In the territory of knowledge: state-centered discourses and the construction of society

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Abstract: The concept of society is of fundamental importance in social science research. Yet there is little explicit theorization among the mainstream social sciences of how society should be conceived of geographically. The dominant tendency is to take a state-territorial definition of society for granted. While an increasing reflexivity has recently emerged regarding the relationship between social science discourses and the states' agency and projects, the role of the state's territorial boundaries in structuring the production of knowledge of society has not received equal attention. This article seeks to make a contribution to ongoing work which focuses explicitly on the interrelationships between governmental practice, bodies of knowledge, and territory.

Key Words: territoriality, state, knowledge, society, social sciences

I Introduction

Along with the breakdown of several seemingly durable geopolitical certainties of the 20th century, the last decade has witnessed increasing reflection on the epistemic underpinnings and (geo)political imaginations informing social scientific world descriptions and explanations. Efforts to understand and expose assumptions concerning the spatialities of society and culture, which much of the social scientific thinking has taken for granted, have produced a now extensive literature on the politics of knowledge and its production (e.g. Stone, 1987; Livingstone, 1992; Ó Tuathail, 1996; Simonsen, 1996; Agnew, 1998).

The variety of approaches and topics tackled in this extensive literature ranges from the epistemological questioning of the relationships between power and knowledge (e.g. Harley, 1989; Olsson, 1991) to more concrete historical and geographical analyses of socially, culturally, and politically dominant representational practices, such as imperial

surveys and colonial mappings (e.g. Godlewska & Smith, 1994; Mignolo, 1995; Edney, 1997). In addition to being thematically rich, the literature cuts through several disciplines such as sociology, geography, politics, and history, and also such interdisciplinary fields of study as international relations, cultural studies, and studies in science and technology. The issues analyzed have proven to be intricately connected, just as are their theoretical explanations.

It is possible, however, to discern a line of inquiry based on a relatively coherent set of questions dealing with various aspects of state-centeredness in social scientific knowledge and its production. Since around the mid 1980's, increasing effort has been devoted to enhancing our awareness of how the modern vision of the world as divided into a patchwork of distinct state territories has evolved; how it became the hegemonic geopolitical imagination of the 20th century; how this condition has been 'naturalized' through the assumption of areal congruence between political, economic, and cultural societies; and how state territoriality has figured in the process because of its unconscious or taken-for-granted spatiality.

Consequently, we are now well aware of the characteristics and history of the 'modern geopolitical vision' (Agnew, 1998), its nationalizing and territorializing influence on the social science discourses of society, and how this persistently state-centered conception of the social world has hindered alternative understandings of the spatiality of politics, economy, and culture (e.g. Mac Laughlin, 1986; Dalby, 1991; Murphy, 1991; Ruggie, 1993; Low, 1996; Escolar, 1997). However, in much of the existing literature the territorial assumptions of the social sciences are noted but not explained, or at best their emergence is accounted for on a very general level by referring to the development of the modern territorial state system (for an exception, see Agnew, 1987; 1994; Taylor, 1996; Wallerstein et al., 1996). In this article I seek to provide a more detailed account of embedded statism in social research. I first show that the role of territory in social knowledge production is largely taken for granted, even in analyses dealing explicitly with the state and its relationship with the social sciences. I then explain why this is so by referring to the history of social science thinking in terms of state-territorial units. Finally, I consider how state territoriality has generally organized and structured knowledge production in Europe. The goal is to enhance our understanding of how a state-centered conception of society has emerged and why it continues to structure much social scientific knowledge production.

II Tracing the territorial contours of 'society'

The question of the state's relation to social scientific research has received little attention in the social science literature of the 19th and 20th centuries. Nevertheless, the issue has interested authors concerned with the sociology of knowledge, and more recently, with the nature of the social sciences. Both concerns are somewhat peripheral in social research, but their treatment of the role of state in the history of the social sciences is highly consequential here. Studies in the sociology of knowledge offer valuable insights into the influence of the state, social ideas, and ideologies on scientific world descriptions (e.g. Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Law, 1986; Bailey, 1996). There is also a vast social science literature analyzing the historical linkages between governmental institutions and projects, social knowledge production, and knowledge utilization (e.g. Lerner & Lasswell,

1951; Bulmer, 1982; Wagner et al., 1991). These are useful sources of ideas on the modern state-social knowledge nexus, which in the existing literature is analyzed with increasing contextual sensitivity – hence the slogans "history matters" and "institutions matter", and the realization of the need to study "social sciences in concrete time and space" (see Weiss & Wittrock, 1991: 357-366).

However, as will become evident, there is one particular issue that remains regrettably underdeveloped in this literature: the geographical assumptions of social science thinking. Although here analysis of the state's influence on the social science conceptualization of society might be expected, studies in the sociology of knowledge and studies of the social sciences turn out poor geography. While spatiality has never figured prominently in the sociology of knowledge literature (for an exception, see actor-network-theory e.g. Latour, 1986; Callon, 1986), it is surprising that even where an explicit quest has been made for contextuality, the result has commonly been comparative analysis in terms of national units defined by state-territorial boundaries (e.g. Wittrock et al., 1991). As such, analysis of the role of state territory in structuring social knowledge production is precluded by the implicit assumption that territoriality is not really at issue in the process (see also Tilly, 1992: 330; Agnew, 1998: 51).

