Counter-Mapping as Method: Locating and Relating the (Semi-)Peripheral Self

Boatca, Manuela

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Manuela Boatcă *

Abstract: »*Counter-Mapping als Methode: Verortung und Relationierung des (semi-)peripheren Selbst*«. Drawing on several critical cartographers' approach to counter-mapping as method and on Boaventura de Sousa Santos' "sociology of absences," I discuss their combination – counter-mapping as a method for the sociology of absences – as a means of enhancing sociological reflexivity through a transdisciplinary lens. Such a lens reveals the very constitution of those academic disciplines that deal with the social world as shaped by the colonial and imperial context of their emergence. I argue that counter-mapping can serve as a decolonial strategy to the essentialization of nation-states and world regions in social scientific and political discourse and propose a relational perspective capable of revealing the constitutive entanglements through which a global capitalism grounded in colonial expansion interlinked all areas of the world. The focus lies on the entanglements that counter-mapping as a method uncovers between semiperipheries such as Eastern Europe and Latin America, constructed as fixed and unrelated locations on imperial maps.

Keywords: Sociology of absences, counter-mapping, coloniality, unequal Europes, semiperipheries, entanglements.

For at least two decades, the absence of factors such as colonial rule and imperial exploitation from most social scientific explanations of the rise of modernity, capitalism, and industrialization has been one of the main charges that post- and decolonial perspectives have directed against sociological theory. Disregard for colonial and imperial contexts, realities, and legacies has accordingly been considered typical of the "gestures of exclusion" (Connell 2007, 46) of Eurocentric theory and as responsible for the "silences" (de Sousa Santos 2004, 14ff.) and "blind spots" (Hesse 2007, 657) of most sociological analysis.

* Manuela Boatcă, Institute of Sociology and Global Studies Programme, University of Freiburg, Rempartstraße 15, 79085 Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany; manuela.boatca@soziologie.uni-freiburg.de.

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Against this background, Portuguese sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2004, 14ff.) coined the term "sociology of absences" – "an inquiry that aims to explain that what does not exist is in fact actively produced as nonexistent." The objective of a sociology of absences is to uncover the diversity and multiplicity of social practices and confer them credit, thus counterbalancing the exclusive credibility of hegemonic practices. Accordingly, the sociology of absences is complemented by the sociology of emergences. Defined as "an inquiry into the alternatives that are contained in the horizon of concrete possibilities" (de Sousa Santos 2004, 25), the latter aims to identify the range of future experiences and include counter-hegemonic, subaltern practices within the realm of available possibilities. Both the sociology of absences and the sociology of emergences become necessary in order to incorporate past and present experiences of the colonized world into general social theory and to build collective global futures.

At the same time, critical cartographers have proposed counter-mapping as a means to address the silences and absences produced through maps grounded in the Western political tradition of a territorial norm and a settled subject in which migrations and refugee movements appear as deviant. Martina Tazzioli and Glenda Garelli's (2019) method of counter-mapping consequently draws on Foucault's notion of "reflexive practice" as well as critical cartographers' plea to go "beyond the unmasking of the silences in traditional maps to the production of new maps" (Pickles 2004, 23). It thus aims for "a deontologized cartography" (ibid.) that foregrounds spaces resulted from connections and border practices, rather than essentializing geographical and cultural units, from countries to world regions by reducing them to their current political and administrative borders. Counter-mapping is accordingly conceived of as a methodological approach that unsettles and unpacks the spatial assumptions upon which maps are crafted and that trouble the spatial and temporal fixes of a state-based gaze. As geographers Joel Wainwright and Joe Bryan pointed out, counter-mapping is primarily a critique of maps as self-evident representations – of national territory or indigenous property, for instance – not, however, a plea for a reversal of perspectives by "replacing bad colonial maps with good anti-colonial ones" (Wainwright and Bryan 2009, 154). It is this critique that warrants an inquiry into the synergies between counter-mapping and the sociology of absences that I will attempt in the following.

Both the sociology of absences and counter-mapping represent reflexive practices in and across disciplines such as sociology and geography that try to grapple with positionalities built in the reigning self-understanding of the discipline but are seldom explicitly addressed as such. Their combination – counter-mapping as a method for the sociology of absences – offers in my view a means of enhancing sociological reflexivity through a transdisciplinary lens that reveals the very constitution of those academic disciplines that

deal with the social world as shaped by the colonial and imperial context of their emergence. In the following, I conceive of counter-mapping as a decolonial strategy to the essentialization of nation-states and world regions in social scientific and political discourse and argue for a relational perspective capable of revealing the constitutive entanglements through which a global capitalism grounded in colonial expansion interlinked all areas of the world. The focus lies on the entanglements that counter-mapping as a method uncovers between semiperipheries such as Eastern Europe and Latin America, constructed as fixed and unrelated locations on imperial maps.

