



The Invention of the Post-Western Sociology

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Abstract

From the production of an epistemology shared with Chinese, Korean and Japanese sociologists, we propose a Post-Western Sociology to enable a dialogue – on a level footing – on common concepts and concepts situated in European and Asian theories, to consider the modes of creation of continuities and discontinuities, the conjunctions and disjunctions between knowledge spaces situated in different social contexts, to work on the gaps between them. In a context of the easternization of the westernized East we will introduce the idea of the demultiplication, the complexification and the hierarchisation of new epistemic autonomies vis-à-vis Western hegemonies in social sciences. The easternization of the Westernized East looks like a kind of matrix of epistemic autonomies today. In fact, epistemic autonomies become plural and diversify, even hierarchize among themselves, without this dynamic of recomposition of the geographies of knowledge in the social sciences being really perceived on the side of the Western worlds. The question of Western hegemonies continues to arise through the process of recognition, visibility and legitimacy of this plurality of epistemic autonomies. Then we will identify some knowledge niches where are produced situated concepts, analyse how transnational theory could be used in different ways in China and in Europe. From epistemic autonomies and theoretical discontinuities in knowledge niches we can find situated concepts in Western and non-Western context. Today some concepts do not really circulate but the Post-Western Space will probably favor their mobility from an Eastern context to Western context and reciprocally. So, we have selected the following situated Chinese concepts: individual and State; power, *suku* and political identity. So we also will deal with the continuities of transnational knowledge in French and Chinese sociologies; we have identified the following theories as illustrations of shared theoretical space

between France and China : Chicago's School heritage and Durkheim's theory. Finally Post-Western Sociology is elaborated from the connections between field practices and the intersecting exploration of what individuals in different situations do, say and think; so we will introduce the methodological posture in Post-Western sociology and what about narratives and multi-sited sociology.

Keywords: Post-Western sociology, epistemic autonomy, common knowledge, easternization

Although scientific thought was constructed as an element of Western societies, the universalizing and tautological conditions of the narration of Western social sciences are largely questioned today. If the global discourse signals a great transformation in the history of social sciences, we then proposed the hypothesis of a scientific revolution, which imposes displacements, reversals, epistemic conversions, even turns (Rouleau-Berger, 2016). From the production of an epistemology shared with Chinese, Korean and Japanese sociologists, we propose a *Post-Western Sociology* to enable a dialogue – on a level footing – on common concepts and concepts situated in European and Asian theories, to consider the modes of creation of continuities and discontinuities, the conjunctions and disjunctions between knowledge spaces situated in different social contexts, to work on the *gaps* between them. In a context of the easternization of the westernized East we will introduce the idea of the demultiplication, the complexification and the hierarchisation of new epistemic autonomies vis-à-vis Western hegemonies in social sciences. Then we will identify some knowledge niches where are produced situated concepts, analyse how transnational theory could be used in different ways in China and in Europe. Post-Western Sociology is elaborated from the connections between field practices and the intersecting exploration of what individuals in different situations do, say and think; so we will introduce the methodological posture in Post-Western sociology and what about multi-sited sociology.

Easternization of the Westernized East and plurality of epistemic autonomies

“The decline of the West is becoming a reality in which the rise of East Asia become a reality” : in their preface to *A Quest for East Asian Sociologies*, published in 2014 by Seoul National University Press, Kim Seung Kuk, Li Peilin and Yasawa Shujiro affirm that the EASN was an initiative to transcend the effects of the variety of conflicts in this region of the world, to construct a new East Asia and a radically reflexive sociology to

question the concept of Western modernity. In this book Kim Seung Kuk considers East Community as hybridization requires, first of all the Easternization of Westernized East Asia, so it means for East Asians to rediscover the countervailing power of East Asian way of value orientations, ie, East Asianism and to easternize the overly Westernized East” (p16). The easternization of the Westernized East looks like a kind of matrix of epistemic autonomies today. But we also have to analyse how this process is dynamic, plural and situated.

In fact, epistemic autonomies become plural and diversify, even hierarchize among themselves, without this dynamic of recomposition of the geographies of knowledge in the social sciences being really perceived on the side of the Western worlds. The question of Western hegemonies continues to arise through the process of recognition, visibility and legitimacy of this plurality of epistemic autonomies. The expansion of Global Studies produces paradoxical situations in the process of recognizing epistemic autonomies: on the one hand, it advocates the need to put in the center the thoughts that have been defined as peripheral, on the other hand, they produce certain moments of the smoothing effects of the epistemic autonomies which render them again partly invisible in their complexity. We will distinguish here different moments in the process of producing epistemic autonomies in China, Japan and Korea.