This article attempts no exhaustive analysis of the social science literature. Instead it looks at key texts by classic authors whose work reflects sensitivity to the state–social knowledge interaction. These 'sociology of knowledge' analyses are complemented with social science texts, which represent more recent windows into the use and production of the knowledge of society. The result is inevitably not a synoptic view of 'social science research' but rather a set of influential texts which illuminate the degree to which a state-territorial definition of 'society' is taken for granted, even in literature dealing explicitly with the state and its relation to social scientific knowledge.

III Classical conceptions of society

It is commonly acknowledged that the institutionalization of the social science disciplines was intimately linked with the emergence of the modern secularized nation-state and the firm installation of capitalism in the wake of industrialization and urbanization (e.g. Nowotny, 1991). Given massive social and political transformations that accompanied these developments, it is not surprising that many of the 19th-century social thinkers took issue with the state, which at the time was gaining strength both as a political organization and as a willing employer of social knowledge. Still, the emerging social sciences rarely viewed the state as an object of theoretical or methodological reflection, or still less, questioned the nature of their relationship with the state. Rather, the early economists, political scientists, and sociologists often perceived their task as state officials to be one of contributing to a better understanding of changing contemporary social circumstances (Wittrock et al., 1991: 35).

However, awareness of the politics of social knowledge in the texts by Karl Marx, Émile Durkheim, and Max Weber among others is easily found. In fact, a number of Marx's writings contain elements of criticism of the 'bourgeois science' and its relation to the state, which Marx saw as a key reproducer of the ideologies of a capitalist society. In *German Ideology*, originally written in 1845-46, Marx (1978: 163) noted that "[Civil society]

embraces the whole commercial and industrial life of a given stage [of the development of productive forces] and, insofar, transcends the State and the nation, though, on the other hand again, it must assert itself in its foreign relations as nationality, and inwardly must organize itself as state". Thus, while critical of the bourgeois state as an ideology, Marx did not doubt its central role as an arbiter and spatial *formant* of capitalist society.

Marx touched upon the question of the spatial form of society in discussing the coming communist revolution. He wrote that the revolution would overthrow the existing state of society as "history becomes transformed into world history ... Only then will the separate individuals be liberated from the various national and local barriers" (Marx, 1978: 163). These barriers Marx (1978: 166) clearly saw in state-territorial terms: "While the French and the English at least hold by the political illusion, which is moderately close to reality, the Germans move in the realm of the 'pure spirit'". Thus, lacking a consistent theory of the state, and indeed of social spatiality, he ultimately resorted to a state-territorial definition of 'society'. In this way Marx ended up substantiating the irrelevance of the issue in social theory building, and encouraging the received notion of 'society' in social science discourses to come.

Since Marx, several other classic authors have implicitly or explicitly addressed the question of how social science analysis relates to the state. Durkheim was striving for theoretically oriented and scientifically legitimate sociology focusing mainly on the ties and ideas that hold 'society' together. In *The Division of Labour in Society* he outlined the historical transition from traditional communities to modern societies held together by organic solidarity and the division of labor (Durkheim 1893/1984). These social ties and forces Durkheim could address theoretically without defining 'society' in geographical terms. Consequently, he ended up taking the latter for granted and even viewing society and state as organically related in nation-states: "[e]verything compels us to look upon [the state] as a normal phenomenon inherent in the very structure of higher societies, since it advances in a regular, continuous fashion, as societies evolve towards this type". While Durkheim's concern with 'the social' was crucial to the development of social theory, it relegated the question of the geographical extent of society to the background.

Durkheim's (1912/1976) thoughts on the social origins of time and space in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, marked a turn toward an increasing theoretical understanding of the constitution of society. In his last book he concludes that: "a society is not made up merely of the mass of individuals who compose it, the ground which they occupy, the things which they use and the movements which they perform, but above all is the idea which it forms of itself" (Durkheim, 1976: 422). Durkheim (1976: 443) obviously has a clear image of the territorial parameters of society as he writes that: "[s]ociety supposes a self-conscious organization which is nothing other than a classification. This organization of society naturally extends itself to the place which this occupies. To avoid all collisions, it is necessary that each particular group have a determined portion of space assigned to it: in other terms, it is necessary that space in general be divided, differentiated, arranged, and that these divisions and arrangements be known to everybody". Durkheim (1976: 440) points explicitly to the role of collective consciousness and collective representations of territory as crucial constituents of 'society': "[the categories] not only come from society, but the things which they express are of a social nature ... the territory occupied by the society furnished the material for the category of space". Foreshadowing an understanding of the social construction of territory Durkheim

(1976: 440) concludes: "[t]hey have taken from society the models upon which they have been constructed".

It is safe to argue that Durkheim's sociology of knowledge had significant potential for a deeper theoretical insight into the social-territorial constitution of 'society'. Unfortunately, the promising opening that Durkheim outlined in *The Elementary Forms*, as well as the sensitivity to spatiality inherent in his sociology, was lost from mainstream social research soon after Durkheim's premature death in 1917. By that time classical academic sociology had lost much of its political legitimacy and was being overshadowed by applied research on the "mass society" (Wagner, 1991: 237-239).