1. On Asymmetric Ignorance in Our Mental Maps

Scholars occasionally confess to the embarrassment of not having read some foundational or otherwise canonical works – an exercise in modesty meant to reinforce their competence. There is the sociology scholar who never reads Weber's *Protestant Ethic*; or the philosophy scholar who never reads Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. In turn, the fact that many highly erudite scholars have not read any single text from all regions of the world seldom produces any embarrassment, while knowledge of such works is not a standard of professional competence. The lack of embarrassment signals what postcolonial theorists have called sanctioned or asymmetric ignorance. In this case, the scales are reversed: It is not that one accidentally missed one important text; one systematically *dis*missed most or all texts. This stark asymmetry has prompted the call for what Boaventura de Sousa Santos has named a "sociology of absences," which analyses the structurally unequal distribution of attention (de Santos 2004, 14ff.). Knowledge about Eastern Europe falls within the purview of sanctioned ignorance. Not to have read primary texts, not to know the history, and especially not to engage theory produced in languages without an imperial history and in peripheral and semiperipheral areas of the world are legitimate options because of a colonially and imperially enforced division of academic labor: On the one hand, the theory-producing metropole, overwhelmingly associated with the Global North, is credited with having the science, the concepts, and the methods as well as having produced the literary and social-scientific canon and proper historiography. On the other hand, the periphery is reduced to a source of data and a repository of myths, folklore, and indigenous (as opposed to "high") art – from which it can, however, derive neither concepts nor canonical literature. Citational politics adhere to a canon of theory in one or two languages (Connell 2007; Keim, Çelik, and Wöhrer 2014).

At the same time, social science gradually elided processes linked to non-Western European locations from its accounts of capitalist modernity – from the particular historical circumstances of the European colonial expansion in

the Americas through the colonial and imperial conquest of the non-European world and up to the impact of enslaved plantation labor upon the development of Western societies (Wallerstein 1996; Randeria 1999; Patel 2006). The grounding of central fields of social scientific theory and research in the epistemological premises of the Western European context thus systematically produced a sanitized version of modern "Europe" from which not only colonial violence, genocide, and plunder were missing, but also the experiences of the "majority world" (Connell 2007) – the millions of people that had been forcibly exploited or moved across continents for several centuries to the benefit of Western European institutions like the Catholic Church, corporations such as the British or the Dutch East India Company, or all of the European states vying for territorial control overseas. Equally missing from this prevailing notion of Europe was the voluntary emigration of up to fifty million Europeans to the Americas between the 1840s and 1930s (Therborn 1995, 40; Trouillot 2003, 31). At the very moment that Marx and Engels, extrapolating from the British context, identified class struggle as the primary conflict of European, modern bourgeois society, and proletarianization as its outcome (Marx and Engels 1848), emigration to Europe's colonies in the Americas started providing a poverty outlet to 12 percent of the continent's population – and to no less than 50 percent of Britain's. Large-scale emigration and the lowering of ethnic heterogeneity in Europe by the 1950s through nation-building, expulsions, and waves of ethnic cleansing gradually ensured that processes of collective organization and social stratification were theorized in terms of class interests and class conflict, rather than ethnic or racial allegiance (Boatcă 2014, 2015).

Against overwhelming evidence to the contrary, "Europe" was thus increasingly produced as a coherent entity. Sociology and political science textbooks presented the emergence of sovereign nation-states in Europe following the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia as marking the gradual overcoming of multinational political organizations and multiethnic empires and the start of processes of ethnic homogenization in most of Europe (Therborn 1995). In turn, transnational flows of people, goods, and capital appeared as a relatively new trend of the late 20th century, and the growing influx of immigrants into Europe as an unprecedented effect of equally recent transnational processes on a once homogeneous European context (Berger and Weiß 2008; Pries 2008).

Such discursive construction of a singular notion of Europe depends on the silencing of the historical role of its member states and their predecessors in creating the main structures of global political and economic inequality during European colonial rule, that is, on coloniality. As Böröcz and Sarkar (2005, 162) have argued, the member states of the European Union before the 2004 "Eastern enlargement" were "the same states that had exercised imperial rule over nearly half of the inhabitable surface of the globe outside Europe" and whose colonial possessions covered almost half of the inhabited surface of

the non-European world. A sociology of absences that recovers and repositions the historical role of state and non-state actors along the lines of today's power structures needs not only to remap, but to counter-map modernity as coloniality and thereby recover "the realities that are actively produced as non-existent" (de Sousa Santos 2004, 22).

2. Unequal Europes and the Coloniality of Memory

In the context of conceptualizing the world-system as a modern/colonial one, decolonial theorists have defined coloniality as a set of political, economic, and sociocultural hierarchies between colonizers and colonized that emerged with the conquest of the New World in the 16th century and thus as capitalist modernity's "dark side." Coloniality differs from premodern forms of colonial rule in that it translates administrative hierarchies into a racial/ethnic division of labor; and it is more encompassing than modern European colonialism alone in that it transfers both the racial/ethnic hierarchies between groups of people and the international division of labor between world regions produced during colonialism into post-independence times (Quijano 2000; Mignolo 2000).

