be specific; those that seem to be the product of reappropriation, reinterpretation, borrowing, and creolization; and those that seem to be produced in areas of non-translatability, that is, in spaces in which research practices and sociological knowledge in Europe and Asia do not correspond with each other.

In order to understand the evolution of sociology towards Post-Western Sociology, I propose proceeding with four stages.

First, we discussed the some heritages of Western sociology and their forms of appropriation, transformation, and reconfiguration in Asia, for example, the theories of Durkheim, Weber and Bourdieu.

Second, we investigated and defined what makes epistemic autonomy in niches of knowledge—where located knowledge is produced—in different sociologies, and we analyzed how they multiply, diversify, and hierarchize.

Third, we analyzed the circulations and assemblages in transnational spaces of knowledge between Europe and Asia; this will make it possible to show the junctions, the tensions, the (in)compatibilities between acquired knowledge, knowledge produced locally, and knowledge implemented in different contexts. The reconfiguration of global scientific fields produces accelerated transformations. The need to grasp them quickly makes this project so timely and urgent.

Finally, we carried out a multisituated sociology of the fieldwork practices adopted by Asian and European sociologists in order to understand where sociologists' practices might intersect with, shun, or enrich each other in their particular research settings (Roulleau-Berger and Liu 2021). In post-Western sociology undertaking fieldwork together still appears to be central in the fabrication of sociological knowledge by taking into account alternative political economies of knowledge in an *anti-piratic way* (Tilley 2017). In accordance with

Vincenzo Cicchelli (2018), *cosmopolitan imagination* is necessary to develop sociological studies of cosmopolitanism in different fields. Post-Western methodology leads to a multisituated sociology, co-undertaking fieldwork in a plurality of spaces, situations, contexts, and temporalities. This signifies the implementation of contextualized tools to account for assemblies and disjunctions between the narratives of societies. In this instance, here, a post-Western methodology is federated around dynamic and non-hierarchical combinations of societal contexts, structural processes, individual and collective actions, and situational orders. The post-Western conceptual space is relayed by a methodological space in which sociologists access the plurality of the narratives of society and the multivocality or polyphony. In the fabric of post-Western sociology I am calling attention to the simultaneity of different forms of spaces of epistemic autonomy and theoretical pollination in the copresence of differently situated sociologies. Although the processes of cross-pollination and hybridization are particularly manifest in non-Western sociologies, Western sociologies are only slowly integrating situated knowledge produced by other intellectual, scientific, and cultural traditions.

In the post-Western sociology Xie Lizhong (2020) integrated his theory of discursive pluralism, distinct from geographic pluralism, to describe Western and non-Western societies beyond epistemic borders linked to indigenous sociological theories. He considers geographic pluralism to favor the indigenization of sociological thought by producing a discourse in a specific time and space.

5 Western Heritages from Yesterday and Today

Post-Western sociology contains different modes of appropriation and reading the classical authors like Durkheim, Weber, Marx, Foucault, but also the contemporary and major figures like Bourdieu. The idea of confronting our way in understanding these Western heritages in China is a key to entering into the post-Western space.

5.1 *Durkheim's Theory in China*

Durkheim's theory was introduced very early in China (Rouleau-Berger and Liu 2012). Today, intellectual legacies and specific theoretical approaches are still intertwined in Chinese sociology. Durkheim's theories were developed for the first time in 1949. They were taken up twice after 1979, and they have since been revised, for example, by Wu Chun, Li Fangying, Wang Hejian, Chen Tao,

Qu Jingdong, and Zhao Liwei. Durkheim's religion plays a central role in the construction of the social bond in modern Western societies, which makes it possible to understand how individuals share a collective consciousness that creates the feeling of belonging to a moral community. Li Fangying (2006) considered Durkheim to force too much the relation between socialization and religion, between social solidarity and religion, and not think enough about the relationship between religion and social conflict. Wang Hejian (2005) proposed revisiting Durkheim by taking an interest in producing moral goods in the modern Chinese economy. From the perspective of economic sociology, this involves linking economic morality and the social structure, based on an analysis of professional relationships. Chen Tao (2013) was also interested in the contractual society described by Durkheim where morality is generated by communal life and where the autonomy and freedom of individuals, constrained to social facts, are based on the respect of social rules to produce a "normal" society. For Qu Jingdong (2017b), in Durkheim's perspective, collective life transcends individual existence. If studying the moral and social order requires starting from the production of norms in everyday life, the relationship between society and state cannot be thought of as antagonistic but rather as a continuum in which the ethics of professional groups and civic morality link individuals to the state. Last, for Zhao Liwei (2014), Durkheim's theory of suicide appears to be a major contribution that remains very important to understanding modern societies. In this sense, one could say that Durkheim's study of suicide as a general social fact explains the modern human condition.