Steps toward a reflexive sociology of knowledge were also taken by Weber, who was among the first to address sociologically the relations between ideas and interests. Of course, he was not the sole pioneer in the field, but his thoughts are particularly salient because of his interest in the state and especially its geographical form – territory (Gerth & Mills, 1958: 61-62). Weber's (1958a: 78) classic definition of the modern state as a "human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory" is still commonly quoted. Yet his thoughts on the relationship between the state and social knowledge are less often acknowledged.

Weber clearly saw the importance of ideas constructed about the state by men and women, and was well aware of the practical significance these ideas had in governing their social conduct (Weber, 1949: 99, 1958c: 280). He also had a profound understanding of the role of professional knowledge in the rationalization of state government. For Weber (1958b: 232-235) expertize created within the bureaucracy was one of the key factors to explain the relative autonomy of the state. Thus, nearly all the elements needed for a critical analysis of the territorial conception of 'society' are present in Weber's works, even though in a fragmented form. However, Weber never looks into the intersection of the modern state and the production of knowledge of society, or its depiction in maps and statistics. He is not interested in how the notion of the territorial state is reflected in the conception of modern 'society', nor does he discuss the role of territory in the structuring of social scientific knowledge. Instead, in his analyses he frequently conceives of the empirical society in state-territorial terms. This can be seen most clearly in *Economy and Society*, his *magnum opus* (Agnew, 1994: 69), but also in several other works with a comparative orientation. As far as the modern world is concerned, Weber had no conception of human society outside the system of so-called nation-states. He accepted national units as historical ultimates never to be integrated and surpassed, and thus was nationalist both methodologically and politically (Gerth & Mills, 1958: 48).

Weber's thoughts were followed up by Karl Mannheim (1936), who in his seminal work *Ideology and Utopia* outlined a program for the sociology of knowledge. He recognized the role of states as conditioning knowledge of society in general, and social scientific knowledge in particular. "Both the modern state and the bourgeoisie achieved success in the measure that the rationalistic naturalistic view of the world increasingly displaced the religious one ... The absolute state, by claiming as one of its prerogatives the setting forth of its own interpretation of the world, took a step which the later democratization of society tended more and more to set a precedent" (Mannheim, 1936: 36-37). However, even though Mannheim's sociology of knowledge assumed the task of unmasking the "social-situational roots" of thought, his emphasis was firmly on the "question when and where social structures come to express themselves in the structure

of assertions, and in what sense the former concretely determine the latter" (1936: 266). He sought these determinants in the composition of the groups and strata and in the changes this "structural situation" undergoes within a larger, historically conditioned whole, "such as Germany, for instance" (Mannheim, 1936: 309).

Both Weber and Mannheim approach the state from the standpoint of knowing. Still, there are obvious differences in their treatment of the topic, and these can be traced back to the main analytic distinctions existing in the social science literature on the state. Two alternative theoretical vantage points are typically distinguished: state-centered modes and society-centered theories of the state (e.g. Clark and Dear, 1984; Skocpol, 1985). The former implies analysis commencing from the viewpoint of the state and focusing on its actual behavior as an institution. The latter refers to analysis perceiving society and social relations as the primary object of inquiry, with the state's role deriving from these structured relations (Clark & Dear, 1984: 9-10).

It is not difficult to see that Mannheim's analysis reflects a society-centered mode of theorizing. In his understanding the state is related to social knowledge through economic and political interests, which structure and rationalize and thus legitimize a particular world view. This contrasts with Weber's state-centered approach stressing the autonomy of the bureaucratic system based on the social reproduction of experts and expert knowledge. Yet, in all their disparity, these two early accounts of the state's relation to social knowledge have something in common: both take the territorial definition of society for granted. While Weber acknowledges territoriality as one of the defining aspects of the modern state, he does not contemplate its role in the structuration of the knowledge of society. Mannheim, again, does not pay much attention to territory at all, even though his sociology of knowledge arguably has more to say about the social sciences' relation to the state.

Authors such as Marx, Durkheim, and Weber instigated an upsurge in the development of social theory by the early 1900's. However, some progress notwithstanding, the social sciences had not been able to achieve full academic institutionalization, and thus remained vulnerable in the face of changing circumstances. During a period from 1900 to the Second World War the theoretically strong Durkheimian and Weberian strands of sociology had proven increasingly inadequate for an understanding of European political and social transformations, and demands for new and different knowledge had been expressed by state governments with growing policy-making tasks (Nowotny, 1991: 38; Wittrock et al., 1991: 37). The rise of empirical, application-oriented social research, particularly in European universities and research institutes, left little room for more academic social theory building (Wagner, 1991: 233). This, again, had far-reaching consequences for the geographical assumptions of 'society' prevailing in social scientific research.

IV The state, knowledge and society in contemporary social theory

C. Wright Mills (1959) wrote his methodological best seller *The Sociological Imagination* at a time when academic and theoretically oriented social research was reactivating after several decades of somewhat haphazard development. The book became influential not only as a canonic textbook, but also because of its sensitivity to the issues of knowledge

production and its political ramifications. It also touches upon the 'family ties' between social scientific reasoning and the state. Although Mills (1959) saw the nation-state as one relevant unit for social scientific analysis, he did not portray it as a transhistorical one. "The point is that the nation-state is the frame within which [social scientists] most often feel the need to formulate the problems of smaller and of larger units. Other 'units' are most readily understood as 'pre-national' – or as 'post-national'" (Mills, 1959: 150). Thus, Mills acknowledges the state's central position as a modern political organization, but laments its overemphasis as a unit of social analysis. What he does not question are the spatial implications of this overemphasis because his methodological point was to link social theory with *historical*, but not geographical imagination.