A hierarchy of multiple Europes with different and unequal roles in shaping the definition of Europe and Europeanness as opposed to the "New World" emerged alongside modernity and coloniality in the 16th century – indeed, it was the premise for both (Boatcă 2010, 2013). What informed the reigning notion of "Europe" – and its corresponding claims to civilization, modernity, and development – was defined one-sidedly from positions of power mainly associated with colonial and imperial rule. The shift in hegemony from the Spanish and Portuguese colonial empires to the French and the British ones made the hegemonic epistemic position articulating European hierarchies the very location for the definition of modernity and the occlusion of coloniality. France and England, the rising colonial powers of the 18th century, self-described themselves as the producers of modernity's main revolutions, the French Revolution and industrialization, and claimed the status of a "heroic Europe" (Boatcă 2010, 2021) as the norm. This self-serving narrative accordingly relegated the early colonial powers, Spain and Portugal, to a lesser, "decadent" Europe, while large parts of the European East, which had lost out of colonial possessions overseas, became the "epigonal Europe" perpetually trying to catch up (Boatcă 2010, 2021). Even more important for today's definitions of Europe, however, is the fact that the colonial possessions, which were economically indispensable for these achievements and administratively integral parts of Western European states, played no part in the definition of Europe or its claims to modernity. To this day, many of these areas, which official language labels "overseas countries and territories" and

"outermost regions," are under the control of European states – from the Dutch Caribbean to the French Antilles and the British Virgin Islands. They are "forgotten" Europes (Boatcă 2021) co-produced by coloniality, yet with no claim to modernity: the geopolitically and discursively least visible group among the multiple Europes resulted from power shifts within and beyond the continent during the past five centuries. Unlike "decadent Europe" and "epigonal Europe," which shared an economically and politically semi-peripheral position in the capitalist world-economy and oscillated between imperial nostalgia and the aspiration to Europeanness, forgotten Europe's attitudes to modernity/coloniality have been ambivalent. They ranged between the strong desire for decolonization, leading to the independence of most territories under European domination in the wake of World War II to the voluntary relinquishing of sovereignty in exchange for EU citizenship and economic integration in the monetary union that to this day characterizes parts of the Dutch Antilles, the British Virgin Islands, and the French overseas departments.

Table 1 Multiple and Unequal Europes

Europe	prototype	role in the history of modernity	world-system position	attitude	role in coloniality
decadent	Spain, Portugal	participant	semiperiphery	nostalgia	founding
heroic	France, England	producer	core	hegemony	central
epigonal	"the Balkans"	reproducer	semiperiphery	aspiration	accomplice
forgotten	British Virgin Islands	reproducer	periphery	ambivalent	instrumental

Source: own elaboration.

Thus, the imperial conflicts and competition among unequal Europes served to positively sanction the hegemony of "heroic Europe": France, England, and Germany, as epitomes of what Hegel had called "the heart of Europe," gradually monopolized the definition of Europe while deploying its imperial projects in the remaining Europes or through them. For late industrializers such as Germany, who played no part in the competition for hegemony among the European powers with large colonial empires of the 18th century – the Netherlands, France, and England – claiming a seat at the table of "heroic Europe" was a lengthier process. Nevertheless, between hosting the 1884/5 Berlin Congo Conference that marked the beginning of the Scramble for Africa, and the end of World War I, Germany claimed the third largest colonial territory, at times measuring 12 million square kilometers and

numbering up to 12 million people, with "protectorates" (*Schutzgebiete*) mainly in Africa, but also in China and the Pacific (Dietrich and Strohschein 2011, 116). In terms of knowledge production, the German system of higher education shaped the modern definition of the Western university during a decisive period in its history. Wilhelm von Humboldt's idea of an educational state apparatus (*Kulturstaatskonzept*) prompted the restructuring of higher education throughout Europe along the lines of state support for both education and science within university structures, rather than within particular institutions dependent on private patronage, as had been the case until the 18th century. The self-understanding of institutions of higher education and their relationship to the emerging Western European nation-states, the main methodological positions, as well as the corresponding demarcation of academic disciplines in both Great Britain and France developed in confrontation with the idea of sciences of the state (*Staatswissenschaften*), German historicism, and the dispute over methods (*Methodenstreit*) between idiographic and nomothetic approaches to scientific knowledge production. The effects of the hierarchy of unequal Europes produced by heroic Europe's claims to the main achievements of the Enlightenment, modernity, industrialization, and science are enduring at the level of both lived experience and social scientific production, both in Europe and globally, as I will illustrate in the following section.

