

THE GLOBAL SOCIETY OF IDEAS: REVIEW AND PROSPECTS

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“Texts circulate without their context:” anyone who has ventured into the international circulation of ideas knows this seminal formula by Bourdieu, itself borrowed from Marx, which functions as a theoretical mantra. But since the publication of that foundational text (Bourdieu, 2002), this field has made significant progress which could be seen at one recent scientific event. Last July, the congress of the French Sociological Association (AFS) allowed for a meeting between Gisèle Sapiro and Wiebke Keim, during thematic networks 27 and 36, to discuss their edited volumes *Ideas on the Move* (Sapiro *et al.*, 2020) and the *Routledge Handbook of Academic Knowledge Circulation* (Keim *et al.*, 2023).

Far from the idealistic view, sociological analysis reveals how the international circulation of ideas is embedded in social structures. The sociological perspective is thus an indispensable tool to objectivize the ways ideas, concepts and scien-

tific theories are transmitted, translated, and modified worldwide. Like any scientific approach, the sociology of the international circulation of ideas demands a fitting theoretical framework. If the *Handbook* defends theoretical pluralism, in which Bruno Latour’s Actor-Network Theory rubs shoulders with Bourdieusian field theory, and even with post-colonial or neo-marxist approaches, *Ideas* remains firmly anchored in its Bourdieusian inheritance. This offers a ready-to-use research program, whose richness its authors seek to reveal.

Another central concern is the scale of analysis. If contemporary sociology has broadly turned its back on macro-sociological perspectives, analysis of the international circulation of ideas takes up Abram de Swann’s (2022) suggestion of a transnational society, and as such, with a world of ideas as a society. As the *Handbook* reminds us, however, scientific endeavors have been internationalized for a long time, even if they can be caught up in unequal flows generated by the western-centered rivalries or colonial relationships. While *Ideas* focuses on Europe, the United States, and Latin America, the *Handbook* takes the inter-continental dimension of this unequal circulation of ideas as one of its main scientific interests. It is important to note a clear difference between the two books: whereas the *Handbook* forms a synthesis, *Ideas* is a collection of case studies. The two are thus perfectly

complementary. In one, a tool to find a way through this vast field of study; in the other, perfect examples of precise empirical analyses.

In their presentations, each author notably returned to the birth of their respective projects. Gisèle Sapiro recalled that *Ideas on the Move* was the last in a series of three works produced as part of the Interco-SSH project. Whereas one examined the translation market (Sapiro, 2016), and another the construction of disciplines (Fleck *et al.*, 2019), this one centers on the circulation of authors and of theories. The project was notably supported by the European Center for Sociology and Political Science (CESSP), which allowed for a number of doctoral students in the laboratory to participate.

Wiebke Keim presented what she called the *making of the Handbook*. She emphasized the good rapport of its international team, doubtless resulting from the fact that its members were at the start of their careers, which alleviated potential power dynamics. In response to student requests, their project was to produce a reference book. One of the challenges was: how to recruit young researchers, in order to increase the visibility of their work? Thus, recruitment was a simple call for proposals. From a practical point of view, Wiebke Keim emphasized the creation of the index at the end of the work, indispensable in such a voluminous book. She also evoked the difficulties of working on an international scale,

for example when to schedule meetings or the choice of publisher. Concerning the latter, Wiebke Keim discussed the difficulties in listing all the project coordinators on the book's cover, even though this is a common practice in the natural sciences.

In brief, for anyone interested in the analysis of the international circulation of ideas through a sociological lens, these two books will be excellent working tools, which have successfully transformed Bourdieu's initial article into a true collective research program.

References

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