

About Fragmentation and Divergence

Abstract

This introduction to volume 7 of Inter Faculty traces the reasoning and objectives for taking the theme of Fragmentation and Divergence as the focus of discussion. It takes a close look at the discussions proper and their outcome. In considering the issues taken up here, the introduction underscores the complexity of the systems that make up the present globalised world (economical, political, social, cultural) and questions the role of research in human and social sciences, highlighting the importance of articulating the phenomena of mankind and his existence and those of nature.

Keywords: transformation, environment, social justice, violence, immigration, cultural identity, intercultural dialogue.

The current edition of *Inter Faculty*, volume 7, is the outcome of the international conference on Fragmentation and Divergence, held at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales from 10th to 11th March, 2015. The conference was reported on in the previous edition. This volume presents the full articles and commentaries resulting from the considerations of the conference in order to open the discussion to the greater research community.

Fragmentation and Divergence, the theme taken up here, has quite naturally evolved out of the growing discussion of the fragmentations of the previous three volumes, for, in effect, underlying the theme is a major trend of this century: the globalisation of the world. Certainly there are some who consider the topic to have already been exhaustively studied, after all globalisation is not a novel experience for human beings. In its broadest sense globalisation occurred during unification under the Roman Empire, or during the Age of Exploration, or again with modern Western-centred imperialism and colonialism.

By contrast, the trend in the globalisation of this century is that of the so-called postmodern age, and its dominant trait is one of homogenisation of the economic system, of the financial and monetary systems that transcend the nation-state; the

process began, in fact, with the end of the Cold War. While the economic system might function supranationally, however, the nation-state, the mainstay of the modern period, is still the most important player in the political sphere; unlike money and goods, people cannot move easily across international borders. In terms of politics, schema such as nation-states and international borders dominate world affairs. The nation-state is a unit with a defined territory, sovereignty, and collective identity. The nation-state's identity is the product of a deep and complex entanglement of political, ideological and cultural systems. Nevertheless, the more globalised the economy, the less homogenised is the culture, with the multiple-value systems resulting in a hybrid society.

There is no denying that a globalising nation-state becomes fragmented due to diverse social, cultural, religious and historical factors. As a result, citizen movements and non-profit/non-governmental activities, which extend beyond the nation-state framework, have mushroomed. Furthermore, multi-lingual and multi-cultural societies have formed due to migration. A major task confronting humanity today is that of building a society in which people can live in solidarity and can co-exist peacefully. However, at present, fragmentation has resulted in a divergence of values, which in turn has led to rupture and division. This has further led to escalating levels, across the globe, of both legal and illegal inhumane violence. Moreover, social justice is divided and international agreements cannot be reached; civil war, conflict, and terrorism abound.

In the context of such an unstable and anxious globalising society with heterogeneous systems criss-crossing each other, research in the human and social sciences dealing with issues of people and society is in urgent need of self-redefinition. What is the meaning of research? What is the goal of research? Indeed, globalisation has brought enormous changes to the research and educational environment of the universities. From the viewpoint of market fundamentalism universities are also a market, where students are clients and a university a place to provide knowledge services, where researchers turn knowledge content into products, commercialising them and supplying them to clients. From the point of view of research and education industries, based on this type of efficiency, human sciences such as philosophy, history, literature, etc., are to be discarded as they are worthless as a market commodity. Martha Craven Nussbaum has sounded the alarm on this trend. For her, the role of human

sciences is not to contribute to economic growth, but to achieve deep understanding of human society (Nussbaum 2010). Such understanding forms the foundation of the construction of a democratic society and Nussbaum has raised a very important issue that concerns us all.

If research into the human and social sciences serves to ask and answer questions on human existence, society and the world, what then are the key issues facing us in a globalising world? The most important would of course concern the dynamic transformations of the twenty-first century world triggered by globalisation. These dynamic changes are, in fact, characterised by the aforementioned fragmentation of the globalising world and ensuing divergence of values. To approach this issue from a research perspective, a number of inter-related problems that come in the wake of dynamic transformation must be addressed. Examples include a paradigm shift away from humans as opposed to nature towards one of co-existence between the two; to questions of human beings able to exist side by side and yet have a sense of belonging/solidarity; to issues related to technological innovation and changes in society; and so on. These issues are not unrelated to each other; they are complexly intertwined with problems of the finite nature of power in society, the limit of human capability, and social justice. Our research, therefore, must be constantly updated and our knowledge frameworks constantly restructured accordingly; demanding, of necessity, a multi-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary research approach.