The question of epistemic autonomy vis-à-vis Western sociology was first posed in the 1930s by Sun Benwen in China. Indeed he will develop a sociology of the individual from a subtle distance from historical materialism; it will play a decisive role in the process of sinicization of Chinese sociology. We can then speak here of affirming an epistemic autonomy when Sun Benwen, president of the Chinese Society of Sociology, launches the movement of indigenization of the sociology which means to produce a proper thought while mobilizing Western methods and theories. In 1979, at the time of the recreation of the discipline, is rested the question of the sinicization of the discipline which is rebuilt next, with, or against the Western thoughts by affirming the refusal of hegemonic postures, seeking anchors in moments of the Chinese civilization of yesterday and today, and also in filiations, displacements, hybridizations with European and American ideas (Rouilleau-Berger, 2008a).

The question of the epistemic autonomy of sociology via its sinicization in China has always been present in the idea of producing sociological knowledge emancipated from the hegemonic thoughts related to “Western” sociologies. Contemporary Chinese sociologies thus seem today to be placed in a kind of partially non-Western mosaic of situated, contextualized and revised constructivisms, linked to historical and civilizational contexts. In Chinese sociology, a diversity of epistemic autonomies develops in different

theoretical perspectives and shows a real internationalization of the discipline and the solidification of new frontiers.

Today in Chinese sociology we could distinguish three forms of epistemic autonomy: *historic epistemic autonomy*, *relative epistemic autonomy*, *strong epistemic autonomy*. The renaissance of sociological thought in China represented a fundamental moment in the history of global thought. There was a type of epistemological, ethical and political indecency in Western worlds that ignored the sciences of Chinese society, which constitute a practice as ancient as in the West. Although the Chinese language could form a barrier, it was above all the orientalisms that fixed the frontiers of perceived, lived, knowledge – represented as more legitimate than other knowledge.

What about an historic epistemic autonomy? It means the re-establishment of continuities with epistemic frameworks which had been constructed before 1949 then forgotten. In Europe most intellectuals ignore renowned pre- 1949 Chinese sociology; Li Peilin and Qu Jingdong (2011) in *A History of Sociology in China in the First Half of the Twentieth Century* have demonstrated how Chinese Sociology flourished in a context of intellectual blooming comparable to that of the spring and autumn periods and to that of the warring States. Although the influence of Western sciences increased in the East, several ideological movements emerged in reaction to the violence of the foreigners' invasions and the humiliations inflicted on Chinese people. This is a context of social reform in which intellectuals defend pragmatic positions. Li Peilin and Qu Jingdong note that, in his 1923 conference “A history of thought in China during the last three centuries”, Liang Qichao considers that Chinese thought, since the 16th century, has been a pragmatic one which has developed in reaction to six hundred years of Taoism; Li Peilin and Qu Jingdong have distinguished five currents of ideas: historical materialism, rural construction and the social survey campaign; the “Chinese School”; the “academic school” or “scholastic school”, and the study of social history. Li Peilin and Qu Jingdong distinguish different moments in the scientific history of Chinese sociology in the first half of the 20th century. The first marxist Chinese sociology used to rely both on historical materialism and scientific socialism: historical materialism is a kind of “new sociology”, a “modern sociology”, which distinguishes itself from traditional Western sociology. Then the “social survey movement” corresponds to an important movement hatched at the beginning of the 20th century.

Then He Yijin has selected the concept of «captive mind» from Syed Hussein Alatas (1974) to analyse the lack of autonomous social sciences in Asia and to explain the monopoly of social sciences remain intact in a context of abandon of Eurocentrism in social sciences; he is considering if the tense relationship between the West and

postcolonial sociology cannot be found in the Chinese context, Chinese sociology has produced historical materialism as its own counterpart. In the continuity of a long history of sinicization Chinese sociology could produce epistemic autonomy walking through the «postcolonial fog». He Yijin purposed the notion of alternative autonomy in analysing the self-adaptations of Chinese Sociology in the 1950 s'. In a really new approach he is showing how Chinese intellectual people remained relatively silent in the debate about Post-Colonial studies. The production of an alternative epistemic autonomy means to take account the past, the present and the future of Chinese sociology; so revisiting the historical trajectory of sociology does express an intellectual voice. In the 1930s, Yijin He analyses how, on one hand, sinicization of sociology has been proposed by native scholars to indigenize Western sociology, and, on another hand, unlike postcolonial sociology which treats Western sociology as an object to debunk or overthrow, Chinese sociology absorbed Western sociology in producing hybridisations, reformulations, radjustments to Chinese society. The real challenge his how Western sociology can be sinicized and reversely, the Chinese interpretations of Western sociology have been changed.

