



Journée d'Etudes: October, 27th and 28th 2011
Epistemological parameters of the circulation of ideas in the
social sciences
University of Freiburg, Haus zur lieben Hand (2nd floor)

The project "Universality and acceptance potential: On the circulation of social science knowledge between Europe and the global South" is organizing a scholarly exchange on the "Epistemological parameters of the circulation of ideas in the social sciences".

The central question of the planned meeting will be: What are the parameters that influence the acceptance or rejection of a given theory, concept, or method in contexts that are different from that of its emergence? The following parameters might be taken into account: First, the values and political orientations implicitly or explicitly attached to or implied by a given approach; for instance, some approaches are considered to represent more conservative as opposed to more progressive social thought, as traditionalist versus modernist, or as bourgeois, nationalist, radical, etc. Second, the linguistic level, including choice of terminology, use of images, metaphors, and idiomatic expressions, etc., needs to be taken into account (see, e.g., Gouldner on the supposed "context freeness" of Marxist language which favors, in Gouldner's view, its international circulation and ready-made acceptance). Third, the degrees of openness and abstraction of a given theory; i.e., following the hypothesis that the more abstract a theory is, the easier is its transfer from one social, cultural, and historical context to another (see the works of Gingras, who differentiates strongly "modeled" disciplines, such as economics, that are much more internationalized from more idiographic disciplines such as sociology or ethnology). This also includes comparing theories with general/universal aspirations with middle-range theories. Fourth, the issue concerning which themes are addressed and which themes are neglected plays a role in the acceptability of received approaches. A given approach can be discredited simply because it fails to mention certain topics critical readers may consider crucial, such as, for instance, the constitutive importance of colonialism in the emergence of modernity in the debate surrounding Eurocentrism in theories of modernity. Fifth, with reference to Berthelot's suggestion of "schèmes d'intelligibilité", i.e., his differentiation between six types of argument in sociology: causal, functionalist, dialectical, hermeneutic, actor-centered, and structural – are some schemes more easily accepted than others?

Other factors are certainly possible and further suggestions are welcome. However, the intention is to focus on those parameters that are intrinsic to theoretical or methodological approaches, as opposed to extra-scientific (historical, cultural, political) contexts that have been thoroughly debated in a variety of meetings and in the literature of the sociology of science and knowledge.

Albert-Ludwigs-University
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Institute of Sociology

BMBF-Project
„Universality and the
Acceptance Potential of
Social Science Knowledge“

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■ Program for October, 27th 2011:

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The meeting will take place in the “Haus zur lieben Hand”, 2nd floor, conference room

9.15.-10.30

Wiebke Keim/Romain Pudel: Welcome

Wiebke Keim (Univ. Freiburg): Epistemological parameters affecting the circulation of ideas. Introduction to the workshop idea and discussion

10.30-11.00 Break

11.00-12.30

Epistemological parameters affecting the circulation of ideas in Philosophy

Clara Ruvituso (Univ. Rostock): La réception de la philosophie allemande, ses „usages“ et formes de circulation dans le contexte du premier Péronisme en Argentine *Presentation in French, English paper distributed*

Romain Pudel (CNRS-Paris): Obstacles in the circulation of Anglo-Saxon philosophy in France

Sebastian Volkmann (Univ. Freiburg): 'Pariah thinking': Hannah Arendt's political philosophy and the charge of lacking tradition

12.30-13.30 Lunch Break

13.30-15.00

Epistemological parameters in international debates on socially relevant themes

Türkay Nefes (Univ. Kent/Univ. Freiburg): Reception of Durkheim in the making of the Turkish Nation (working title)

Anna Schnitzer (Univ. Zürich): Debates on multilingualism in India and Switzerland/Europe (working title)

Veronika Wöhrer (Univ. Freiburg): Reception of Indian gender studies in the US (participation to be confirmed)

15.00 Coffee Break

15.30-16.00

Internal meeting: Future perspectives

19.00

Dinner