Mills' book was written in the critical spirit of the Frankfurt school and at least partly directed against instrumentalist applied research dominating mainstream social science, particularly in Europe but also in the United States. The critical analysis and evaluation of 'policy-oriented' social research has grown substantially since the 1950's, along with the increasing elbow room for academic social theory building (e.g. Lerner, 1959; Shils, 1969). Particularly since the late 1970's this research interest has attracted scholars working within 'the studies of social sciences' (e.g. Knorr, 1977; Bulmer, 1978, cf. Weiss, 1991).

Scholars such as Peter Wagner (1989), Björn Wittrock (1989), and Helga Nowotny (1993) have written extensively about the close interaction of social inquiry with the evolution of the modern state and of the secular transformation of European societies from preindustrial to industrial, urban, and modern. Wittrock (1989; 1993) views social sciences as modes of institutionally reproduced discourse and puts particular emphasis on the political-institutional setting within which social sciences were able to achieve a degree of scientific and political legitimacy. He concludes that the latter depended largely on the establishment of certain linkages between scientific discourses and politico-administrative institutions and their broad policy traditions. By the term 'social science discourse structuration', Wittrock (1989) refers to the mutual alignment of the modes of societal knowledge and state policy making in the new European nation-states of the 19th and early 20th century.

In a similar vein Peter Wagner (1989) has sought to shed light on the development of social science discourses emerging in complex interplays of intellectual traditions on the one hand, and in relation to political structures on the other. According to Wagner (1989), these two important arenas for 'discourse structuration' meet and are mediated by scientific institutions which are the societal locus of legitimate discourse. Thus, he stresses that social science discourses are shaped by their societal contexts, but at the same time by the interaction among social scientists. The interaction of these two again shapes and restructures these very contexts – the scientific and the political fields. Both Wagner (1989) and Wittrock (1989) rely on Anthony Giddens' notion of structuration in the development of social science discourses. Social scientists "draw on the rules and resources of [scientific] institutions as they are instantiated in the particular historical constellation and as they relate to the political structures" (Wagner, 1989: 510).

This work is important in that it pays attention to the involvement of social science discourses in the formation of the modern nation-state. Furthermore, the discourse structuration is contextualized and put into historical perspective. Thus, we learn that the late-19th-century transformation from the liberal concept of the state to a more interventionist one, along with the institutionalization of societal knowledge production,

the professionalization of academic work, particularly research, and the need for social reforms brought about by the deep social transformations in the modernizing Europe, all heavily conditioned the conceptualization of 'society' in social sciences (Wittrock, 1989; Wagner, 1989). However, the resulting 'permanent cognitive affinity' between the state and legitimate discourse in social sciences is not viewed in terms of its hidden geographical agenda. Instead, both Wagner and Wittrock tend to uncritically accept the idea of comparative methodology using 'nations' or 'states' as the units of comparison. Thus, Wittrock (1989; 1993) for instance talks about "European societies" and "the German context" without specifying how he conceives of these entities. Similarly Wagner (1989; 1994) discusses rather unproblematically "Italian and French sociology, political science and economics" as he asserts the need to compare European, English and American societies.

Analysts of social policy making have typically adopted a more state-centered mode of analysis. For example, Theda Skocpol and Dietrich Rueschemeyer (1996: 3) point out that "the modern social sciences took shape in close interaction with early attempts by national states to deal with the social consequences of capitalist industrialization". Consequently, the social sciences as particular modes of knowing about the social world, as well as new knowledge-bearing groups and knowledge generating institutions, all came to reflect the states' concerns in modern social policies. Along these lines Stein Kuhnle (1996) has looked at the role of the state's capabilities to collect and analyze social statistics as a key factor contributing to the creation of social insurance programs in Denmark, Norway and Sweden. He argues that official statistics were important in legitimating the idea that government should actively address social problems, and that they affected the modes of thought and argument in both the social sciences and public policy.

In light of the above discussion, it seems that a lot of useful research exists on the relationship between social science discourses and the states' agency and projects. Yet, neither the early sociology of knowledge nor the more recent studies of social sciences have given the role of territoriality in social knowledge production the attention one might expect. Reasons for the latter are hard to pin down, but echoing Soja's (1989) notion of the subordination of space in the social sciences, Agnew (1993: 251-252) has pointed out the failure within mainstream social science research to deal with space and spatiality in anything but national or structural terms. Both national and structural accounts of space are hidden geographies in the sense that they are usually not the result of conscious reflection on how space and society are related, and thus, how society is spatially constituted (Simonsen 1996: 494). Taylor (1996) comes to much the same conclusion, but in terms of the inert treatment of space as a platform within mainstream social science research that has taken state territoriality as the given spatiality of society (see also Wallerstein et al., 1996).

