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# Theory

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### SOCIAL THEORY IN THE PERIPHERY

- José Mauricio Domingues and Frédéric Vandenberghe: Deprovincializing Global Sociology. Views from the Periphery ..... 1
- Daniel Chernilo: After Postmodernism and Globalism: Rethinking Universalism Sociologically ..... 2
- Raewyn Connell: Social Theory in Australia ..... 3
- Fernando García Selgas: Sociological Theory: A View from Spain..... 5
- Nilgun Celebi: A Short Look at Sociology in Turkey ..... 6
- Shana Cohen: Sociology in Morocco..... 7
- Adriana Marrero: The Social Capital Theory: A Problematic Source for Policy Making in Latin America..... 9
- Devorah Kalekin-Fishman: Ironies of Public Sociology ..... 10
- Message from the Chairs: Phil Smith and Fuyuki Kurasawa ..... 12

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### Deprovincializing Global Sociology. Views from the Periphery

The last issue of our Newsletter was a special issue on sociological theory in Brazil. In this issue, we wanted to radicalize our attempts to “deprovincialize” sociology and invited colleagues from the “periphery” to send in contributions on sociological theory in their countries. We got a very good response, more than we could possibly publish, and are happy to present contributions from Chile, Australia, Turkey, Morocco, Uruguay and Israel. The contribution of Devorah Kalekin on public sociology is not strictly regional, but it allows us to raise the central question which is subjacent to the debate, namely if, and if so how, a

## A Short Look at Sociology in Turkey

by Nilgun CELEBI

It can be argued that sociology in Turkey has developed, roughly, along two lines. Along the first line, Turkish society is seen as a modern one. The individual and collective actors that make up the social system overcame tradition and constructed a brand new market, public and political sphere. "Society-centred" Turkish sociologists, as I call them, assumed that traditional elements of both institutional structure and cultural values of Turkish society were pathological residues and they were to fade away in modernization process anyway. Main representatives of this line are Mubeccel Kiray, Emre Kongar, Birsen Gokce, Ozer Ozankaya. Also orthodox or revisionist Marxists produced class analyses of Turkish society along the same modernist lines of interpretation. Behice Boran, Muzaffer Sencer, Nihat Erdogan, Ulgen Oskay are the most prominent sociologists among the Marxists. This line of thought has lost its prominence over time.

Sociologists of the other theoretical framework prefer to examine actual Turkish society beyond limitations of modern-traditional dichotomy. I call this line "socius-centered" and divide it into two sub-groups: Some of socius-centered sociologists see the historical roots and cultural heritage only as auxiliary elements, while some others of them pay special attention to their power and effect on actual Turkish society. Some representatives of the first sub-group are Caglar Keyder, Haldun Gulalp, Bahattin Aksit who were influenced by dependency theory and/or centre-periphery theorizations. Members of second sub-group studied history of culture, history of economy, history of political thought alongside social theory. Sabri Ulgener from economics and Serif Mardin from politics are prominent members of this sub-group. Within this group Baykan Sezer represents the more nationalist voice. Baykan Sezer looks for almost an authentic sociology.

Members of the second sub-group of socius-centered sociologists typically assume that one should not start with an abstract conception of 'society' if one wants to take an accurate picture of Turkish society and be able to both explain and understand the occurrences in. For them every conception of society is history-and-culture-bound. The standard image of society as an abstract entity is Eurocentric. In Turkey, the market, the public and political sphere have been shaped through different historical experiences and cultural codes. Younger representatives of this second are Nur Vergin, Nilufer Gole, Korkut Tuna, Hasan Unal Nalbantoglu, Mesut Yegen.

This authentic perspective is also at work in applied sociology. In some new problem-solving researches it is observed that in order to discharge the tension between old and new elements of society it is necessary to develop solving mechanisms well adapted to cultural and institutional needs of actual Turkish society. For example, a juvenile delinquency research completed by Ebru Yucel tackles the issue by explicitly focusing on the cultural dimension.

To know what is culture-and-history-bound and how it is possible to discern and transcend these boundaries without going down the alley of cultural relativism and subjectivism, communication among sociologists of different languages and cultures is important. Some years ago I did a research in Turkish language that aimed to overcome the limitations of a cultural perspectives. Interestingly, I found that adjective type of words are more culture-

bound than the nouns. Maybe this can be a good starting point to catch some conceptual misunderstandings in different language spheres.

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