Xie Lizhong and He Yijin are participating to the production of a relative epistemic autonomy. Xie Lizhong has defined Post-sociology as a pluralistic discourse analysis, we cannot believe that all the controversy ocured in a field of social research are only some discurve disputes but all social realities constructed by people have their own ojectivity and social phenomeans have not «essence». Post-Sociology is a new perspective in China based on the abandon of “given realism“, “representationalism”, “essentialism“, “fundamentalism“... and the promotion of a multidimensional, dynamic, processuel and plural space for sociology (Xie Lizhong, 2012a,b). So Post-sociology is opening an epistemological space on a plurality of theoretical paradigms.

Qu Jingdong (2017) proposes another form of affirmed epistemic autonomy in coming back to historical views, reconstructing the sociological imagination to understand the reality of Chinese society, it should be return to the theme and context of modern transformation of Chinese social thoughts. According to Qu Jingdong by re-interpretation on Kang Youwei's theory of the Three Eras - 'Era of War,' an 'Era of Good Governance,' and an 'Era of Peace- from classics, Qu Qingdong considers “*The inspiration of classic sociology made us realize that the structure and transitions of modern Western society have different traditions, structural conditions, and senses of real- life experiences. The evolutionary trend of history is by no means purely unified. The modernity we see today is one of the possibilities that was derived from modernity; furthermore, different civilizations and communities make their adjustments, trans-*

formations, and reconstructions between tradition and modernity» (Qu Jingdong, 2017, p140). Thus, Kang Youwei made an explicit judgment that the modern period is an Era of War the Idea of Cosmos Unity should be established as the universal value for world history, and Confucius Religion should be built for cultivation of mores. Today, some social scientists are calling Confucianism a force for transformation in the process of modernizing Asian societies.

The construction of an epistemic autonomy is constructed in other words in the Japanese social sciences. Kazuhiko Yatabe (2015) recalls that the Japanese intellectual history for 150 years has been organized around a double process of pendulum oscillation between passion of the West and exaltation of the Japanese and / or Asian spirit on the one hand, of going beyond modernity, on the other hand. The social sciences in Japan have formed a dual relationship of continuities with the Western world and Japanese society, but the process of Westernization of Japanese society has helped to maintain and invisibilize Japanese knowledge. Japanese researchers, after being influenced by American positivism, then that of Parsons and Marx, turned to phenomenological approaches while integrating authors like Habermas, Bourdieu, Giddens to affirm today an inscription in a space of transnational thought. For Shujiro Yasawa (2014), Western sociology was shifted to 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 that of Parsons and Marx. Shujiro Yasawa then explains that, after 1980, a post-modern sociology was developed, with the revival of forgotten pre-war authors – such as Takada, Ariga, Suzuki – and an indigenous sociological theory began to form, especially Tsurumi Kazuko’s theory of social change, based on Yanagita Kunio’s ethnology, Minakata Kumagusu’s cosmology and Torigoe Hiroyuki’s sociology of the environment. The discussions in the Japanese public space by Hoshikawa in the 2000s took center stage in Japanese sociology. Kazuhisa Nishihara showed that different forms of cultural and scientific nationalism continued to exist, in a movement of opening and “intercultural reconciliation”, and he proposed the production of a “sociology beyond societies,” as advanced by Urry (2000). Lastly, from Georges Herbert Mead’s theory of the ‘self’ and society, Shujiro Yasawa (2014) recently showed how a reflexive sociology was developing in Japan, structured around the production of a transcendental Subject. Japanese sociologists are producing a form of epistemic autonomy by proposing a sociology of the transcendental Subject that flirts with the idea of paving the way for a cosmopolitan humanity. Today, if Japanese sociologists deploy established spaces of thought, some defend a form of Asiatism that others challenge by refusing any form of

narrow methodological nationalism; but certain forms of cultural and scientific nationalism assert themselves in a context of the circulation of knowledge. Finally, other sociologists produce a form of epistemic autonomy informed by Western references; for example, noting that the perspective of Ulrich Beck's "methodological cosmopolitanism" is not adjusted to North-East Asia Kazuhisa Nishihara proposes the notion of "methodological transnationalism" (Nishihara, 2013) to cover transnationalism, regionalism and cosmopolitanism to analyse the future of Oknawa, for example.