Thus, it is not surprising that some of the most innovative research on the territorial assumptions of social scientific discourses has arisen from spatially sensitive theorization within sociology and human geography. For example, Jim Mac Laughlin (1986) has analyzed the state-centered assumptions prevailing in the mainstream social sciences of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. By distinguishing two opposite intellectual traditions – one state-centered and the other anarchist – he outlines the role of the "statist" social sciences and nationalistic historiography in the political and cultural consolidation of the European nation-states. Mac Laughlin (1986: 16) points out that the social sciences

developed largely as nationalist schools operating in intensely nationalist environments. In mainstream social scientific discourses the state was regarded as natural and the preeminent vehicle of social development and 'progress' (see also Wallerstein et al., 1996: 26, 82). The discursive co-structuration of the social sciences and the state has had far-reaching consequences, which include the belief that national concerns generally replaced local ones in 19th century Europe, and the inclination to view all groups, even dissident minorities, in terms of an idealized national norm (Mac Laughlin, 1986: 14-16).

Mac Laughlin's observations presaged a growing research interest which, since the mid 1980's, has been expanded by authors seeking to expose the received spatialities of the mainstream social science discourse (e.g. Agnew, 1989; Wallerstein, 1991; Taylor, 1993; Murphy, 1993; Anderson, 1996). Nevertheless, the ramifications of the territorial conception of society extend far beyond mere theoretical imagination. In his analysis of the interrelation of state and social sciences, Anthony Giddens (1985: 180-181) argues that in the modern period the latter have been constitutive of the 'reflexive monitoring' of social reproduction – the collection of official statistics and the production of knowledge for the self regulation of societies – which is an integral feature of the modern nation-state. Official statistics mediate between the social sciences and the state in two ways. On the one hand statistical data direct the analysis toward an operationalization of 'society' as defined by the state territory. On the other hand, the collection of statistics implies a (social scientific) understanding of society and social processes, that is, particular concepts and theories of 'society', which are part of the social reproduction of the nation-state. Thus, the use of official statistics links social sciences and the state both empirically and discursively (Giddens, 1985: 181).

Giddens' (1985) notion of reflexive monitoring points in a useful way at links forged between the emerging nation-states and institutionalizing social sciences. Social science disciplines were striving for resources and legitimacy, and were therefore tightly connected to the *practical* interests of the state (Desrosières, 1991; Katznelson, 1996). This was particularly obvious in the case of political science, sociology, and economics, which produced systematic knowledge relevant to the bid for state management, social control, and the accumulation of wealth (Agnew, 1994: 69). During much of the 19th and the 20th centuries, the societal legitimacy of the social sciences has been measured against their relevance to issues, problems, and challenges as framed by the dominant political power of the modern world – the state. Thus, when Durkheimian sociology failed to provide knowledge that would seem useful for dealing with the problems of the 'French society', or when Weberian sociology failed to meet the expectations of the German state for similar reasons, their intellectual spaces were soon recaptured by more applied social research (Wittrock et al., 1991; Wagner, 1991: 240). The latter had its roots in descriptive and statistical 'Cameralist' and reformist studies, which sought to assist the emerging states in their increasingly managerial tasks from the 17th century onwards (Manicas, 1987: 38; Rueschemeyer & Van Rossem, 1996: 152). It is to this context of knowledge, its hidden geography, and its role in structuring the production of knowledge of society that I now turn.

V Territoriality as a hidden agenda in the knowledge of society

Robert Sack (1986: 19) defines territoriality as a strategy to affect or control people, phenomena and relationships by delimiting and asserting control over a geographic area. By extension, we can understand state territoriality as a strategy of control and influence connected to states' governmental practices. For our purposes it is important to underline that these have not been historically invariable. Research on the history of state practices has shown that modern states differ markedly from their predecessors in terms of their capacity to control geographical space both practically and cognitively (e.g. Giddens, 1985; Ruggie, 1993; Häkli, 1994; Paasi, 1996). Furthermore, it is now understood that the practical and cognitive strategies of territorial control are interlinked and evolve historically in constant interplay (Mann, 1984; Murphy, 1991). Whereas the pre-modern state had porous frontiers and lacked the means to effectively regulate social life, the modern state organizes its practices, defines its sovereignty and population territorially, and imagines itself as a territorial unit (Ruggie, 1993; Häkli, 1994).

Many of the defining features of modern state territoriality have only come about with social and technological innovations in the practices of government. In particular, the production and utilization of knowledge of society has played a central role in the modernization of state government. Better knowledge of the state's domain and population has enabled increasing governmental capacities for territorial control and political regulation. It has also given rise to particular cognitive and discursive structures through which the social world is portrayed, defined as the 'society' in state-territorial terms, and legitimated in connection with the state's governmental practices (Häkli, 1998). It seems evident that the *sources* of the territorial conception of 'society' should be sought in the context of this vast machinery of knowledge production rather than from the development of social theory as such.

However, this is not to say that social theory, and social sciences in general, are exempt from the problem of state-centeredness due to the state-territorial definition of society. While a given analysis may not be state-centered in the sense of openly supporting the state governmental policies, it nevertheless may be statist in the sense that it adopts the state's perspective on the social world. Here the role of state territoriality in structuring the production of knowledge of society is crucial. Instead of reflecting 'reality-as-it-is', knowledge is both conditioned by social relations and involved in their social construction. Furthermore, knowledge always represents particular points of view highlighting certain features of the social world while disregarding others. Different perspectives of knowledge imply unmentioned preconditions, techniques, and practical and historical contexts which enable and regulate the representation of social space (Bensman and Lilienfeld, 1973; Driver, 1992; Agnew, 1993). As an important center for the production of knowledge, the modern state can be characterized as a powerful and enduring *perspective* on the social world – one embedded in the political and administrative practice of the state. A defining feature of this perspective is that it equates 'society' with the population within the state's territorial domain (Murphy, 1996:103). To the degree that social scientific discourses adopt this conception of society, they are reproducing a state-centered view of the social world.