5.2 *Weber's Theory in China*

Weber's theory also had a very strong influence in China. His books on China, *Confucianism and Taoism* and *The Religion of China*, occupied a prominent position in Weber's research system. First, Weber's China studies were regarded as Eurocentric and hegemonic studies. According to He Rong (2020), Weber's theoretical ambition was to understand the various types of rationalism in the world's civilization systems, indicating that the world's civilization systems are a rational regulatory system of equality, juxtaposition, and coexistence. She asserted that Max Weber overcame the cleavages between Western and non-Western civilizations. His research on China is part of the grand system of the economic ethics of the world's religions. It is by no means a single process with the West as the only model and teleological orientation; however, it should follow the inherent logic of each civilization system and have its own characteristics. It can be said that this research strategy of his method avoids Eurocentrism. For He Rong, *Confucianism and Taoism* is not only a study of

the spiritual temperament of Confucian rationalism, that is, in a dialogue with Protestant ethics, but more than half of the work is devoted to the topic of sociology.

5.3 *Bourdieu's Theory in China*

Bourdieu's work only began to be known in China in the 1990s; *la Distinction* and *la Noblesse d'Etat* would be translated; in 1996, *Libre-Echange* would be published; then in 1997 the interviews with Loïc Wacquant, *Invitation to reflexive sociology*; in 2000, *Sur la télévision*; in 2011, *Les règles de l'art*; in 2006 *Homo Academicus* was translated (Sapiro 2020). The field theory would be widely mobilized in China, the theory of social reproduction was widely cited in sociological works for about 15 years. Li Lulu (2008) described the double social reproduction process arising out of power instituted by the State and institutions on the one hand, and the imposition of a social and symbolic domination by dominant groups that produce the interiorization of social relationships of domination on the other. This theory echoes Pierre Bourdieu's theory of genetic structuralism; however, the forms of reproduction and social domination are still situated in a socialist context in which instituted power and symbolic domination are constructed from cultural, social, institutional, and political orders linked to the history of Chinese society. Li Lulu explicitly refers to Pierre Bourdieu and poses the hypothesis of the universality of social reproduction processes in which the form varies according to societal contexts.

In a very closed perspective, Li Chunling (2012) shows how social mobility pathways were to diversify from 1979 and the structural barriers to mobility were redefined. She also showed how economic capital played a crucial role in social mobility prior to 1949 but became a negative factor between 1949 and 1980. She explained the paradox of the reforms after 1979, which have increased the opportunities for mobility and at the same time made the boundaries between social groups clearer, for example, elites maintained their position. This approach to social mobility in China also demonstrated how volumes of economic, social, and cultural capital, their structure, and the evolution over time of these properties define what Pierre Bourdieu called "a three-dimensional space" (1979), except that one must also take into consideration the global volume of political capital that combines with resources and powers linked to the very decisive political position in China.

If Western heritages are still quite influential in sociologies from Asia, we cannot consider Eastern heritages to have been mobilized in European sociologies. In China, Korea, and Japan, Confucianism is a common heritage and is revisited in different ways. In Korean sociology, Confucian heritage and

Western sociology are combined; however, in Chinese and Japanese sociology, Confucian heritage is embedded in the Chinese or Japanese traditions. But in Western sociologies Confucian heritage has not been imported.

6 Epistemic Autonomy and Located Knowledge

In post-Western sociology we have identified spaces of epistemic autonomy in European and Asian sociologies in order to circumscribe the located knowledge in each context and open new dialogues between them. In Chinese sociology, we can select the concepts of *guanxi* and “mosaic familialism”, and in French sociology we will introduce the concept of public space.