3. Positionality as Self-Mapping

As a Romanian scholar living in Germany, I have long been thinking and writing from the border between Western Europe and one of its other Europes – the one that, at different moments in its history, has been defined as "Eastern Europe" and is often still reduced to being an epigonal Other within. My approach, like all others, is geopolitically, intellectually, and epistemically situated. Self-mapping my own positionality as a migrant scholar of German sociology is therefore a necessary step to embarking on a sociology of absences.

I grew up in Bucharest in a white middle-class Romanian family in the last decade of Ceausescu's regime. My parents, teachers of Romanian language and literature and lovers of grammar and history, originally from Moldova, in the North-East of today's Romania, had not had many opportunities to travel abroad before 1989. However, they made great efforts so that – unlike them, who had been forced to major in Russian philology before being allowed to take up the study of Romanian language and literature – I could learn Western languages from an early age – with a focus on English and French. Theirs was therefore an implicit choice *against* the imposition of the Soviet-era education that had characterized epigonal Europe for half a century and *for* access to the cultural capital of heroic Europe in the ongoing geopolitics

of knowledge between East and West. In college, in 1993, I chose to study English and German philology and to take Spanish as an elective, thus remaining firmly within a Western European framework. More than in foreign languages and literatures for their own sake, however, I was interested in the social inequality patterns shining through in the novels I read as well as in the power structures permeating the languages we studied, and that a class in sociolinguistics had revealed to me. After obtaining my philology degree in Bucharest, I went to Germany to study sociology for what I thought would be an M.A. degree, but soon became a doctoral one.

Suddenly, my abstract interest in social difference and inequality became lived experience. I had been raised to consider myself European. And I had grown up in downtown Bucharest with the privilege of not having to consider whether or not I was white. Migrating to Germany in the years preceding the so-called "Eastern enlargement" of the European Union, I witnessed Europeanness being gradually narrowed down to European Union citizenship, and the whiteness of Europe's Easterners and Southerners being increasingly questioned. Suddenly, it was no longer clear whether I was exactly white, and I certainly was not a citizen of my new country of residence. The difficulties caused by the spelling of my last name anywhere abroad and the awkwardness that my Romanian passport periodically occasioned both the border authorities and myself made me keenly aware of my lesser Europeanness in a Western European context. It took me a few years and a PhD in sociology to realize that I had actually migrated and was in Germany to stay.

But I did not yet have an analytical framework with which to discern these new meanings. German sociology in the 1990s did not offer much space to critically engage with issues of migration, racialization, and exclusion. Germany's colonial history was treated as insignificant in scale and duration when compared to that of other European states and much less discussed than its National Socialist past. Postcolonial perspectives had only started being articulated in sociology, but very much remained marginal or were relegated to anthropology. It was during a research stay in the United States shortly before 9/11 that I became acquainted with the analysis of the modern world-system and the Latin American decolonial perspective. In both approaches, the experiences of the periphery and global structural dependencies immediately made sense – as did their marginalization in the prevailing social theory. The state socialism in which I had grown up, viewed in world-systems analysis as a political strategy of semiperipheral Eastern European states to prevent an economic decline into the periphery while remaining a part of the world capitalist system, finally had acquired a plausible global logic to me. History was far from over – despite what Francis Fukuyama had proclaimed in 1991 (and negated in 2019).

My PhD thesis on theories of social change in 19th century Romania after independence from the Ottoman Empire and these theories' elective

affinities with Latin American dependency theories and world-systems analysis (Boatcă 2003) was, at best, an awkward fit for the German sociology at the time. Published in English by a German press and dealing with historical debates in an Eastern European country, the thesis was interesting only for a handful of specialists, most from other disciplines – history, regional studies, international relations. For the (rare) institutes of Eastern European studies in Western Europe, it was too unrepresentative for the region because of its focus on Romania, a country that deviated linguistically from the Slavic bloc, had distanced itself politically from Moscow during the state socialist regime, and had not imposed any regional model in religious terms, either. And I, carefully educated in Western languages, did not speak Russian.

I spoke Spanish instead. The knowledge of Spanish acquired during my studies in Bucharest had both eased my way into dependency theories and the decolonial perspective, both predominantly developed by Latin American authors and insufficiently translated into English or German – and had thus become a necessary research skill. A conference in Brazil in 2005, where I had naively hoped to find something reminiscent of the spirit of dependency theorists in the 1960s and 1970s, opened my eyes to the pervasive Eurocentrism that had long dominated sociological knowledge in the region and that risked erasing any trace of continuity with the tradition of dependency theory. It also paved the way for my research stay in Brazil in 2007-2008. This is how, instead of embarking on a path of "Eastern European" studies, I became, more or less intentionally, a "Latin Americanist." From 2010 to 2015, I was a professor of the sociology of global inequalities at the Institute of Latin American Studies at the Freie Universität Berlin. I was, however, only able to "shed" any spatial fix to a particular region, either of birth or of choice, upon being appointed a professor of sociology and global studies at the University of Freiburg in 2015. Global entanglements finally became the official, and thus legitimate focus of my teaching and research.

