

# **GLOBAL SOCIAL SCIENCES?**

**ON THE STATE AND THE POTENTIAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE IN MAJOR WORLD REGIONS**  
(Working Title)

## ***A Global Perspectives Series of Special Collections***

Coordinated by

Helmut K Anheier  
Editor-in-Chief

*Global Perspectives* addresses fundamental points of debate within the social sciences and humanities as they relate to trans-disciplinary and transnational research. Next to substantive fields such as cultures, values, institutions, networks, exchange systems, technologies or international relations (which make up the Journal's various sections), this includes a profound interest in the state of the social sciences in different parts of the world, how they differ and interact, what challenges they face, and what their potentials might be, also in view of greater, more open and equitable relationships.

While some issues are well-known (in no particular order: existing hierarchies, exclusionary structures, language barriers and the increasing dominance of English, citation networks, hiring practices, political censorship and restrictions, funding, the capacity of administrative systems, author parasitism, cultural and political issues, among others), there are new and emerging ones such as open access, internet policies, cyber-readiness, changing geo-politics as well as increasing mobility limitations for social scientists and students.

Yet irrespective of prevailing realities, the social sciences, at least nominally, maintain the ideology or aspiration of a unified, global endeavor for a better understanding of human societies, the economy, cultures, and politics – even though they fall woefully short of realization. Over 150 years after the founding period of the social sciences, we have significant fragmentation and unevenness in this quest for understanding the human condition. There are distinct hierarchies and exclusionary structures between the “West” and regions like Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and many parts of Asia, while other countries even entire regions (e.g., most small island states) are terra incognita, at least from a Western vantage point, and relegated to “areas studies” at best.

At the same time, distinct social science traditions have emerged and are emerging in many countries and regions outside the West, and there seems a new interest in

developing approaches that rely less on Western foundations and conventional academic practices. The postcolonial debate is one prominent example of this, among others.

**For *Global Perspectives*, the questions become: are the social sciences drifting further apart or is there a possibility of greater dialogue even cohesiveness to advance our knowledge and understanding globally rather than in some regions or countries only? And if, so, why, how and for what?**

Against this background, *Global Perspectives* launches a systematic assessment of the state of the social sciences in different parts of the world, each curated by a dedicated editor (or editors). Given the complex scope of the social sciences with many specific subfields, methodologies, curricula as well as varying degrees of professional institutionalization and different political backgrounds, we will aim for **reflective essays** rather than comprehensive stock-taking.

Each of the “regional” special collections would have a separate introductory paper setting the stage and introducing the main issues, and a Conclusion offering an overall regional assessment.

Of course, each chapter could address many different issues. To make sure that there is some common structure and comparability across the various regions, we suggest that chapters relate these topics:

**A. Research: What are the main topics or issues currently?**

For example:

- Economic development, role of business
- Inequalities, role of elites
- Cultures and identities
- State capacity, public administration
- Political systems, political decision-making
- Internal and external conflicts
- Social cohesion, self-organization, civil society

**B. Institutionalization: Are the social science well established?**

Issues include:

- Professionalization
- Research funding, major sources and issues
- Academic freedom
- Relations among disciplines
- Career patterns, professoriate, research staff
- Policy relevance
- Decolonization debate or some other major topic being debated

**C. Curricula matters: What is being taught?**

- Teaching content (main curricular modules at BA, MA level); see research topics: are these actually thought? What is balance between “Western” versus “regional curricula content?

- Undergraduate and graduate interest
- PhD education, funding

The overall suggested structure of each regional special collection would be:

- Introductory essay: what are the issues, political context, what is special about the region, and what are common themes etc.
- 4-5 essays dealing with research topics in A above
- 1 essay addressing topics in B above
- 1 essay about topics in C above
- Conclusion: a paper taking stock and adding comparative perspectives

Each essay can run up to 15,000 words, with a 5,000-word minimum, aiming around 8,000 excluding references. Multimedia content is possible. Refer to *Global Perspectives* instruction to authors for detail.

Recall: the idea is to initiate a structured dialogue among the world's social science regions, including North America and Europe. Therefore, once the special collections have been submitted, we will commission commentaries from other regions, and invite rejoinders as well.

I will provide the overall coordination, and each special regional collection will have its own separate editor(s). The editor(s) would solicit papers and, if they wish, issue an open call for papers. Accepted papers would be published as they become available, assuming that the regional editor(s) have submitted an introductory essay.

- Editorial – Introducing the GLOBAL SOCIAL SCIENCE SERIES, by H. K. Anheier
  - Africa, curated and edited by Ebenezer Obadare (Council on Foreign Relations, Washington DC)
  - Arab World, curated and edited by Lisa Andersen (Columbia University) et al
  - Caribbean (case of small island states and regional cooperation), Jessica Byron-Reid (Universities of the West Indies)
  - India, curated and edited by Bishnu Mohapatra (Krea University)
  - Latin America, curated and edited by Juan Pedro Blois (National Scientific and Technical Research Council & National University of General Sarmiento, Argentina) and Miguel Centeno (Princeton)
  - China, and Taiwan, Kuo-ming Lin (National Taiwan University) and Kin-man Chan (National Chengchi University, Taiwan).

- Commonwealth of Independent States, Marina Lebedeva, MGIMO, Moscow, Russia
- Overall comparative essay, concluding thoughts, Arjun Appadurai (NYU / Bard)
  - Invited commentaries
  - Rejoinders

We hope to initiate the series of special collection in the summer of 2022, and have papers submitted in the fall. The aim is to start publishing in winter 2022-3, following peer review.

In mid 2023, we plan to convene all special collection editors and the editors of *Global Perspectives* to a joint meeting, funding permitting, to develop a forward-looking agenda for greater cooperation and interaction among the social science communities from different parts of the world.

For further information contact [Anheier@hertie-school.org](mailto:Anheier@hertie-school.org) or [Anheier@luskin.ucla.edu](mailto:Anheier@luskin.ucla.edu).