As demonstrated in many major social science studies, the collection and analysis of accurate data is vital for problem solving. At the same time, as can be seen from human science studies, the depth and breadth of the interpretation of texts are indispensable to comprehend the essential issue of the problem. Fragmentation and divergence are problems posed by a complex globalising society. Research in the human and social sciences has the ability to investigate, analyse and interpret global issues, to propose hypotheses, which can be presented to society. The role of the human and social sciences is not to be immersed in research for the sake of research, but to present research outcomes to society and to contribute to the development of society.

This means that such research should interact with and intervene in society. Although closely linked to issues confronting society, research must nevertheless retain absolute independence in defining its own objectives and methodology.

Research into a changing world, informed by methodologies from both the social sciences and the human sciences, contributes to human society which impacts on future generations; it does not cater to the economic market, as discussed earlier, yet it is open to society while maintaining professional autonomy.

To turn then to the current issue, which examines the rapid transformations that the world has undergone in recent years from the standpoint of a common understanding of the intersecting nature of research. The six chapters of the original discussion were: Environment and Landscape; Social Justice and Equality Beyond Violence; Disaster and Civil Society; Demography and Immigration; Impact of Art and Culture; and Intercultural Dialogue and Education.

The conference opened with the video-film *Transformations* by Itai Keshet (2015), a young video-documentalist from Germany. This highly poetic and moving short film (two minutes, twelve seconds) concentrated on the theme of change, or transformation, in the world. There are no words to describe the world in the film, but the images are eloquent: the birth of life, the sprouting of a plant, its growth towards the sky, the synthesis of human life, the race to exploit the universe, climate change, bountiful rain, evaporation, boiling, steam engines, trains running on an elevated bridge, pedestrians hurrying to cross a scramble intersection, war, liberation, speed, the sound of children's excited voices, tomatoes in the morning, bees in the afternoon, leaves falling, dandelion seeds blowing in the wind, bubbles, flight, continuation, disappearance... Unexpected images of nature and human society trigger new imagery to create a link, leaving a poetic footprint. Intuitively, the viewer comprehends the trajectory of *Transformations* in the pre-language state.

The first question to emerge from the seemingly unrelated six chapters of the conference was that of 'subject' in modernity. Augustin Berque discussed the subject-object dualism at the root of modern thought. The 'modernity' constructed in western thought has stretched the 'subject = subjectivity = ego' schema to its limit. Its counterpart is 'object = objectivity = the other'. This dualism has established a *terce exclu* in logic. Science separates the observer from the observed. Society establishes the relationship between subject and object. At the level of the state, the relationship is established between the ruler and the ruled. The human being has modified and subjugated the natural system. Humanity has placed itself at the centre of the world and judged, acted, created,

and modified its order. In this respect, humanity is modelled on the modern human being with a western self. A number of scholars have already critically examined this type of dualism, (Thierry Martin comments this point in the present volume); certain have proposed alternative worldviews. For example, the view of nature based on quantum physics developed by Max Karl Ernst Ludwig Planck and Werner Karl Heisenberg, the view of life proposed by James Jerome Gibson who advocated ecological psychology, that of philosophy by Kitaro Nishida and Tetsuro Watsuji, and ecology by Kinji Imanishi, on which Berque draws. These views are from different fields, but they all have in common an approach that proposes the comprehension of the relationship between nature and humanity beyond dualism. In this sense these perspectives constitute a significant trend towards the construction of a new paradigm. Berque analyses Japanese culture and thought in depth and proposes a new relationship between subject-object, drawing on the linguistic structure of the Japanese language ‘subjective predicate’ which has no subject. Other approaches discussed were Kitaro Nishida’s philosophy of place (*ba* 場), and Tetsuro Watsuji’s ‘milieu’ (*fudo* 風土, literally wind and earth). In the place of a worldview in which subjectivity interprets and adjusts (for its convenience) objectivity, Berque proposes a worldview in which objectivity is supported by subjectivity. Furthermore, Berque argues that human beings and the environment are not separate entities, but that human beings are animals who create their landscape. This leads to a ‘co-existence of nature and humanity’, with the notion of ‘live together, be together’. Berque is critical of ecology, for, at the foundation of ecology lies the view that humanity and the environment are fundamentally in opposition and that humanity should manage the environment. Rather, according to Berque, humanity is part of the environment; the environment supports humanity, and humanity develops the environment. Berque proposes *mesology* rather than *ecology* to define humanity as part of the environment.