My epistemic position therefore coagulated on a biographical and intellectual background in a state socialist regime, with philological training in Romania and sociological training in Germany and the United States and a longstanding interest in the theoretical production in – and about – two regions mostly treated as unrelated: Eastern Europe and Latin America. Thus, my perspective is based on several related and complementary positions: (1) world-systems analysis as a critique of the intellectual division of labor between the social sciences in the 19th century and, consequently, the critique of the nation state as an indisputable unit of analysis (Wallerstein 1991); (2) on postcolonial studies' problematization of Eurocentrism in general and Orientalism in particular (Said 1978); (3) on dependency theory's emphasis on the connections between structures of global inequality that reflect the colonial power relations between yesterday's metropolises and colonies and today's centers and peripheries (Cardoso and Faletto 1969; Frank 1972); (4) the

decolonial notion of modernity/coloniality as common, eminently relational products of the colonial expansion of Europe in the Americas and the Caribbean from the 16th century onwards and the resulting geopolitics of knowledge production (Coronil 1996; Mignolo 2000); (5) on several works that place Eastern Europe and the Balkans at the intersection of colonial and imperial projects of the modern world, and at the same time at the intersection between Eurocentric and Orientalist thought patterns (Bakic-Hayden 1995; Todorova 1997).

As such, my sociological practice was infused by and reflects a long search for an itinerant identity, a theoretical affiliation, a political position of my own and an intellectual "home" into which to fit several regions, epochs, and worlds. At the same time, it came with its own blind spots: For a long time, I was interested in the location assigned to Eastern Europe in the discourse about the European Union as a community of values and in how this type of discourse reflected the hierarchies between multiple and unequal Europes resulted from the shifts in hegemony between different European colonial powers. My entry point into a critique of conventional understandings of Europe, the semiperipheral Eastern European perspective, however, served to obscure other possible entry points, and consequently produced its own absences: While pointing to the multiplicity of Europes when seen from the eastern part of the continent, I was invisibilizing, that is, actively forgetting, Europe's remaining colonial possessions – from Guadeloupe, Martinique, and Curação in the Caribbean to Mayotte in the Indian Ocean – and was thus complicit in the production of what I later called "forgotten Europes." It was only through an analysis of the relationality of producing both semiperipheral, epigonal Eastern Europe and peripheral, forgotten Europes as inferior others that I arrived at a possible counter-map of Europeanness.

4. Counter-Mapping from the Semiperipheries

As the first peripheries and, later, as semiperipheries of the capitalist world-economy – and despite their undeniable differences in economic, political, demographic, and social terms – Eastern Europe and Latin America have served as laboratories of development processes and, in general, as laboratories of modernity at the level of global capitalism, both in theoretical and empirical terms.

In world-systems scholarship, semiperipheries have been credited with ensuring the survival of the modern world-system since its inception – mostly because their intermediate position has served to placate the system's tendency towards polarization between an exploiting core and an exploited periphery. By preventing the unified opposition of the periphery areas against the core, semiperipheries fulfilled not only a significant economic function

in the capitalist world-economy, but first of all the major political task of providing stability to the system, one region at a time. As Immanuel Wallerstein put it in the wake of the 1970s economic crisis,

> The essential difference between the semiperipheral country that is Brazil or South Africa today and the semiperipheral country that is North Korea or Czechoslovakia is probably less in the economic role each plays in the world-economy than in the political role each plays in conflicts among core countries (Wallerstein 1979, 75).

Semiperipherality has thus triggered two conditions: first, not being the core entailed situations of political and economic domination akin to the ones in peripheral areas and the need to develop theoretical and practical solutions to them. Second, not being the periphery amounted to a certain degree of visibility in the production of knowledge, which intellectual projects in the "silenced societies" of peripheral areas did not know. The discursive practices of the core illustrate the different epistemological standing of the semiperiphery: Unlike the peripheral Orient, which was constructed as an incomplete Other of Europe and as the locus of barbarism, irrationality, and mysticism (Said 1978), the semiperipheral European East, to which too many of the attributes that had gone into the construction of the (white, Christian, European) Western self were undeniable, have featured in the Western imaginary rather as Europe's incomplete self since at least the 19th century (Todorova 2009). Geographically European (by 20th century standards), yet culturally alien by definition, the European East as the Orient has conveniently absorbed the political, ideological, and cultural tensions of its neighboring regions. It thus exempted the West from charges of racism, colonialism, Eurocentrism, and Christian intolerance while serving, in Maria Todorova's words, as "as a repository of negative characteristics against which a positive and self-congratulatory image of Europe and the 'West' has been constructed" (Todorova 2009, 60).

