'Western hegemony' in the social sciences: fields and model systems

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Abstract: This paper discusses the role of privileged research objects ('model systems') in producing patterns in transnational knowledge production. In its approach it follows Bourdieu's call to focus on contexts of production and forces internal to disciplines as well as his insistence on practice. Learning from work in science and technology studies it also considers material objects of knowledge and spaces of knowledge-production. It discusses the case of sociology and argues that conventions surrounding privileged research objects matter relatively independently of authors' national origin or field-position. Examining model systems, I argue, can contribute to our understanding of how some well-established inequalities are produced and reproduced. This focus adds specific stakes to the debates about global knowledge production: we can discuss the problem of neglected cases in ways that are not always included in current reflections that draw on general political – rather than specifically knowledge-political – categories.

Keywords: transnational fields, sociology of the social sciences, Anglo-American hegemony, Western hegemony, model systems, canons

Introduction

The debate about the 'global' and the 'international' in the sciences has mirrored the debates about globalization and global civil society in general to some extent. There is, on the one hand, what one might call the 'happy' view of the globalization of science: in this line of arguing, science has always been cosmopolitan in its values and orientation and, building on this ethos, it has now been diffused throughout the world, using collegial and educational ties and information technology (Schott, 1991). This view emphasizes science's foundation in shared values and its benefits to all.

This narrative is juxtaposed by a range of arguments and significant evidence about inequality and power related to the production and dissemination of knowledge across national contexts, both concerning the past and the present (International Social Science Council, 2010; Gingras and Mosbah-Natanson,

2013). Commentators use different terms to label these power relationships, including 'imperialism', 'northern dominance', 'hegemony', 'core and periphery' (Altbach, 2002), 'Anglo-American hegemony' (Aalbers, 2004; Aalbers and Rossi, 2006), or 'dependency' (Alatas, 2003).

In these labels, and to some extent in the debate more broadly, commentators clearly borrow from theories that try to understand domination and transnational domination more generally. This borrowing usefully highlights some of the ways in which social scientific production is embedded in broader social and ideological structures and the ways in which it is embedded in a long history of power relations.

But it would be reductive to try to understand the scientific world only as a reflection of broader patterns of domination.[1] I would argue that we cannot understand how inequality is produced and reproduced without also looking at processes internal to scientific disciplines. This paper follows Bourdieu's call to focus on contexts of production and forces internal to disciplines as well as his insistence on practice. Learning from work in science and technology studies it also considers material objects of knowledge and spaces of knowledge-production.

The paper begins by reviewing what we can say about dynamics internal to social scientific communities on different scales from a field-theoretical perspective. It then raises the question about inequality, not among nations or positions, but among topics and objects of research. Focusing on the case of sociology, the paper discusses the role of implicitly privileged research objects in producing and maintaining (unequal) patterns in transnational knowledge production.

Philosophers and sociologists of science have alerted us to the ways in which model systems focus research in biology and some other disciplines (Amann, 1994; Kohler, 1994; Creager *et al.*, 2007; Leonelli, 2008; Ankeny and Leonelli, 2011; Howlett and Morgan, 2010; Sealey, 2011). Scholars in biology address general questions about life and disease by working with specific organisms, called model systems, selected for convenience and by convention. For every type of system biologists are interested in (such as an invertebrate organism, or a mammal), scientists tend to select particular ones for the purposes of research (such as fruit flies, or mice). A model system is thought to limit the variation among objects studied and allows researchers to link observations by different researchers in different sites. The literary canon fulfils a somewhat analogous role in literary studies (Poovey, 2001).

I have argued elsewhere that sociology, like biology and literature, focuses a disproportionate amount of attention on some objects rather than others (Guggenheim and Krause, 2012). Relating this analysis to questions about transnational fields, knowledge and inequality, I argue here that the west has served as the model system for societies, but also that model systems have effects independently of the more general phenomenon of 'euro' or 'metrocentrism' in the social sciences (Wallerstein, 1997; Go, 2013; see also Chakrabarty, 2000). Research has focused on a select number of nations within the West, and on specific cases rather than others in various subfields. The paper reviews the way

field-effects and model-system effects intersect before revisiting some of the normative stakes of the debate.