In South Korea, the necessity of an epistemic autonomy affirmed itself rather early. In political science, Kang Jung In (2006) analyzed the negative influence of Western ethnocentrism and the dependence of the Korean academic world regarding American political science, which resulted in the marginalization of the Korean experience through Western ethnocentrism. Kim Seung Kuk (2014) spoke of an "East Asian Community (EAC)" and introduced the idea of inventing 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. In an in-depth dialogue with Ulrich Beck, Hang San-Jin and Young Hee-Shim (2010) also supported a "bottom-up" methodological cosmopolitanism, by putting Asian history and culture into perspective to transcend the notions of first and second modernity proposed by Ulrich Beck, and to apprehend the complexity and diversity of "Eastern" modernities. Chang Kyung-Sup (2016) developed the theory of compressed modernity defined as "a civilizational condition in which economic, political, social and/or cultural changes occur in an extremely condensed manner in respect to both time and space, and in which the dynamic coexistence of mutually disparate historical and social elements leads to the construction and reconstruction of a highly complex and fluid social system"; he also produced the concept of "internalized reflexive cosmopolitanization" by taking distance from, and improving, Eisenstadt's theory of multiple modernities (2002). Kwang-Yeong Shin (2013) also talks of the double indigenization of social sciences and symmetrical comparison, considering Western theories as indigenous, re-establishing the institutional symmetries and resisting forms of domination in disciplinary fields.

How to define the *Post-Western Sociology*? *Post-Western Sociology* does not only mean encouraging a multiplicity of non-Western narrative voices but also, and above all, identifying the theories they contain and seeing how these can assist us in re-visiting and re-examining Western theories. *Post-Western Sociology* is above all relational, dialogue-based and multi-situated. Contrary to global sociology and similarly to "connected sociology" (Bhambra, 2014), *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 of the co-present actors. Post-Western Sociology relies on different knowledge processes (Rouleau-Berger, 2011, 2016): “knowledge niches” which appear to be specifically European or Asian and do not signify a transferability of knowledge; intermediary epistemological processes which encourage the partial transfer of sociological knowledge from Europe to Asia and from Asia to Europe; transnational epistemological spaces in which European knowledge and Asian knowledge are placed in equivalence. Post-Western Sociology is elaborated from the connections between field practices and the intersecting exploration of what individuals in different situations do, say and think. It utilizes not the differences but the intervals between the perspectives, practices and concepts of Chinese and European sociologies. This is the starting point of the construction process of Post-Western Sociology and as such 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 distinction between Post-Western Sociology, international sociology and global sociology lies (Rouleau-Berger, Li Peilin, 2012; Xie Lizhong, Rouleau-Berger, 2017).

Theoretical discontinuities and knowledge niches

From epistemic autonomies and theoretical discontinuities in knowledge niches we can find situated Chinese concepts or situated Western concepts. Today these concepts do not really circulate but the Post-Western Space will probably favor their mobility from an Eastern context to Western context and reciprocally. So, we have selected the following situated Chinese concepts: individual and State; power, *Suku* and political identity.

Individual and State

In China, in the compressed modernity (Chang, 2010), processes of individuation, linked to regimes of premodernity, modernity and postmodernity, intermingle to hybridize and produce forms of individuation that are both localized and globalized, as they are active in Western societies. Individuals remain heavily dependent on the authoritative state and continue to think of themselves as part of the state, even while developing strategies of individual or collective emancipation. Shi Yunqing (2018) defines the *compressibility* between tradition and modernity, the coexistence of socialism and capitalism, the social and political emancipation of individuals subjected to an authoritative state. From studying the collective litigation of persons pursuing a local

government for violations of their property and social rights, activists would introduce an egalitarian state-individual relationship to relations with the authoritative state. What is at stake here is the question of the production of an “Eastern-style” individuation linked to an authoritative state.

Furthermore, Chinese sociologists have mobilized the notion of “partial individuation” (Yan, 2010) to consider an individual caught between the political control imposed by the state, and the claimed emancipation of individual rights in a regime of contradictory modernity. Individuals were constructed in different temporalities linked to the stages of the modernization and urbanization process; they firstly had to prove their loyalty to the state during the socialist movements of the 1950s, then had to adapt to a market economy structured around the injunction to be oneself. If speaking of individuation in China begs the question of the state-individual relationship, the society of individuals is, however—in Norbert Elias’ sense—constructed by the state’s withdrawal from private life and by the affirmation of increasingly dissenting “voices” in Chinese society. A process of partial individuation is defined by Chinese sociologists under the control of the central state when individual/local government/central government relationships are part of circles linked to interpersonal networks, of which the boundaries are more or less permeable and more or less enable the *self-empowerment* of individuals.