It is precisely the territorial state's growing need for utilizable knowledge, together with the inevitable perspectivity of social knowledge production, that opened avenues for

state-centeredness in social research. The historical interplay of knowledge and political practice is well captured in Michel Foucault's (1991: 93) notion of *governmentality*. The term refers to modes of thinking and acting in state government since roughly the mid 18th century, particularly to states' growing engagement with institutionally based, professionally produced accounts of society (see also Revel, 1991; Desrosières, 1991). According to Foucault (1991: 102) there is a deep historical link between "the movement that brings about the emergence of population as a datum, as a field of intervention and as an objective of governmental techniques, and the process which isolates the economy as a specific sector of reality, and political economy as the science and the technique of intervention of the government in that field of reality". Not surprisingly, economy was the first social science discipline to achieve institutionalization and acceptance as a policy-relevant field of knowledge in Europe (Tribe, 1991; Wittrock et al., 1991: 37).

Thus, while 'methodological statism' is historically deeply rooted in social theory the problem is certainly not confined to the realm of conceptualization, which is a mere surface manifestation of the much more voluminous production of knowledge governmentally connected to and centered on the territorial state (Ó Tuathail, 1994). To really grasp the relationship between knowledge and power it is important to reveal the hidden geography of the media through which society was portrayed 'for reasons of state', but also in more academic analyses of the social world. A useful starting-point for the exploration of this geography of knowledge is the notion of state territory as a category denoting an area, a community, or a set of social relations across a given area, none of which can be perceived directly. Scientific or governmental observation of territories is possible only by means of "visualizing devices" like statistics and maps. While the latter two have certainly not been exclusive sources of governmental insight, they nevertheless possess two important qualities which explain why they have become the privileged route to scientific government.

First, maps and statistics enable synoptic representation of territory. Before the age of statistical and cartographic surveys, rulers and governments lacked an overall view of their subjects, let alone numerous other features of the kingdom. Estimations of the size of the population often resulted in gross exaggerations, yielding significantly larger figures than those achieved by the first statistical surveys (e.g. Johannisson, 1988). In the absence of proper maps, the realm was primarily known as a succession of places, epitomized by the medieval itinerary which was predominantly a written description of the route and travel time between places (Harvey, 1980). Instead of the panoptic "view from nowhere" that the modern map gives, rulership in a mapless world involved a considerable amount of horseback riding in order to produce knowledge of the realm (Biggs, 1999).

Second, maps and statistics exist in a consistent relation to the objects they represent. This quality, dubbed 'optical consistency' by Bruno Latour (1986), is achieved through the techniques and rules that govern cartographic representation and the production of statistical data. Theodore Porter (1992) views such rules as a means to remove arbitrariness, idiosyncracy and judgement from any social interaction. From this standpoint, the rules of *quantification* in cartographic and statistical surveys are much more than mere technical conventions. They appear as a strategy for overcoming distance and distrust which characterize personal experience and communication. Quantification turns local subjective worlds into public knowledge that is 'objective' in the sense of being impersonal. Hence, objectivity, secured by the rules of quantification of social and natural

phenomena, is a "technology of distance: geographical, intellectual, and social" (Porter, 1992: 640). It empowers modern authorities devoid of the traditional 'divine right' or personal charisma. The scientist's armoury of machines and standards, which enable uniform measurement, also facilitates long distance control (Law 1986).

A related but equally important effect of optical consistency is that it opens up a direction back from the documents to the world they portray, and thus encourages policies first to be designed on paper and then implemented concretely. In this sense optical consistency is absolutely crucial for the instrumental use of knowledge. However, it should not be confused with impartiality or neutrality in the knowledge of society. Nor should the significance of maps and statistics be limited to their role as panoptic representations of society and territory. As will become evident, the 'political geography of knowledge' embedded in territorial reconnaissance is much more complex than that (Häkli, 1998).

It is precisely the practices necessary for securing the synoptic and consistent qualities of knowledge that tie maps and statistics so tightly to state government and its increasing territorialization. According to Latour (1986) optical consistency requires a particularly stable and disciplined system of data collection, one that is most often provided by a specialized bureaucracy (see also Kuhnle, 1996: 245). Furthermore, to really serve as a panoptic view over the whole domain, statistical and cartographic data collection must have been organized geographically to cover the whole state territory. Thus, while statistics and maps have been instrumental in making society visible in a manner relevant to its government, they have also been quite concretely involved in the construction of the territorial-administrative structures of the state (Dandeker, 1990; Häkli, 1994). Conversely, the territorially constituted fields of knowledge have also contributed to the consolidation of the territorial state and the construction of society as a territorial unit (see also Ruggie, 1993).

Statistics and maps have certain qualities that explain why they grew to be an important part of modern state government. Inscribing social space on paper fixed it as a representation and made it movable across time and space (Latour, 1986). This time-space compression, that is, centralized accumulation of time and space in governmental archives, revolutionized the ways in which societies were governed and conceived of (Harley, 1988; Harvey, 1989; ó Tuathail, 1994). State institutions were developed with the particular task of producing knowledge about territory and society, and new ways of seeing and thinking in and about society as a territorial unit emerged. The interplay of cartographic and statistical survey, and new knowledge-based policy making then gradually established 'society' as a field of action and population defined by the state territory. The state-centered discourses on society, produced and reproduced by governmental agents, scientists, and laymen alike, began to grow upon this well demarcated foundation.