The term *guanxi circle* is really important in Chinese culture and in social sciences. Yang Yiyin (2008, 2012) considers *guanxi* not to be the relationship between two individuals, two groups, or an individual and a group; rather, it indicates a sort of coloration and penetration of social relationship by a Chinese cultural hue. So, she distinguished three levels to define what makes *guanxi*: interpersonal relations, intergroup relations, and group-individual relations. Interdependent self-construal and interdependent self-construal are two typical self-construals. Yang Yiyin introduces *guanxi* as the prescriptivity of interpersonal rules in interpersonal connection and defines it as a subcultural genre of interdependent self but not an exclusive product of Chinese society; it originates from the Chinese traditional mourning dressing system of the Nine Clan and Five Clothing system. The “We” is produced on the one hand by the *guanxi* that draw the particular boundaries of “I”; or, more precisely, what Fei Xiaotong (1992) called the *chaxu geju*, and on the other hand through categories, identifications, and social memberships. “Guanxinization” is the establishment process of the typical “self” and the “we” in Chinese traditional society. “Ziji ren” serves one form of interpersonal relationship among Chinese people. Yang Yiyin has considered

in the Western culture, the construction of group-individual *guanxi* by the self-construal of independent self tends to be realized through categorization. While in Chinese traditional culture, it is easier to be realized by guanxinization in terms of group-individual *guanxi* by the self-construal of interdependent self.

The We is the result of the relations between guanxinization, categorization, and embedding; *guanxi* today are evaluating in “mixed self” or “polyself”. Whereas in Western theories, the *me*, the *I*, and the *Others* are seen as quite

distinct moments in a quite discontinuous process of the *self*, in Chinese thinking, these separate steps are not so clearly delineated, as the process itself is much more continuous.

According to Zhang Jingting and Jia Chao (2021) Chinese culture has always attached great importance to emotion; traditional Chinese rule was highly dependent on notions of human kindness and compassion. These authors have distinguished emotional patterns in Chinese history into the traditional structure of feeling, the revolutionary structure of feeling, and the consumerist structure of feeling. Cheng Boqing (2012, 2013) first produced a theory focused on social interaction and *guanxi*s, then promoted the sociology of emotions in China. He considered that we have to come back to the *self* and especially to the *Confucian self* and to take account in the transformation of the *modern self*. For Cheng Boqing the way of thinking of the Subject was inscribed in a new Confucianism and Foucault's theory—it means to articulate the *ethical self*: it means the requirements, emotions, and limits in our relationship to Others, the *aesthetical self*; it means affections and feelings, and the *transcendental self*.

In a closed perspective the Confucian patriarchal tradition and the socialist heritage have played a fundamental role in the production of the Chinese experience. During the Mao era, Chinese families sought economic stability, security, and social protection above all. The 1978 reforms deeply revolutionized family structures in Chinese society. The changes brought about by a growing GDP, mass education, and the decline of patriarchy destabilized traditional societal structures in China, particularly in rural areas. During the socialist period, individuals who were excluded from the patriarchal family were more or less forgotten in a dominant collectivism, instead of being integrated in a strong welfare state (Ji Yingchun 2017). With the reinstitutionalization of gender inequalities and of family as an institution, in a context of commodification and privatization in the labor markets, Ji Yingchun (2020) conceptualized the very located concept of *mosaic familialism*, which contains elements of Confucian patriarchal tradition, of socialist heritage and of a compressed modernity, and which is characterized by situations of great social and economic uncertainty for individuals and by new dynamics in family relations.

In French sociology, the issue of democracy and forms of collective action in the public space appears to be highly situated. The question of the voiceless, of the “sans”; is recurrent in public debate; it is central with the urban riots (Kokoreff and Lapeyronnie 2014) that mobilize some of the children of post-colonial immigration and it has been further amplified with the mobilizations of asylum seekers and refugees, and the construction of new situated citizenships (Neveu 2014) from below. In a context of the overexposure of weakened, discriminated, and fragile individuals, the voices of weak actors are raised in the public space. In European democracies, the public space also becomes a

place of struggle against social fears and of conquest through mobilizations, demonstrations, rallies, and the staging of collectives of the voiceless. Urban revolts remind us that subaltern minorities can become active, can express a capacity of mobilization, revealing forgotten places of speech. They reveal processes of invisibility of the “forgotten of the democracy” in the modes of social, economic, moral, and political organization.