Fields: from critique of ideology to contexts of production

Bourdieu writes:

> between an internal reading of the text which consists in considering the text in itself and for itself, and an external reading which crudely relates the text to society in general, there is a social universe that is always forgotten, that of the producers of the works. To speak of the field is to name this microcosm, which is also a social universe but a social universe freed from a certain number of the constraints that characterise the encompassing social universe, a universe that is somewhat apart, endowed with its own laws, its own nomos, without being completely independent of the external laws. (Bourdieu, 2005: 32–33)

Bourdieu insists here on paying close attention to relevant contexts of production; when we apply these principles to an analysis of social scientific work, Bourdieu invites us to look at the social context of the production of social scientific works, and specifically the context of production constituted by relations among producers. He encourages us to at least initially step out of the conversation among colleagues, which favours conceptual engagement, epistemological critique and epistemological counter-proposals (eg de Souzas Santos, 2014; Rehbein, 2014), in order to engage in a sociology of the social sciences (see, eg, recently Lezaun, 2007; Lezaun *et al.,* 2013; Camic *et al.,* 2011)

Nicolas Guilhot has pointed out that in Bourdieu's most topical essay, 'On the international circulation of ideas' (1999), that context of production is framed as a national context (Guilhot, 2014; see also Keim, 2014). But this focus is not an inherent feature of Bourdieusian analysis, as Gisèle Sapiro (2013) has most recently argued. The starting points of field-analysis are relationships; national fields are only one form that sets of relationships can take.

Starting with relationships rather than national fields means we can look beyond some common narratives of globalization, which are also common in narratives about the globalization of science. If we start with relationships, we can note that science has always been transnational, and even the social sciences – younger than the natural sciences, and more closely tied to the state – have a long transnational history (Gingras, 2002; Zincke, 2014; Heilbron *et al.,* 2008; but see Heilbron, 2014). Of course national fields have played an important role, with pushes in the nineteenth century (Wittrock *et al.,* 2008) and after the Second World War (Steinmetz, 2007). But the nationalization of science has always remained a 'project', and is always incomplete as it co-exists with colonial relations (Bhambra, 2007; Steinmetz, this volume), with fraternization of elites across borders, and with technical specialization.

Rather than as a transition from national to global relations, the transformations of the last 30 or 40 years should be examined as a changing configuration of local, national, regional and global relations. New technologies and new

networks, intervene into a space that is already fielded on several levels. Arguably in sociology national, regional, such as European or Latin American (Heilbron *et al.,* 2008), and global fields (Heilbron, 2014) coexist today, along with sub-and interdisciplinary spaces (see also Buchholz, this volume). For each of these fields, we could ask a number of questions regarding centralization, kind and type of autonomy, and symbolic structure (Gorski, 2013; Krause, n.d.). We can ask how centralized or not the distribution of field-specific capital is, that is, how hierarchical a field is (eg Bourdieu, 1975). The literature on the social sciences suggests that there is a hierarchy among national fields, positing the US, and perhaps the UK, as the centre of the emerging global field, and Europe, Australia and Latin America as the second-tier (Heilbron, 2014). The status of the US and the UK is bolstered by the dominance of English-speaking journals, which are edited in the US and the UK, draw heavily on UK and US reviewers – often recruiting junior US and UK reviewers before more senior international ones – but are often accepted and indeed privileged by hiring, tenure and grant committees in other countries and continents (eg Beigel, 2014b).

From a field-theoretical perspective, it is worth remembering though that inequalities are not, or at least not only, amongst national fields. Not all American social scientists have more field-specific (or other types of) capital than all non-American social scientists. National fields are symbolically and materially divided in ways that are not superseded by their (partial) integration into a larger space.