Ji Yingchun (2018) articulates the concepts of Yan’s *partial individualization* (2010), Beck and Grande’ reflexive cosmopolitanism (2010), and Chang’s *compressed modernity* (2010). In the socialist era, the individuals excluded from the patriarchal family, instead of being integrated into a strong welfare state like in Western capitalist societies, were somewhat forgotten in the dominant collectivism. This can be called a process of partial individualization, by emphasizing the inability to access personal rights. This process was accompanied by the re-institutionalization of inequalities pertaining to gender and the institution of family, the separation of spheres of professional life and family life in a context of commercialization, and privatization on labor markets. Very localized figures then emerged, like the trained and qualified young Chinese women, neglected as they could not place themselves in the family system tinged with Confucianism.

Power, Suku and political identity

In the political history of China, one sociological way of thinking about the status of subjectivity is directly related to power in the Chinese context, so we will examine the emergence of another knowledge niche: *Suku*. According to Sun Feiyu (2013), *Suku* is a singular Chinese concept which refers to a political technique used by the CCP and

historical movement, or the practice of confessing individual suffering in a political context and in a collective public forum. *Suku*'s practice of the political confession of suffering is a key phenomenon to understand the whole revolutionary process in China, such as the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, and also the modernization of Chinese society. *Suku* is an instrument of moral regulation by the state in rural life; it established a relationship between peasants, local and traditional structures, and the state power during the revolution. By exploring *Suku*, Sun Feiyu (2013) purposed a new theory of China's modern identity – both cultural and political – confronted with an increasingly globalized world. The examination of *Suku* is not only a way to understand China's Revolution but also to understand the subjectivity of Chinese people during the revolution and in modernity. By means of the political confessional narrative, Sun Feiyu has combined power, identity and subjectivity to analyze the production of revolutionary truth, on the one hand, and social suffering, on the other. This constitutes a new theoretical sociological approach, really situated in the Chinese context, to understand subjective meaning through narratives of suffering from the perspective of political identity. This approach also is a way to deal with the injunction to “be oneself” in modern societies for individuals; the vulnerable groups are especially overexposed in the public space by governmental figures and medical, scientific, religious authorities.

If this way of thinking about *Suku* was inspired by “the banality of evil” in Hannah Arendt's modernity, Sun Feiyu did consider the former to be silent on the individual subjective experience in political manifestation. Nobody in European sociology is using the concept of *Suku*; this Chinese concept could be very useful to understand the cosmopolitan condition, I mean the social suffering, political confession and subjectivity of asylum seekers or refugees from Iran, Syria, Afghanistan or African countries, constrained to tell their narratives to political and institutional actors to get social rights and to be citizens in European society.

So, we can clearly understand *discontinuities* between European and Chinese sociologies about Individual and State, *Suku* in knowledge niches in the two cases.

Theoretical continuities and transnational knowledge

In this part, we deal with the continuities of transnational knowledge in French and Chinese sociologies. We have identified the following theories as illustrations of shared theoretical space between France and China : Chicago's School heritage and Durkheim's theory.

Chicago's School Heritage

In France in 1979 Yves Grafmeyer and Isaac Joseph introduced the work of the Chicago School, then little known in France to introduce a tradition of research in urban sociology very different from the French sociology of the moment. The presentation of this current of research takes place at a time when some French sociologists in the 80s, including Lyon - and I have been part of it - are starting to work in the neighborhoods - the suburbs - where the questions of crime and deviance, where the first riots take place; these events recall the history of the city of Chicago. The numerous monographs made by Robert Park and his followers focused on the social and spatial trajectories of immigrants, daily mobility, neighborhood relations, associative life, spatial segregation of minorities, juvenile delinquency, gangs, homeless, prostitution ... (Grafmeyer, 2004). Issues related to immigration and integration will take on an important status. The introduction of the work of the Chicago School will lead to the development of a new French urban sociology around similar themes: urban "milieux" and downtown areas (Grafmeyer, 1991); migration and ethnic economies (Péraldi, 1999; Tarrus and Missaoui, 2000); residential trajectories and urban life (Authier, 2001); youth, marginalization and intermediate spaces (Roulleau-Berger, 1991, 1999); ethnicity and social worlds (Payet 1995, Boubeker 2003); drugs' economy and youth (Kokoreff, 2003); urban poverty and homeless (Pichon, 1996). These works have privileged methods of ethnographic observation, life stories, case studies, analysis of personal documents ... In the foundation of this urban ecology *"the city is considered as the natural environment of forms of sociability that elaborate daily in a complex game between organization and disorganization, identities and mobilities, frequentation of the similar and experience of the other. In a text that he has always considered as a key moment in his itinerary (Resistances and Sociabilities, 1978), Isaac Joseph sketched the outlines of a research program that refocused on the question of urban cultures, by illuminating it through a close dialogue with the writings of Georg Simmel and Erving Goffman"* (Grafmeyer, 2004, pIV)