While in general this interplay of knowledge and political practice has been conducive to the territorialization of Europe, the development has not followed a single path. Marcelo Escolar (1997) provides a useful analysis of the differences in the state-knowledge relationship in different political-administrative contexts. In politically centralized or centralizing states, such as France, Sweden, and England, mapmaking activities and statistical surveys fell in the hands of the government early on. The economic and institutional resources of these states facilitated coordinate mappings and resulted in

synoptic knowledge of the territory more quickly than in the more decentralized states, such as the United Provinces (later Holland) or Austria (Escolar, 1997: 60-63). In the latter case regional powers could resist attempts to put the state on the map by refusing to provide the necessary data or to co-operate in the surveys of their private lands (Buisseret, 1987: 106). Thus, while mapping undoubtedly promoted geographical unity (Edney, 1997), the political context of mapping made a difference in how readily this unity was adopted as a state-territorial norm (Escolar, 1997).

These differences notwithstanding, all emerging states gradually deemed it necessary to represent their territories and overseas expansions. Indeed, it is important to note that the imperial and colonial aspirations of the European great powers played as important a role in the development of statistical and cartographic representation as the governmental will to map domestic lands and people (Godlewska, 1994: 34; Edney, 1997). This tellingly reveals the 'international' nature of European and global territorialization; not only did colonial rule and overseas exploration promote territorial reconnaissance and the consolidation of state power, but by the end of the 18th century scientific cartography had also become the legitimate means of fixing state boundaries, which is an 'international affair' by definition (Escolar, 1997). Furthermore, the scientific skills and techniques required in cartographic survey and statistical analysis were transmitted and disseminated through a community of scientists and administrators that extended well beyond any political boundaries (Law, 1986; Livingstone, 1992).

Institutionally the linkages between the territorial state government, the projects of cartographic and statistical mapping, and the emerging social sciences were centered on scientific societies such as the *Royal Society* in London, the *l'Académie Royale des Sciences* in Paris, the *Sozietät der Wissenschaften* in Göttingen, and the *Kungliga Vetenskapsakademin* in Stockholm (Frängsmyr 1989). These instutions enjoyed state patronage and were instrumental in both forging the European networks of scientist and administrators, and securing the standardization and dissemination of rules and techniques for the production of knowledge about society. Therefore, while there is a close interdependency between the territorialization of state government and the mapping of the state's domestic territory, every case of the state-centered construction of society should be understood as part of a wider 'international' development.

In sum, the age of reconnaissance had a profound impact on the ways in which societies were governed and conceived of. Maps and statistics provided governments with synoptic and optically consistent knowledge which enabled indirect strategies in governance, including social policy making and planning. By creating the illusion of a transparent 'visible society' they also contributed to the increasingly state-territorial notion of society. Cartographic and statistical data assumed an important role in the governmental routine, but also encouraged a more analytical perception of society, particularly in policy-oriented social research (Porter, 1986; Hacking, 1991; Edney, 1997). What resulted is the discursive co-structuration of 'society' as a territorially conceived unit, and the states' policies aimed at the control, regulation and government of the social world thus understood (Foucault, 1991). This is Giddens' (1985) 'reflexive monitoring' with a particular hidden geography to it.

The conception of society within 19th and 20th century mainstream social sciences has reflected these developments in two partly overlapping but distinguishable ways. First, social science theorization has very often taken the state-territorial constitution of society

for granted. In fact, as I show above, statist definitions of 'society' are common enough to be found even in the language of the sociology of knowledge and studies of the social sciences. Second, the social sciences have reproduced state-centered views of society in their research practice by taking part in the 'reflexive monitoring' of the social life integral to the functioning of modern state governance. In this case state territoriality has structured the production of knowledge of society in a more direct but equally implicit manner through what could be called 'methodological statism'. The latter refers to the hidden geographies of knowledge production including the mechanisms and practices of cartographic and statistical surveillance, data collection, and distribution, but also the circulation of historical and geographical knowledge for example through school education and mass media (Williams & Smith, 1983; Paasi, 1996; Escolar, 1997; Häkli, 1999). Because of the taken-for-granted and hidden territorial geography of knowledge production, the state's perspective has often been taken for granted in the study of the social world.

VI 'Society' in the political geography of knowledge

My intentions in this article have been twofold. Firstly, I have sought to chart the extent to which the state-territorial conception of 'society' has been taken for granted in social science discourses. Examples from authors within the early sociology of knowledge, as well as the recent studies of the nature of social sciences clearly show that the question of what 'society' is has typically not been addressed in geographical terms. This observation parallels those of Mac Laughlin, Taylor, Agnew, and others who have argued that mainstream social sciences have been state-centered in their approaches to the social world. Paradoxically, the insensitivity to geographical assumptions about society is also present in the recent literature dealing with the state-centeredness of social knowledge. Here the state's relation to social knowledge production has aptly been explored in connection with, for instance, the development of capitalism, the ensuing need to regulate a new kind of civil society in 19th-century Europe, the rise of social insurance, modern social policy making, and statistical thinking (e.g. Porter, 1986; Wagner et al., 1991; Rueschemeyer & Skocpol, 1996). Yet the role of the state's territorial boundaries in circumscribing knowledge about society has not been given equal treatment. While an increasing reflexivity has emerged regarding the relationship between social science discourses and the states' agency and projects, the geographical contexts within which these interlinkages are analyzed have often been taken for granted either as countries, nations, or societies, but nevertheless defined and demarcated by the state territory. This is what Taylor (1996: 1920) calls the 'embedded statism' of social scientific research.