The fact that a field is central in an international hierarchy of fields does not mean it is necessarily highly autonomous in every sense of the term. We might find, for example, that American sociology is very autonomous vis-à-vis other national scientific fields – in that it does not cite work from foreigners, does not cite work in other languages, and does not value foreign PhDs (Beigel, 2014b; Gingras, 2002; Kennedy and Centeno, 2007; Kennedy, 2015) but is not necessarily very autonomous vis-à-vis its own political field.[2]

We can ask about the type of symbolic oppositions that structure the differentiation of positions within fields – though much emphasis has been placed on the opposition between one autonomous and one heteronomous pole, these divisions can take varying forms (eg Krause, 2014). Considering the fact that different national fields coexist and fields on different scales coexist, we can note that resources from other scales can be a dimension of symbolic divisions within a field. Indeed, one of the divisions in each national field may be between globalizers and those with more local engagements; and among globalizers between orthodox and heterodox globalizers (see Fourcade, 2006).

In this context utterances celebrating the universality of science and denouncing provincialism are performances that need themselves to be analysed in terms of the positions they express. The same is true for positions denouncing globalization and celebrating local authenticity. Ulrich Best has argued, for example, that the debate about Anglo-American dominance in geography has been launched by European nationals with claims to elite positions within the emerging European field of geography – a field, which is established in opposition at the same

time to a global field of geography, and in opposition to several national fields of geography (Best, 2009).

Model systems: asking about research practices and objects

Missing from an analysis of positions and fields sketched so far, are research practices and the actual content of the work published in the social sciences. Even if the mapping of symbolic structures of national fields, regional fields, and global fields were complete and even if it included examples of concrete studies and work being cited in this map, this would still be at some remove from practices involved in the production in social scientific work and at some remove from the content of the work.

Bourdieu calls for an analysis of practice, but in his studies of fields he often does not go very far in that direction. Despite Bourdieu's claim to overcome the false opposition between structure and agency, studies following Bourdieu can tend to be either strong on the analysis of field or on the analysis of practice – compare, for example, Hjellbrekke *et al.* (2007) and Denord *et al.* (2011) on the one hand and Wacquant (2007) on the other hand as works that exemplify the analytic gains of either focus. Some commentators have argued that a focus on fields has replaced the analysis of practice in the course of Bourdieu's work (Warde, 2004).

Here we can draw on work in science and technology studies, which has pioneered ethnographic attention to knowledge-production (Latour and Woolgar, 1986; Knorr-Cetina, 1981). This work has sensitized scholars to new dimensions of description, which close empirical observation makes possible. It has paid specific attention to tools and objects of research and places of knowledge-production. This work also invites closer attention to the question what it is exactly that circulates when 'ideas' circulate (Bourdieu, 1999) or when 'theory' travels (Said, 1983; Clifford, 1989). Texts do not travel by themselves. Not only do they need an infrastructure for travelling, they also carry 'stuff' with them – in the case of empirical studies usually some combination of research object, place, method, writing and perhaps translation.

In addition to asking about inequality among nations, and the field-theoretical inquiry into inequality among positions, we can ask about inequality among research objects. I want to ask how disciplines attribute attention to research objects.

I call a model system in any discipline an object of study that pools resources and is used by convention to stand in for a more general class of epistemic objects (Creager *et al.,* 2007). The knowledge gained through the analysis of model systems is supposed to hold also for other, not clearly specified cases. The analytical notion of model system here subsumes what is also sometimes called 'exemplars' (Kuhn, 1970), 'paradigmatic cases' or 'canonical cases'.

As I draw on research that emphasizes the diversity of practices within even the natural sciences, it is important to point out that a focus on model system is only one of many ways in which disciplines can structure and reward

attention to concrete research objects. Model systems initially came to the attention of philosophers of science as an alternative to law-seeking physics (Creager *et al.*, 2007). In law-seeking science there is no stand-in, but rather the claim is of direct access to the epistemic object by virtue of a total or a representative sample. Another logic that contrasts with the logic of model systems is the logic of coverage where a focus on a previously unstudied or neglected case is rewarded (see Guggenheim and Krause, 2012).