Similarly, and at approximately the same time, "Latin" America as an explicit political project of imperial France and, later, of Creole elites in the former Spanish and Portuguese colonies of the Americas started playing the role of a new racial category. France, which had lost its most prized possession in the Caribbean through the Haitian Revolution and had had to sell Louisiana to the United States as a result, tried to maintain political control in the American colonies. As such, a Latin American identity was primarily defined by its marginal status with respect to Europeans and North Americans, rather than by blood descent and skin color (Mignolo 2005, 73). In the process, "Latinity" was gradually displaced from the center of Christianity and increasingly equated with Catholicism. Thus, the Latinity of "Latin" America (and most of the Caribbean) is as much a colonial construct as the Easternness of "Eastern" Europe is an imperially charged category drawing on Orientalism. The (co)relation between "Latin" America and "Eastern" Europe is also striking in the

construction of both: Eastern Christianity, already marginal to Latin Christianity since Moscow had been declared the "Third Rome" at the beginning of the 16th century, was no longer at the negotiating table as hegemony started being disputed between the old Catholic and the new Protestant colonial powers. Until World War II, the difference attributed to "Latin" America with regard to the West was, as in the case of "Eastern" Europe, more one of degree than one of substance. In the words of Walter Mignolo:

> although "Latin" American Creoles and elite Mestizos/as considered themselves White, particularly in relation to the Indian and the Afro-descendent population, from the perspective of Northern Europe and the US, to be "Latin" American was still not to be White enough (Mignolo 2005, 90).

By being gradually associated with those racial, cultural, and temporal attributes that had acquired a negative connotation in the context of the self-definition of the modern West – non-white, Catholic, and underdeveloped – "Latin America" served in particular as North America's incomplete and backward Other. In turn, the Caribbean, with a predominantly non-white and immigrant population due to the systematic trade in enslaved people from the 16th to the 19th centuries, was neither "native" enough nor "Western" enough (Trouillot 1992, 20) in an Occidentalist framework and was constructed as Western Europe's Other. It stood for the backwardness, inefficiency, and unfreedom associated with slavery – the opposite of the modern, efficient, free industrial labor viewed as having originated in and characterizing Western Europe.

The fact that this processing of othering should apply to those parts of America and the Caribbean on the one hand, and those parts of Europe on the other, whose early incorporation into the modern world-system as areas of coerced labor has made them into "the first large-scale laboratories of underdevelopment" (Szlaifer 1990, 1), is therefore no coincidence. The structural similarities between these areas in terms of their imputed "backwardness" are sometimes acknowledged as causes for the emergence of their respective regimes of unfree labor – the "second serfdoms" and "second slaveries" (Tomich and Zeuske 2008; Boatcă 2014). Yet their similar theoretical strategies for the conceptualization of this condition – themselves structural responses to that socioeconomic situation – are rarely perceived as such. The reason lies not only in the different timing at which the concerns with peripherality and underdevelopment were voiced in the two locations – starting in the late 19th century for Eastern Europe and in mid-20th century for Latin America and the Caribbean – but also, and more importantly, in the dissimilar opportunity structure for making these theoretical strategies visible beyond regional (or even state) borders.

In this case, counter-mapping as method consists in the search for structural similarities rather than the focus on the constructed differences. Excavating the similarities between "Eastern" Europe and "Latin" America from

their incorporation into the capitalist world-economy as peripheries with specific forms of unfree labor geared to the same world market, to the rise to semiperipheral status and the elaboration of theoretical approaches to the condition of dependency at different points in time, reveals systematic entanglements. As such, it allows for a relational mapping on which political, economic, and intellectual absences can finally surface.

At the same time, counter-mapping makes it possible to re-evaluate the contribution of knowledge produced in colonial contexts to a broader understanding of capitalism rather than to particular local or regional issues. Given the close link between structural location and valid theoretical production in the logic of Western modernity, the intellectual division of labor among world-system positions places theory, together with civilization and culture, in the core, while consigning the periphery to an object of study of the former and thus to the status of "silenced societies" in terms of the production of knowledge. It thereby produces the absences with which the sociology of absences invites us to deal, and which range from epistemic disappearances to outright epistemicide (Mignolo 2000, 73; 2005, 109). While in most semiperipheral areas, the awareness of their own peripheral condition was enhanced by their previous experience of peripherality, as was the case in Latin America and the Caribbean, the knowledge thus produced only obtained a hearing within Western cultures of scholarship once the respective areas ascended into intermediate positions in the world-system. Dependency theories in the mid-20th century are a case in point and will be addressed in the next section.

5. On Uneasy Positionalities

As early as the 1960s and 1970s, Latin American dependency theories countered the dominant approach of the US modernization school with a fundamental critique of Eurocentric conceptions of history. Central to the critique was revealing the "First World" perspective of modernization approaches and offering a theory and policy of development from a "Third World" perspective instead. The latter included a new sociological vocabulary and an innovative political economy of capitalism based on a relational model of center-periphery dependency. This was one of the first explicit and globally resonating commitments to the positionality of a region for social scientific knowledge production. The fact that this approach did not initiate a worldwide sociological "turn" at the time (although it impacted Latin American, African, and to some extent Indian sociologies and was crucial in the emergence of Immanuel Wallerstein's world-systems analysis) is in itself worthy of postcolonial analysis. Its fate had a lot to do with the fact that it was mainly developed in the periphery and its findings published more often in Spanish

and Portuguese than in English, so it was less visible and less accessible in the Global North, as well as less valued there.