If in the French urban sociology that developed from the 80s the localized approach could be privileged as in the "community studies" linked to the Anglo-Saxon tradition, we can observe the same movement in Chinese urban sociology since the 80's linked to the influence of Fei Xiaotong. It should also be remembered that the representatives of the Chicago School, Robert Park and his son-in law Robert Redfield, came to teach sociology in China in 1931- 1932 and in 1948. Fei Xiaotong in the refoundation's process of Chinese sociology, was strongly inspired by them. The Chicago School is one of the most important scientific community in the history of sociology, has played a major role in the

history of Western sociology but also has a continuous influence in non Western countries, especially in China. Urban sociology and what Zhou Xiaohong (2004) identified as social psychology, the two major fields in Chicago school influenced so much the first generation of Chinese sociologists.

If Chicago School chapters have been translated and published in 1979 in France by Yves Grafmeyer and Isaac Joseph, Chinese sociologists very early know about urban sociology, and so many scientific exchanges Chicago School's reference appears like a theoretical mark, *especially* in community surveys. The influence of Chicago's School was pregnant in the two contexts, French and Chinese sociologists have mobilized Chicago School to understand urban neighborhoods, peer groups, gangs, communities of migrants, tribe society ... Today Chicago School in Chinese Sociology is taking again a new important status in all studies on shequ; Liu Neng (2010) showed how Fei Xiaotong, inspired by Chicago School, has developed a space-based sociology where he has used a territorial unit of analysis in rural China especially in three villages in Yunnan in 1940. He purposes to come back to space-based sociology in relying on the methodological concept of «spatial contextuality» connected with the Andrew Abbott's sociological theory focused on the analysis of social life and social actions in a specific time-space context.

Reception of the Durkheim's theory in China

Wang Hejian (2005) proposed to revisit Durkheim by taking an interest in the production of moral goods in the modern Chinese economy. In a perspective of economic sociology, this involves linking economic morality and the social structure, based on an analysis of professional relationships. For example, in large Chinese companies, the social networks are closed, the contractual relationships are very stable and based on trust; in small companies, the professional relationships are unstable and based on distrust, especially when the migrant workers (*nonmingong*) cannot obtain their wages from their foremen. The author agrees with Durkheim on the idea that morality and economy are indissociable, that morality affects all economic relationships in modern societies. In work relationships in China, economic morality is built on obligations and regular exchanges of gifts and counter-gifts—in Marcel Mauss' questioning—which delimits the spaces of social interactions, maintains them. For Wang Hejian, the Durkheimian approach is a critical contribution of the orthodox economy and enables an understanding of the processes of economic and social transition. Morality remains the basis of contemporary societies and of the construction of social links.

Chen Tao (2013) is also interested in the contractual society described by Durkheim, where morality is generated by communal life and where the autonomy and freedom of

action of individuals, constrained to social facts, are based on the respect of social rules to produce a “normal” society. The author believes that the transmission and criticism of Durkheim on the theory of the social contract retained the attention of researchers. One could say that Durkheim uses the theory of the social contract to understand modern society. The exteriority of social facts vis-à-vis individual consciences signifies that the individual is first subjected to social constraints via institutions, as the term is commonly understood, as well as to the “ways of doing, thinking and feeling”, which Durkheim calls the collective ways of being. From Durkheim’s work, Chen Tao retains that the social dominates the individual, but the modern form of the social produces the individual; a society can be defined by an aggregation of individuals in contact with one another and who share common goals, representations, collective beliefs. Individuals can then access autonomy by sharing communal life when they have integrated the social constraints and rules, and after receiving a moral education.

For Qu Jingdong (2017), for example, 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. For this author, Durkheim’s theory is necessary to understand how the collective conscience is constructed, but it must not ignore the citizens’ feelings and traditions in maintaining the political order and civic morality. Qu Jingdong takes up Durkheim’s idea of the tension between differentiation and social unity, by insisting on the necessity of identifying the intermediary levels between society and individual. The challenge of reconstructing society is to find intermediaries between tradition and modernity, so that isolated individuals can rediscover an attachment to the group and moral self-sufficiency, so that the modern political democracy can rely on social groups who can efficiently structure economic life and fully represent public policy requirements. The central issue becomes the question of subjectivation in a Chinese modernity where the state’s power and control are constantly asserted. Qu Jingdong retains Durkheim’s theory of the modern social contract, in the sense of Hobbes and Rousseau, which indicates a consensual contract based on free will and rights and obligations applying to all. With the advent of capitalism, Durkheim notes that, in the social contract, a “just” social organization is based on an agreement guaranteeing equality and freedom among all; it presupposes the assessment of the work of individuals.