Model systems in sociology

I have argued elsewhere (Guggenheim and Krause, 2012) that some prominent subfields in sociology do use model systems though to the extent that social science research uses population-level data or representative samples, it does not use model systems and requires a different kind of engagement. In that article, we compiled an initial list of candidates for sociological model systems (Guggenheim and Krause, 2012: 108). We name the model system first and then the type of object it stands in for, followed by an indication of some exemplary and seminal literature that focuses on the model system (or work that analyses the literature on the model system).

1) Doctors (professions) (Abbott, 1988; Becker *et al.*, 1977)
2) Chicago (cities) (Park and Burgess, 1925)
3) African-Americans in cities (race) (DuBois, 1899; Wilson, 1980, 1987)
4) The French Revolution (radical social change) (Skocpol, 1979, 1985; Sewell, 1985).
5) The biological laboratory (the production of scientific knowledge) (Latour and Woolgar, 1986; Knorr-Cetina, 1981).
6) The Scientific Revolution (the relationship of science and society) (Merton, 1938).
7) English working class (class formation in capitalism) (Marx, 2007[1857]; Thompson, 1964; Calhoun, 1982)
8) Car industry (organization, work) (Rot, 2006)
9) Women (gender studies)
10) Juvenile petty criminals (the sociology of law, criminology) (Shaw *et al.*, 1938; Cohen, 1955)
11) Marx, Durkheim, Weber (theory, history of sociology)
12) High art (culture) (White and White, 1993)

Studies about doctors are foundational for the sociology of professions, studies about Chicago are foundational to urban sociology and urban ethnography, and studies of the French Revolution are central to comparative-historical sociology. Criminology has focused intensely on petty criminals and has, as a result, relatively neglected other forms of criminals. Studies of the car industry have had significant influence on the sociology of work. Sociological theory is still

prominently shaped by a consideration and reconsideration of the classic texts as model systems for sociological thought.

In each of these subfields, classic works on the model system are central to teaching and to theoretical debate. A reinterpretation of a classic case can garner significant rewards in terms of attention and recognition, while it is more difficult for work on an odd or unrecognizable case to be accepted as theoretically relevant.

I would claim that these patterns are produced on the collective level and are largely unreflected in everyday life, despite the fact that some scholars, particularly in sociology, have developed very sophisticated ways of formalizing how knowledge about specific cases could be contextualized to draw more general conclusions from individual studies (Burawoy, 2009; Ragin and Becker, 1992).

The West as a model system

Connecting the discussion of model systems with the critique of 'euro' or 'metrocentrism' (Wallerstein, 1997; Go, 2013; Chakrabarty, 2000) lends itself to an analysis by analogy. We can restate the critique of Western hegemony in the social sciences by arguing that the West has served as the model system for societies, or more specifically as the model system for 'modern' or 'developed' societies. This means, on the one hand, that those societies and institutions command a large share of attention, and that the analysis of Western societies and institutions implicitly serve as a stand-in for the analysis of societies and institutions in general. The notions of 'modernity' and 'development' have been used to imply that lessons from the model system can be transferred to other cases, even if it may take some time.

In the logic of metrocentrism as in the logic of model systems, other cases have to be justified in relationship to the privileged case. As Chakrabarty notes:

> that Europe works as a silent referent in historical knowledge becomes obvious in a very ordinary way. There are at least two everyday symptoms of the subalternity of non-western, third world histories. Third-world historians feel a need to refer to works in European history; historians of Europe do not feel any need to reciprocate. … the greats and the models of the historian's enterprise are always at least culturally 'European'. 'They' produce their work in relative ignorance of nonwestern histories and this does not even seem to affect the quality of their work. This is a gesture, however, that we cannot return. We cannot even afford an equality or symmetry of ignorance at this level without taking the risk of appearing 'old-fashioned' or 'outdated'. (Chakrabarty, 2000: 28).

The unsaid privileging of Western countries and Western institutions as reference cases is reinforced via Anglo-American journals, which allow some cases in as the default and ask those writing on other cases to explain themselves in much more details (Stöckelová, 2016; Meriläinen *et al.*, 2008; Johnson (Latour), 1988; see Kennedy, 2015: ch. 5). Scholars report that reviewers question much more thoroughly why a non-standard case might be relevant. They also report that they

are asked to provide additional context on non-standard cases, as reviewers feel it is legitimate to profess ignorance on non-standard cases, and to posit readers that know nothing about non-standard cases.