When postcolonial studies, centered mainly on British colonialism, started gaining visibility in academic centers of the Global North, dependency theories no longer fitted either the timeline or the vocabulary that postcolonialism offered, since Latin America had been colonized two centuries before the rise of the British Empire and had become independent long before the majority of British colonies. This is what Fernando Coronil, writing an entry on Latin American decolonial thought for the *Postcolonial Studies Reader* in 2004, termed "Elephants in the Americas": The different genealogy, vocabulary, and location of Latin American decoloniality – which owes a lot to dependency theories and shares some of its prominent authors, notably Aníbal Quijano – made it an awkward fit with postcolonial terminology despite the many common denominators. That does not make the common ground any less important for a radical critique of social theory, which is why dependency theories feature prominently in Raewyn Connell's *Southern Theory*.

I therefore tend to be rather skeptical of self-proclaimed "twists and turns" and "paradigmatic shifts" in sociology. I would insist instead on the fact that a collective critical endeavor committed to the critique of Eurocentrism/Occidentalism, to decoloniality, or to postcolonial sociology needs to excavate, acknowledge, and work through the continuities between dependency theory, Third World and Chicana feminism, Indian subaltern studies, Africana philosophy, indigenous knowledges, decoloniality, and postcolonial studies in order to develop a self-understanding of the commonalities on which it can build – in other words, respond to Santos' call for a sociology of emergences. This is of course also linked to different academic settings with their own histories, politics of naming and of exclusion. Immanuel Wallerstein has been mainly viewed as a historian in Germany, which made it easier to relegate world-systems analysis to a past period of the discipline of history, rather than see it as a radical critique of social science and the academic division of labor. Neither the report of the Gulbenkian commission, which Wallerstein presided, and which was titled "Open the Social Sciences" (1996), nor Wallerstein's *Unthinking Social Science. The Limits of 19th Century Paradigms* (2001) were widely discussed in Germany as specifically *sociological* critiques targeting Eurocentrism. Sanjay Subrahmanyam's work on connected histories entered German academia through the prominent role it played in Sebastian Conrad and Shalini Randeria's 2002 German-language collection, "Beyond Eurocentrism. Postcolonial Perspectives in History and Cultural Studies," and Randeria's related concept of "entangled histories of uneven modernities," both of which have since become standard reading for postcolonial curricula (Conrad and Randeria 2002). Ella Shohat and Robert Stam's 1994 volume, "Unthinking Eurocentrism. Multiculturalism and the Media" (Shohat and Stam 1994), despite having been published in English or maybe because of it, but

certainly because it is not primarily aimed at sociology, has received far less attention in Germany although it speaks to the same issues. And Samir Amin's 1989 book, *Eurocentrism: A Critique of Eurocentrism and Culturalism* (Amin 1989), is sometimes referenced for its title, yet has tended to circulate more widely in French-speaking contexts than outside of them despite having been published in English. Here, the hierarchy operating among what Walter Mignolo (2000) called "imperial languages" still serves to distribute attention, postcolonial visibility, and academic currency.

In terms of positionality, acknowledging genealogies of thought should be particularly important to a decolonial critique that relies on counter-mapping as its method. While new approaches (not only in the social sciences) have often tended to overstate their own originality and to advocate a new "turn" as a result, doing so usually happens by disavowing the contribution of previous approaches. In the case of postcolonial thought, this would amount to disavowing Southern approaches, indigenous and Black European thought, among others. It is therefore all the more important for postcolonially-minded scholars to recognize the many ways in which critiques of Eurocentrism, imperialism, and colonialism have informed "Southern" thinking and critical approaches for quite some time and draw from the common bases instead of (sometimes) reinventing the wheel. This would contribute to a sociology of absences systematically based on counter-mapping the Global South as the location of knowledge production. This would entail learning from some of the lessons of the recent past.