The definition of what makes located knowledge is really complex because of a plastic and dynamic process, so we have to redefine located knowledge at each new step in the fabric of the post-Western sociology. Moreover, it is impossible to produce a creolized knowledge without knowing how, where, and when located knowledge is produced.

7 Sociologies in Dialogue and Post-Western Assemblages

Based on various research programs in France and China, we have shown in a constructed dialogue how “Western” and “non-Western” theories meet, how shared sociological knowledge and situated knowledge cohabit and become embedded. From the intersecting perspectives of European and Chinese researchers, we have constructed theoretical assemblages between Chinese and European sociology which open up a transnational space for the production of a process of the pollination of knowledge.

7.1 *Inequalities and Social Mobility*

Over the past decade, China’s economic and social development has entered a new phase, with a series of historical transitions and new characteristics of the stages, including the continuous and profound changes in the structure of social classes, which have a wide impact on the economy and society (Li and Cui 2020). Instead, as Li Chunling (2019) aptly demonstrated, it accentuated the phenomenon in which intragenerational social inequalities are reproduced between young skilled people and the new generation of young low-skilled migrants. In China, the last 10 years have been marked by increased competition, the devaluation of academic achievement, and a simultaneous and continuous rise in youth’s social aspirations. This phenomenon of *structural disqualification* (Bourdieu 1978) impacts low-skilled migrants in China above all. The *widespread and systemic downward social mobility* (Chauvel 2016; Li 2019) has affected the young graduates.

The most profound change has occurred within the workforce, namely the rapid increase in the proportion of “white collars” while the proportion of “blue collars” (industrial workers) has declined. Second, the two main groups of the middle class, the “new middle class” and the “old middle class” are both

growing rapidly, with the proportion of the “new middle class” growing which is primarily made up of professionals and technicians. A new urban *underclass* has been formed with the second generation of young, less-qualified migrants. A new process of marginalization and social segregation is produced within Chinese cities linked to forms of unemployment, emerging precariat, and systems of structural disqualification which target young people, especially young migrants.

In France, in Western Europe, the increase in inequalities between the “working rich” (Godechot 2007) and the “working poor” has worsened in a context of *middle-class squeeze*, where the disappearance of intermediate jobs largely affects the working classes and the lower fraction of the middle classes (Duvoux 2017). As in China, the development of self-employed status, for example with auto-entrepreneurs, particularly in digital work, is contributing to an increase in inequalities “from below” linked to the institutionalization of precariat and the development of unemployment. A new European urban underclass is living in segregated working-class suburbs. New migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees are joining them and forming a *global underclass*.

Approaches in terms of social polarization and social reproduction are widely mobilized in the French and Chinese sociologies of social classes. This reflects the *continuous continuities* between the French and Chinese sociological approaches.

7.2 *Ethnicity, Space, and Religion*

In Chinese sociology, just as in European sociology, the deconstruction of the ethnic entity should take societal and historical contexts into account, such as colonialism and nationalism, which produce classifications and fixed moral and social borders. This signifies the deconstruction of ethnic categorizations and classifications in a constructivist approach, interethnic relationships according to Fredrik Barth, as well as ethnic boundaries, globalized religions, and transnational spaces. In China, the term “ethnic group” is a foreign concept. Before the 1960s, studies of ethnic groups were rare in the Chinese social sciences. Since the 1970s, the theory of ethnic boundaries conceived by Fredrik Barth has had broad repercussions in Chinese academic circles and has been widely cited. Thus, *continuous continuities* have been produced around the theory of ethnic boundaries between Western European and Chinese sociologies.

In France, according to Jean-Louis Amselle (1990), ethnicity was a fiction or an illusion produced under the influence of imposed identities in a colonial situation. The public affirmation of ethnicity and tensions between history and memory was also founded by the struggles of postcolonial migrants (Boubeker 2003); the children of postcolonial immigration cling to their cultural and religious traditions, especially Islamic ones.