Bruno Latour states in a footnote to a paper he published under the pseudonym Jim Johnson in an American journal, 'The reason for this use of pseudonym was the opinion of the editors that no American sociologist is willing to read things that refer to specific places and times which are not American. Thus I inscribed in my text American scenes so as to decrease the gap between the prescribed reader and the pre-inscribed one' (Johnson, 1988).

Modelcentrism

We should distinguish between general ethnocentrism and the role of model systems more specifically in focusing attention and stratifying research objects. We can restate the problem of metrocentrism in terms of model systems but model systems also play a role relatively independently of general ethnocentrism. Analysing these dynamics in terms of model systems leads us to look more closely at case selection within 'the West'. Historically, the West may have been the model for political modernity, as Chakrabarty has argued, but Europe was the model system for the West and particular countries have served as model systems for Europe. The very history of the discipline is based not so much on the West but on the study of a very small set of states (see also Wagner *et al.*, 1991). Those who live in smaller European nations are not the victims of colonization but have a harder time contributing to the seemingly cumulative research on model systems for societies.[3]

Partly because modernity has been defined with reference to classics of sociological theory, the German and French cases have been particularly important. France and Germany are the reference points for discussions of state-formation, citizenship and nationalism. Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge (2014 [1981]) have argued that for our understanding of industrialization and class-formation, England – rather than, for example, Germany – has been the privileged case. They have argued that this has left us with assumptions about a very rapid and relatively complete separation of people from the land, which are not correct when thinking about Germany (and other places). The theory of modernity might have looked different if it had started from different cases or been able to consistently focus on a variety of cases.

The French revolution has been the model case for revolutions, and with that it has become foundational to the whole subfield of comparative historical sociology. This central place of the French Revolution can be seen when scholars make arguments about the way in which it was embedded in colonial relations (Go, 2013). It is expressed when the French revolution becomes the site of more general debates about culture (Skocpol, 1985; Sewell, 1985). This way of referencing the French Revolution recalls one of the functions of canons in literature: by agreeing to discuss the same books and authors, theoretical differences can be thrown into relief.

Some of the model systems on the list above are not place-specific, such as 'doctors' as a stand-in for 'professions' or 'gangs' as a stand-in for 'crime'. For studies of these objects, it does seem to be an advantage to be located in the West, or more specifically in one of a few 'model nations' within the West. These contexts seem to render studies 'contextless' – beyond that it does not seem to matter what kind of hospital is studied and where they are located – many studies are set in university hospitals, others in major cities, but some studies are of community hospitals and the classic study by Becker *et al.* (1977), for example, is set in Kansas.

Urban sociology, unsurprisingly, is particularly place-specific. Conversations about cities have had different model systems: The first model system may have been Paris, or Berlin. As Thomas Gieryn has shown, in early American sociology, Chicago sociologists managed to turn their field, the city of Chicago, into *the* canonical research setting for urban sociology and the nascent discipline as a whole (Gieryn, 2006). What was explored in Chicago as a specific field site became general knowledge about cities. Chicago was a stand-in for 'city' that was a stand-in for 'modern society', in a way in which, for example, Heidelberg and Freiburg in Germany were not.

Model systems can change and Chicago's status as a model system has been challenged. Chicago was the dense city of the twentieth century that exposed the frantic pace of industrial and financial centres and that drew a massive influx of migrants to the jobs these industries offered. At the end of the century, Chicago was an outdated model and Los Angeles became a new model system (see Dear and Dishman, 2001; Judd and Simpson, 2011). Today, Los Angeles in turn, sees its status as model system questioned and research is beginning to pay attention and to the fast-growing cities of the south.

It is worth noting that as research starts considering non-Western cities, it does not choose a representative sample or a range of cities but focuses on establishing new model systems that are studied at the expense of other cities. Lagos and Mumbai concentrate a large share of the attention (Gandy, 2005). We could argue that Dharavi (Mumbai), and Kibera (Nairobi) function as model systems for the object 'slum'. Many other forms of settlements are comparatively neglected, including what Robinson (2006) calls ordinary cities and Hilgers (2012) studies as middle-sized cities.