Lastly, for Zhao Liwei (2014), Durkheim’s “theory of suicide” appears to be a major contribution that remains very important to understanding modern societies. There are

four types of suicide in the theory—anomic suicide, altruistic suicide, egoistic suicide, fatalistic suicide—which reveal the “negative” links between individuals and society in the relationship between the “normal” and the “pathological” where his theory of the “social division of labor” is centered on social relationships and “positive” individuals. Zhao Liwei retains the duality of human nature and the question of personality development; for him, melancholy is a pathology of modernity and the typology of forms of suicide developed by Durkheim can facilitate a multidimensional analysis of modernity. Durkheim’s discussion on suicide revises different levels of human existence. In this sense, one could say that Durkheim’s study of suicide as a general social fact explains the modern “human condition”.

Narratives and Post-Western Sociology

In each societal context the following question is asked: how does the sociologist access their fields with a non-ethnocentric approach? We have considered that both the people we met during our surveys and ourselves have the same bases of competencies at our disposal (Rouilleau-Berger, 2004). We have adopted an approach which rejected “methodological irony”, otherwise known as scholarly knowledge to produce a concurrent analysis, which is even sometimes corrects the attitudes of the members of ordinary society (Watson, 2001). For example, we have considered the *nonmingong* (peasant-workers) requests for recognition in China and of the young French-Maghrebi who live in working-class suburbs in Lyon, Marseille, Milano. The definition of the framework of the research experience can thus be developed around the production of moral economies, or the transaction, circulation, and exchange of moral and symbolic goods such as confidence, reputation, and consideration.

The production of moral economies is the foundation of the interactions between the researcher and the individuals they meet in various societal contexts and local situations where the sociologist is increasingly confronted by an increase in demands for social and public recognition by populations in situations of vulnerability, poverty and social or economic disaffiliation. It is thus necessary to think about the diversity of multi-sited fields in a comparative perspective by referring to places of social conflict and to requests for recognition, and when we find ourselves in the fields of disqualification, of “bottom up migration”, of vulnerability, of discrimination.

Biopolitical apparatuses are set up and control the intentions and actions of individuals who are expected to produce narrative identities in accordance with the norms of institutions; this double process of injunction to be oneself and of submission to the State could be described as a “double process of subjectification and subjection” (Fassin,

Memmi, 2010). The demand to be a Subject appears as a biopolitical norm present in European and Chinese societies. Harnessing bodies and subjectivities is a cornerstone for moral economies in China and in Western Europe. Thus, subjectivity has been domesticated and socially, politically and economically instrumentalized. Different kinds of social groups struggle and compete to gain access to a moral autonomy which is controlled by others. Individuals have to show a sense of autonomy, being able to act and think reflexively on different social scenes. These scenes happen to provide self-esteem restoration in a way that will allow the harnessing of subjectivities and the domesticating of the individuals' selves. Those who are ascribed to these situations have to enter a regime of inter-individual competition to be granted access to legitimate moral economies. In China, individuals must increasingly demonstrate their capacity for autonomy and enterprise in a context of great economic development. For example, the injunction to be oneself appears clearly to be the norm with the deterioration of the working conditions of the recently qualified young people.

So for the sociologist what about the policy of intimacy? How does the researcher access the *self* of the individuals when reconstituting biographies? Individuals must show themselves to be autonomous, and capable of action and of reflection in various stages of social plans to restore self-respect which permit harnessing the subjectivities and confiscating the “selves” of the individuals. Individuals, signed up to these plans despite themselves, are constrained to competitive relationships and inter-individual competition to access legitimate moral economies. Here individuals endure *double-bind* hardships where there is a gap between being themselves and capturing subjectivities, so difficulties in accessing the “self”. The sociologist is thus also confronted with a *double-bind* situation: on one hand we cannot participate in this process of capturing subjectivities in the survey and on the other hand if they cannot get close to the individuals, no mutual recognition can be installed. For example, fieldwork with invisible populations and «subaltern» groups in fields of “bottom-end” migration, disqualification, discrimination ... can only take place from the moment that the researcher and the actors co-produce a moral economy where the researcher accepts to write them with the demands of meaning and recognition, and where the actors recognise this moral, even political, competency that produces an honour system with variable intensity according to situations encountered and political and societal contexts.