In Chinese sociology and anthropology, for Fan Ke (2017) the notions of ethnic group and ethnic boundary have brought an entirely new paradigm, and many things people used to take for granted have now begun to receive serious scrutiny. As a result of Barth's work, many scholars have had second thoughts on how people were categorized in the ethnic identification campaign and how this categorization has changed ethnic configurations in China; more importantly, many scholars are questioning how national, ethnic, or any other kind of collective identities has been constructed and reconstructed. In this constructivist approach, for example, Fan Ke (2017) conducted an in-depth field study of the two main Hui groups in the Quanzhou region: the Ding clan and the Guo clan; he described the process of localizing Islam through the activities of the Hui clan and the reappearance of Islamic culture. Mi Shoujiang (2010) also developed the concept of "urban Islamic cultural ecology".

Following in the footsteps of French scholars, Chinese scholars have come to adhere to a constructivist approach to ethnicity (Fan 2017). They conceptualize the dynamic relationships between ethnicity and cultural identity to study ethnic interactions, the relationships between ethnic groups, and the state and the moral boundaries of ethnic groups (He 2017). Nevertheless, the question of ethnicity and religion could be formulated differently in French and Chinese sociologies. For example, situated concepts can be found in Chinese studies, such as the process of "localizing" Islam or even "urban Islamic cultural ecology" (Mi 2010), showing the broad difference between the weakening of urban traditional Muslim communities and rural Muslim communities. So, we also can identify *continuous discontinuities* between Western European and Chinese sociologies

7.3 *Compressed Individual and Global Condition*

In creating theoretical conjunctions between European, American, Chinese, and located knowledge in a post-Western and cross-pollination perspective I have combined different concepts: the concept of *compressed modernity* from Chang Kyung-Sup, and that of *compressibility* from Shi Yunqing (2018); the concept of emotional capitalism from Eva Illouz and Arlie Hochschild; the concepts of individuation in the sense of Yan Yunxiang (2010) and subjectivation in the sense of Paul Ricoeur (2004); and the concept of globalization (Sassen 2007). In China the effects of collisions between temporalities, spaces, and situations specific to *multi-compressed modernity* (Chang 2010, 2017) produce bifurcations, unpredictability, and reversibility in individual and collective biographies. Constant clashes occur between spaces, temporalities, and situations, simultaneously giving rise to a growing number of zones of uncertainty. Each time Chinese youth migrate, a new biographical crossroads appears with a vast number of possible choices, fuelling further uncertainty.

The individual must undergo a series of identity changes due to spatial and professional mobility and changes in *floating work*, thus becoming increasingly multi-compressed. The Chinese migrant reveals the effects of collisions intrinsic to compressed modernity which manufacture what I have called a *compressed individual* who features as “a hero” (Rouleau-Berger 2021b) equipped with strong emotional capacities and forced into a cycle of self-improvement. If emotional capitalism is a culture where emotional and economic practices and discourses influence each other and where feelings and emotions become commodities (Illouz and Hochschild 2006), we can say that an “emotional socialism” exists in China. The *compressed individual* has internalized the injunction to invent a narrative of self-performance, giving rise to young Chinese entrepreneurs and executives in both China and abroad.

8 Conclusion

If the pandemic has favored a process of closing certain social, moral, physical, and political boundaries, it also produces new boundaries of knowledge and new spaces for dialogue. To create dialogues between European, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean sociologies in different fields is a way to open spaces for multiple knowledges to flourish toward a post-COVID “democratic sociology” (Connell 2019) by producing a polyphonic economy of knowledge. *Post-Western sociology* has become a simultaneously local and global critical conception challenging the established boundaries of some scientific territories. It also means taking into consideration new forms of academic competition and hegemony. In the new post-COVID geography of non-hegemonic conceptions we simultaneously analyze the delocalized and relocalized epistemologies of *the Western-Wests*, *non Western-Wests*, *semi Western-Wests*, *Eastern-Easts*, *non-Eastern-Easts*, the demultiplication of epistemic injustices and autonomies, and new assemblages of local knowledge. We hope the pandemic will not prevent us from coproducing creolized *knowledge* by using a cosmopolitan sociological imagination to create a new future of social sciences.

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