This analysis lends intra-scientific specificity to the more general problems of metrocentrism: in scholarly work, the focus on model systems can flirt with notions of inherent aesthetic value underlying the literary or art historical canon, which can very explicitly argue that we need to study the 'best' cases. It also flirts with notions of generalizability, but it does so without engaging in the standardization practices that underpin claims to generalizability in both biology and literary studies.

The charge in post-colonial critique has been that the West hides its particularity and presents itself as universal. In some ways, 'the West' is also hiding behind the particularity of specific objects. The logic of distributing attention to a model system, allows an open acknowledgement of particularity on the level of the

specific study, with implicit claims for general conclusion and a simple crowding out of other cases or topics.

In sociology, the claims for generalizability of model system research are usually implicit; it is worth noting that while other disciplines that use model systems invest in an infrastructure that is thought to ensure standardization as a precondition for comparability and the control of context, sociology does not. We can distinguish between the specimen, the object in front of the researcher, and model system, the kind of object researchers are trying to study. Both biologists and literary scholars put a lot of efforts into standardizing specimen. Biologists do not all study the same animal – a fruit fly, for example – but they try to control the variation among individual fruit flies studied and they study similar fruit flies. They do not circulate the actual animal, but they circulate genetically identical drosophila so that they know the variation observed is not due to genetic differences of the object of study, or they study genetically different drosophila, but then they know about the differences between the different genotypes. The equivalent of the biological 'specimen' for literary studies is the physical copy of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, for instance, that a scholar is working with. Not all editions of the book are the same and indeed scholars pay much attention to the differences between different editions in order to find out who is studying 'the real' Joyce, but also to make clear which differences of interpretation are owed to different versions of the text (eg Rossman, 1988). Translations add another level of variation and issues of translation are discussed as problems of research. But standard editions of texts go very far in making sure that research objects are identical and deviations can be identified and named.

The specimen of sociological model systems do not travel and are not copied. Because of this, the objects of research are less standardized than in other disciplines and different research projects on different specimens of the same model system are not easily comparable.

The case of theory

'Model systems' or 'canons' have been most explicitly set and most explicitly contested in social theory. Theory syllabi focus on some thinkers, not others; secondary commentary in journals focuses on some authors not others (Connell, 1997; Seidman, 1994; see also Bhambra, 2014).

Considering the materiality of research objects, it is worth pointing out that this is a specific kind of canon for the discipline of sociology. 'Marx', 'Durkheim' and 'Weber' are not technically objects of social research, such as, for example, the family or the state, but authors. In the subfield of sociological theory, the canon thus operates like a literary canon – but without a theory of genre or a theory of how to work with texts.

Theorists are themselves model system in that they concentrate attention and serve as privileged objects of research; it is also worth noting that the process by which a person becomes a theorist promotes a reading that isolates them from their original context and their empirical concerns (Bagheer, 2012); canonization

of people focuses attention on specific studies, while obscuring their local origins or even the fact that they were studies of specific objects.

Bourdieu has commented on this process, writing that 'as a rule, non-French interpreters of my work, both anthropological and sociological, have offered a reading of it limited to its purely theoretical dimension. This has often led them to ignore its properly empirical dimension, as well as the contribution that my research brings to our knowledge of French society and, mutatis mutandis, of all modern societies' (Bourdieu, 1993: 270).

We might inquire here into the tension between the analysis Bourdieu provides in the first part of the quote, and the universalizing claim towards the end. Bourdieu on the one hand observes how his reception as a theorist leads to a neglect of the specific context of his work. But he then proceeds to at least flirt with the idea that France can stand in for other 'modern societies'.

Theoretical canonization might interact with the factors discussed in the section on 'The West as a model system' and 'Modelcentrism'. Because of the link between model systems and generalizability, insights derived from model countries and cases may be more readily recognized as 'theoretical'. That may mean it is harder to become a famous theorist from a base in a small European or non-Western country. It may also mean that if one wanted to become a famous theorist based in a small European country, it might be strategically advisable to travel for research or become the kind of theorist whose work is not based on empirical research.