In Germany, for a long time, postcolonial and decolonial perspectives were not considered to be part of sociology at all. Worse still, they were seen as what Encarnación Gutiérrez-Rodríguez (1999) has called "third-degree imports": ideas borrowed, first, from the humanities (*Literatur- und Kulturwissenschaften*); second, from a different cultural space, that is, the Anglophone one; and third, from a different historical context, that is, one that was "truly" postcolonial, like the British one – since Germany's role in the history of colonialism and the present of coloniality was considered insignificant in comparison. We have come a very long way since then, and one can definitely say that postcolonial perspectives have made significant inroads in the social sciences in the past 15 years. There is now a solid corpus of literature in German on classics of post- and decolonial perspectives as well as on their impact and further development of their perspectives in sociology, political science, geography, and so on. But it is still possible, indeed it is the rule, to get a sociological or political science degree without ever having been exposed to postcolonial thought. It would however not be possible to get a degree in sociology without having studied functionalism, or modernization theory. This is why I am skeptical about celebrating any "postcolonial turn" just yet. Not only are there no established equivalents in Germany to the sociology of race and ethnicity institutionalized in the US, and no departments of ethnic studies, race

and ethnicity studies, or Turkish-German studies, for that matter – to mirror them. But, more important still, "race" as a term is still not used in most German social science texts in the German original. The original term "Rasse" is reserved for reference to its use during World War II and thus to what is considered a tragic exception in the history of an otherwise racism-free national society that has since learnt from its mistakes. The term is therefore disconnected from its systematic, century-long use in the transatlantic slave trade and in the German colonies in Africa as well as from its impact on today's hierarchization of human groups. In this respect, the treatment of the term in Germany is somewhat similar to the situation that Étienne Balibar (1991) had diagnosed for France when saying that "migration" functioned there as a euphemism for "race," but "race" was never used. In many ways, we are still dealing with third-degree imports when it comes to both postcoloniality and the critical sociology of race in many parts of Europe. Systematically acknowledging the positionality informing one's research would accordingly entail a more sustained engagement with the legacies of local pasts and their global interconnections. Since some, but not all of the local pasts will be colonial ones, the result would be less a postcolonial turn and rather a turn towards increased reflexivity.

This is precisely the case because counter-mapping Europe means breaking free from equating it with a "heroic" Europe focused on England, France, and Germany, and instead revealing it as a structurally unequal formation the understanding of which requires the juxtaposition of hegemonic Europe with its constructed others, the decadent, the epigonal, and the forgotten Europes. There is a significant amount of work being undertaken in Hungary and Romania and their respective (and growing) diasporas on the political economy of empire, critical whiteness theory, and decoloniality. Yet this is a younger generation, mostly precariously employed and with no institutional say in their countries or a limited say in the diaspora and is not representative of how social sciences are being taught in Hungary or Romania, or throughout "epigonal Europe" either. To this day, the sociology of race is more strongly represented in those parts of the world in which the migration of enslaved Africans played a significant role, and which use "race" as a census category for this very reason. That renders "race" sayable and a category of sociological analysis at the same time. That is the case for the US and many parts of South America and the Caribbean, including its forgotten European component. The UK introduced "race" in its census in 1991 in response to increasing immigration from the Commonwealth.

As someone who has started out as a humanities scholar herself, I tend to see the synergies rather than the differences between the humanities and sociology. As mentioned before, what initially attracted me to sociology was a class in sociolinguistics that I had taken as part of a philology curriculum; what eventually drew me to qualitative research was Fairclough's critical

discourse analysis of which I had learnt as part of my English philology training, and which is widely used in sociology to this day. So, as social scientists, we need to be aware of the fact that disciplinary boundaries are historical as well as political constructions, and that the emergence of the social sciences, as well as the intellectual division of labor between sociology, anthropology, political science, economics, and history, was concomitant as well as complicit with empire, something that the report of the Gulbenkian commission (1996) on *Open the Social Sciences* had already pointed out long ago.

Meanwhile, the perceived conflict between the norm of a value-free sociology and a politically engaged postcolonial approach still drives a wedge between sociology and postcolonial studies. On the one hand, this is due to a misrepresentation of Max Weber's stance. He actually never advocated a value-free sociology and was well aware of the fact that researchers' class, upbringing, and social location shape their interests and, thus, the research questions they regard as relevant. He did advocate value-freedom, but only in assessing the results of empirically researching the questions thus formed. He, however, again conceded that the recommendations derived from the research results are shaped by individual values (Weber 1904). So, on the other hand, this misrepresentation of sociology as value-free has led to a postulate of objectivity in social science research that seems to be at odds with political activism. Yet, as we have all learnt from feminist research, the personal is political and standpoint is crucial for furthering reflexivity. Postcolonialism is very similar to feminist standpoint theory in this respect in that it points out that there is no neutral, objective standpoint, that perspectives are geopolitically located, shaped by class, gender, and race-imbued values and historically contingent. Weber would have agreed. The Weberian sociology bequeathed to us through Parsons and modernization theory has simplified his position to advocate for value-freedom, but postcolonial sociology – defined elsewhere as a context-specific, history sensitive sociology of power relations (Boatcă and Costa 2010, 27) can bring the political back into the social without the risk of losing the explanatory power of sociology in the process. Countermapping social scientific objectivity as a form of global solidarity between and across cores, peripheries, and semiperipheries of the world-system, instead of as the monopoly of value-free social science from the core or the Global North, would increase the range of methods available for an urgently needed sociology of absences with a global scope.

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