When the life lines of individuals and groups met are often exhausted, researchers were regularly confronted by a feeling of self-shame that the individuals experience and which is not always visible or expressed. The life narrative thus became impractical in some instances by getting too close to that which creates the feeling of shame in the

individuals. Biographical interviews inevitably reopen some wounds, rekindling ancient sufferings. For example, when we have done fieldwork in 2013 in Sichuan about life after earthquake, it was quite indecent to do biographies with victims. The collective and individual biography in practice does not always allow for respecting the narrative pact, so it becomes necessary to construct a methodological scope to redefine the terms of the narrative pact, to invent a methodological plan where making the narrative allows the redefinition of the narrative pact with individuals.

Complex societies produce multiple collective narratives which co-exist in relatively autonomous way or on the contrary, intertwine or fit together. Narratives of contemporary societies and individual life narratives were increasingly thought about in terms of their dynamics and complexity. Life narratives reveal juxtapositions and overlap in societal and civilisational contexts and give access to the plurality of collective narratives. For example, we know that the processes of individuation which are very active in European and Chinese societies are characterised by a multiplication of biographical changes and reversals of situations. Individual biographies are constructed from junctions that correspond with changes in spatial regimes in the form of geographical mobilities, as well as changes in economic regimes in the form of professional mobilities. In the journeys of insecure, discriminated, and segregated populations, “biographical crossroads” (Bessin, Bidart, Grossetti, 2010) appear in a repetitive manner.

Along with metropolization, biographies become cosmopolitan and complex, forming plural identities built not only in different situations but also in multisituated times and spaces. A process of differentiation and individuation is helping to produce a plurality and diversity of complex careers that are now replacing life histories built on continuity and stability. City dwellers, especially vulnerable groups, have to adapt themselves to a diversity of new, constantly overlapping work situations that are difficult to hierarchise and to move from one urban activity to another; as a result, they are having to adopt a succession of different identities in the City. The bifurcations are structured in the conjunction of spatial and professional mobility.

Along the intensification of migration the figure of the new transmigrant (Tarrus, 2000, 2013) is really emblematic to imagine new way to define « polygamic biographies » (Beck, 2006), it means to develop methodological theory to be able to catch the multispatiality, the multitemporality of multisited individual and collective biographies. With each change of place, events (wars, unemployment...) have an influence on the repertoires of individual and collective resources that re-organise to compensate for the social statuses, places and identities of individuals. The succession of junctions and the formation of biographical crossroads – especially in migrants’s lives- result from the

structural processes of the work in different societies and the capacities of action, mobilisation, circulation of various categories of social groups and individuals (Rouleau-Berger, 2010).

For the sociologist, these junctions are difficult to grasp in their materiality in the framework of the fulfilment of biographical narratives, even in a multi-sited ethnographic approach. The biographical narrative can decreasingly be apprehended in a relative linearity but rather as starting from disjointed sequences linked to various spaces and temporalities. For the sociologist, the issue becomes that of taking back the meaning of the conjunctions and biographical ruptures. Obviously this means thinking about the journeys and contexts while avoiding reducing the contextualisation of journeys into distant forms of determinisms (Demazière, Samuel, 2010). The issue becomes: what causes rupture? what causes conjunction? To respond to these questions, the sociologist takes into account the way in which structural processes play on the construction of ruptures and conjunctions and the meaning that is attributed to them by individuals. The researcher is thus invited to produce a biographical method which allows the pluri-situated dynamic of migrant individual and collective experiences to be recreated. This means following them, for example, in their geographic mobilities and in various societal contexts, it means “multi-sited biography”

Conclusion

Post-Western Sociology has become a simultaneously local and global critical conception challenging the established boundaries of certain scientific territories while also taking into consideration new forms of competition and domination of certain conceptions and ways of thinking over others. The geography of non-hegemonic conceptions and ways of thinking is built upon critical sociologies. Intellectual figures, especially critical intellectuals, who used to have little visibility, have come to occupy the international sociological scene leading us to envisage a plurality of academic centers of knowledge. If, in the Anglo-Saxon world, the center of gravity of critical theories shifted in the 1980s, other centers of critical sociology have multiplied and aggregated in regional arenas, notably within the frameworks of scientific Chinese forums. If sociologies appear connected (Bhambra, 2014), at certain moments they can also appear to be disconnected or to connect only to disconnect and reconnect to the rhythm of local or world events and according to the effects of the circulations of ideas, norms and knowledge which may be diffused more rapidly during certain periods and more slowly during others.

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