Connell's account of the phenomenon 'X in Australia' (1997: 81) hints at the difficulty of becoming a 'theorist' based on non-model system research. Researchers in Australia, Connell notes, felt compelled to re-do canonical studies in other settings: 'The task of the Australian sociologist was to apply the metropolitan research technique, demonstrate that the phenomenon also existed in Australia, and say empirically what form it took here' (1997: 81).

Critical discussion of the theoretical canon has focused on who is or should be included. Including diverse theorists, whose concerns arise in different contexts, might lead to the inclusion of more diverse local realities. But critics often collude in the personalization of the enterprise 'theory', whereby people and their work become the model system to be studied and argued over. This personalization itself comes with a cost to the representation of diverse geographic contexts.

Fields and model systems

I have suggested that we need to pay attention to the internal dynamics of social scientific disciplines, when trying to understand unequal patterns in global knowledge production. To the analysis of differentiation of and inequality among positions in national, regional and transnational fields, I have proposed to add an analysis of the inequality among research objects and topics. How might the hierarchy of topics and objects interact with the symbolic structure and hierarchy of positions targeted by field-analysis? The following four hypothesis could be investigated further.

Firstly, access to model systems can be a source of field-specific capital. Research on model systems can be assumed to contribute to knowledge of general importance; with that inequality of access to model systems becomes an inequality of access to the opportunity to contribute to knowledge perceived to be of general importance. This matters both within national fields and within transnational fields. Researchers in 'model cities', for example, can work with the assumption that their findings have relevance beyond their immediate context. Researchers in 'model nations' can presuppose that their research can directly contribute to general knowledge. When they study cases of non-located model systems, such as doctors or gangs they do not need to comment in as much depth on how the specificity of their location shapes their findings.

Access is particularly important for original qualitative research. The case for model systems based on textual sources and library research is somewhat different. Access to the sources on the French Revolution or the Holocaust is not equally distributed, but it is somewhat more equally distributed than access to long-term field research in Chicago.

Secondly, though, conventions regarding model systems do not only provide field-specific capital to those who have direct access to model systems and are able to conduct original research. They do not only reinforce a single dimension of centrality, between positions with access to model systems, say, and others. Sociological canons, like other canons, can also be a resource for some in outsider positions because they provide a relatively explicit message about what needs to be known (see Guillory, 1993).

Within national fields or the transnational field, knowledge about sociological canons provide a shortcut to field-specific capital for those in relatively peripheral positions who try to play by the dominant rules of the game – as opposed to those who are distanced by choice or by force. This is particularly true for second-hand uses of model system research, such as in citation and in teaching. Model systems can become a means by which elites in subordinated fields compete with their own colleagues; the reference to model system research becomes a line of symbolic division in such fields.

In an essay published in 1985, Bourdieu has described the dynamic between central and peripheral positions in the field of Francophone literature. Asking, 'Is there a Belgian literature?', he shows that Belgians have a choice of whether to compete in Paris on unequal grounds, or become labelled as local literature (Bourdieu, 1985). Researchers from peripheral countries face a similar choice within the global field; but national academic systems may provide more protection within the transnational field for those 'Belgians' who write in 'Parisian' ways than is provided within the field of francophone literature (see also Christin, this volume).

Thirdly, I would hypothesize that access to other kinds of field-specific capital can supersede the constraints imposed by assumptions about model systems. In extreme cases of this, field-position may trump access to model systems. Considering urban research, the rise of new model systems in the global south has not led to much new power for local researchers. These model systems have arisen at

the same time as international travel has become fast and cheap, and outsiders are able to do fly-in research (see Gandy, 2005). We have to remember that in some fields, like mountaineering, archaeology, and to some extent in the history of anthropology, local status is precisely what precludes people from claiming shares in locality-specific achievements. In the history of mountaineering the local guides did not benefit from their easy access to iconic mountains – or indeed their superior skill – they were defined out of the relevant universe of actors (see, eg, Krauss, 2013).