Thus it is possible to talk about a hidden geographical agenda in mainstream social science, where the common assumption is still that the state territory adequately describes the spatiality of 'society'. This dominant geographical imagination has guided social research both practically and conceptually, and its relevance has only recently come to be challenged by the interrelated processes of economic, political, and cultural localization and globalization which <u>may</u> be eroding the world of nation-states (Agnew, 1989; Taylor, 1996). The consequences of this hidden agenda include what Agnew (1993: 254) calls the 'nationalization' of the representation of space; the indistinct use of the terms nation,

state, and society; and the dominance of the scale of the state at the cost of more place-specific or global analyses (Taylor, 1996: 1920). This view is shared by Immanuel Wallerstein, who has insisted upon the need to discard 'society' defined by state boundaries as the given unit of social scientific analysis. According to Wallerstein (1991) we should "unthink" 19th century social science, and create "new cartography and new statistics" which enable the visualization of the historical development of the world economy.

Wallerstein's (1991) call for new maps and statistics suggests that to expose the *territorial* assumptions of social knowledge production, it is necessary to look at the intertwined histories of knowledge, territoriality, and the modern state. It is here that we come to the second task I have sought to accomplish in this article, which is to explore state-centeredness in the knowledge of society by looking at the intimate relationship between the production of cartographic and statistical knowledge of society and the state's increasing territoriality. I am arguing that the origins of a state-centered conception of society can not be reduced to social theoretical discourse alone, and that attention should be paid to those practices which routinely reproduce images of clearly demarcated spheres of social action defined by state boundaries.

The governmental practices through which the state territory was constructed as the scale for representing the social world and framing issues of political importance also contributed to the production of society as a discursive formation in the modernizing Europe. This social reality, centered on the state, has eventually come to be taken as a given not only in the activities of state government, but also in numerous other spheres of social life, including social research. The increasing role of the state as a context of discourse was intimately associated with the search for new rational ways of governing societies. Rational government came to require empirical knowledge of society and rest on conceptions of *society* and *space* no longer attached to the territory as a mere administrative realm, but rather the multiple relations within the population and territory (Foucault, 1991). It was also largely through systematic survey that the state gained a better grip of its territory and the society "within" (Hacking, 1991: 181-196; Revel, 1991). When contemplating the relationship between the state and knowledge about society, this development marked the consolidation of discursive structures and limits of knowledge of the social world stemming from and contributing to the governmental interests of the state.

States' role as significant centers of symbolic power in modern societies is not without consequences. One of these is that much social scientific knowledge is still discursively related to the state (Wittrock, 1989: 497-508; Wallerstein et al., 1996: 83). This involvement is based on a shared perspective from which the social world is viewed and portrayed. Among the "statist" discursive limits are the conception of 'society' as a territorially confined unit defined by the national state, the conception of space as a static container of social relations, and the conception of maps and statistics as impartial mirror-images of reality. These implicit understandings of knowledge and society are routinely reproduced not only by the vast mechanisms of 'reflexive monitoring' that inform the states' conduct and policy making, but also by much of the empirical social research conducted both inside and outside governmental institutions (Wagner, 1990; Harley, 1989; Agnew, 1993).

The persistence of state-centeredness is particularly intriguing in studies where political areal units make little sense in understanding the phenomena in question.

Environmental issues are perhaps the most often quoted example (e.g. Murphy, 1996). Challenges to state-centric conception of society have also arisen from within recent geopolitical changes, such as the revival of ethno-regional movements, trans-regional economic networking, and new forms of trans-boundary governance within the European Union (e.g. Le Galès & Lequesne, 1998; Herb & Kaplan, 1999). These challenges have been tackled by those adopting critical approaches to geopolitics (e.g. Ashley, 1987; Shapiro, 1997; Ó Tuathail & Dalby, 1998), but the latter have yet had little influence on the 'realist' mainstream political science analysis. Paradoxically, even though new technologies of electronic surveillance, such as the GIS, in principle enable the visualization of societies beyond political boundaries, the very context of application of such knowledge often leads to its reterritorialization (e.g. MacEachern et al., 1992; Pickles, 1995).

The fact that the state still functions as one of the most powerful organizations of knowledge production and dissemination may explain why state-centeredness still rules, and alternative conceptualizations of society have not easily gained foothold in the mainstream social sciences. In this regard there is a strong inertia built into the states' concrete governmental praxis, but also into the myriad instances of intellectual reproduction ranging from school education to national broadcasting (Dougherty et al., 1992; Paasi, 1996). All these together represent a social force which seems to have been able to effectively resist pressures on the state-centered conception of 'society' coming from the processes of globalization/localization, and the concomitant revival of interest in spatiality and scale among various social science disciplines. Fortunately, it is more and more widely realized that we should sensitize ourselves to the challenges of exploring alternative ways of conceiving society and space, that is, of crossing and rewriting the boundaries which we have inherited through the history of governmental power.

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