There is another way in which the constraints associated with model systems matter less for those with access to other forms of field-specific capital. There is perhaps more licence for those in central and secure positions to address other cases. If and when the investment on interesting cases pays off intellectually, they can garner the rewards.

Model systems have a certain effect in (transnational) fields. I would also hypothesize, lastly, that fielded transnational exchanges in turn have an effect on the role of model systems in sociology, reinforcing their status. International exchanges may lead to dialogue that questions the status of nationally specific model system and might lead to greater interest in variation among cases of non-located model systems, such as doctors or gangs. But internationalization may at the same time lead to a higher consensus on canons in different sociological sub-fields. Though more studies cross national boundaries, these studies cover only a subset of objects and cases considered in the original context. In this process exemplary cases are taken out of the context of other possible cases, and exemplary studies are deprived of the context of the broader literature that they emerge out of, as discussed by Bourdieu (1999).

Conclusion

I have suggested that in addition to inequality between 'core' and 'periphery', and between different nations, we can consider the differentiation of positions within fields. This alerts us, for example, to the ways in which transnational, national and regional fields overlap and to the ways national fields are shaped by oppositions between 'globalizers' and their opponents. Further, I argued that in addition to the differentiation of positions in fields, we consider inequality among research objects. We can then analyse how the differentiation of positions and the inequality of research objects may intersect.

In closing I would like to return to only one of the normative dimensions of the patterns under discussion: the effects of model systems and the way they function within fields on the quality of knowledge production. It is worth noting that distributing attention among research objects in an unequal way is in itself not only a bad thing in this regard: Model system research has had some benefits for research in biology and literary studies: in contrast to law-oriented research modelled on experimental physics, model system research encourages and rewards attention to specific cases (Creager *et al.,* 2007). Focus on research objects facilitates communication among researchers and particularly among researchers in

different subfields and different national settings. It can help clarify theoretical differences by limiting empirical variation; it can help clarify theoretically relevant empirical variation by limiting other kinds of variation. In these ways, a focus on model systems can help create cumulative effects of what would otherwise be isolated pieces of research.

But there are also drawbacks of this kind of focus in terms of the knowledge produced: assumptions derived from research on model systems might be unthinkingly applied to other cases, when results from research on model systems is not easily transferable to other objects. Indeed even translating findings from one study of the 'same' research object to another ('comparability') requires a level of standardization usually absent in the social sciences. By focusing on model systems, researchers are not considering the full range of variation among cases. Some objects that have value in and of themselves may never be studied and understood.

Focusing on processes internal to (social)-scientific disciplines, the question then becomes what kind of mechanisms disciplinary fields, and disciplinary transnational fields in particular, have to reflect on whether and how it makes sense to focus attention on specific cases. How can we exploit the strengths of model system research and how can we mitigate its weaknesses? How can we learn most from different studies of the same research objects, while also reflecting on the fact that specimens are not standardized? How can we train scholars to be literate both regarding canonical cases and what it would mean to think about the full variation of cases? What kind of mechanism would help ensure research as a whole in some way reflects the underlying variety of cases, as well as the variety of national contexts?

These kinds of questions are not only a challenge for transnational fields – it would be misleading, for example, to imply that unequal attention to cases began with Anglo-American centrality in an emerging transnational field – but it is *also* a challenge for transnational fields. We can inquire into what kind of transnational practices and networks serve primarily the exchange and accumulation of field-specific capital within national, regional and transnational fields and what kind of transnational practices and networks have the potential to foster the kind of reflexivity discussed above.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1 Fernanda Beigel has noted that using metaphors from economic development to describe the scientific world system might lead us to confuse the results of symbolic violence – the lack of

international visibility of Argentinian sociology for example – with real deprivation – a lack of productive capacity in Argentina (Beigel, 2014a).

2 See Benson (2005, 2013) and Krause (n.d.) on the different forms of autonomy.

3 But see Fleck and Nowotny (1993) on Austrian sociology and Kennedy (2015) on the influence of Polish sociology and of research on Poland.

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