In response to Berque, Corine Pelluchon examines the problem of nourishment in its broadest sense. Pelluchon’s discussion intersects Berque’s mesology in treating the problem of nourishment not as a simple ecological and health issue, but as one extending to the entire chain of relation, taking food, human physiology and pleasure, life, joy, living environment, politics, and the relationship with society into account. Her thoughts are expounded in detail in Pelluchon (2015).

The question of subject, in terms of actor, further arises in problems of social justice, human rights, migration and violence. Aleš Bučar Ručman deals with problems of violence and society. The major thrust of his argument is in examining the relationship between migration and violence/crime employing the concept of ‘structural violence’ by Johan Galtung and ‘total institution’ by Erving Goffman. International migration and structural violence are deeply intertwined. Structural violence is not the violence meted out by a particular individual such as social disparity, oppression, or hunger, but an indirect and invisible type of violence produced by social systems. This manifests in the form of gaols, ghettos, and detention centres for foreigners - total institutions in Goffman’s sense. Bučar Ručman points out in regard to migration problems in the EU, that by creating localised total institutions to exclude migrants within the strong EU-fortress, a space of social exclusion is being produced. He then discusses migrants flooding into the EU as ‘waste populations’ and posits that this has brought about new forms of prejudice and discrimination. The problem here is not a postmodern one that goes beyond the dualism of modern subjectivity and objectivity, but one of ‘this’ side versus the ‘other’ produced by political and social systems subjugated to the economic system. In other words, the problem of subjectivity is not of human beings and their actions but of societal systems (economy, society, culture) and humanity, which is subjugated to them. This leads to the logic of ‘us’ and ‘them’. Furthermore, a zone that does not belong to ‘us’ has been created in ‘our’ territory. In the past, at the centre of ‘our’ side there were God, kingship, democracy, communism, socialism, or a free market economy, which constituted both ‘us’ and ‘them’. Is structural violence inevitable in human society? This is a major and extremely serious issue to be resolved.

‘How can we exit violence?’ is Michel Wieviorka’s question. Wieviorka identifies four levels at which violence exists, that of: the individual (*individu*), the collective (*groupe, communauté*), the state/federation, and the international/global society. In his research study *La Violence*, Wieviorka (2004) focuses on the question of ‘the subject’ who exercises violence. He tackles the complex question of which processes the subject undergoes in becoming ‘the subject’ of violence. He proposes a number of concepts including the ‘floating subject’, the ‘super-subject’, the ‘non-subject’, the ‘anti-subject’ and the ‘subject attempting to survive’, showing the diversity of processes - the fragmentation and polarisation - in the making of the subject who inflicts violence, the ‘brutal evil’. As a result,

Wieviorka emphasises the need for research into ‘exiting violence’ as being one of the most important challenges for the human and social sciences to undertake. This research should be independent, and not undertaken with a view to policy-making or ideology, or used for media discourse. Neither should it be undertaken as research for the sake of research. Such research represents a new approach for the human and social sciences to interact with and for society.

Both Wieviorka and Bučar Ručman examine ‘violence’; their major analytical concepts constitute the subject for Wieviorka, and the structure for Bučar Ručman. Both are central concepts of the social sciences. In Wieviorka’s case, ‘the subject of violence’, meaning both the subject who exercises violence and the subject who suffers violence is placed at the centre of his theory of violence. Bučar Ručman examines the spatial system in which violence happens and in which it is contained, drawing from Galtung and Goffman. Further discussion from these two intersecting perspectives is needed.

Responding to the questions of social justice and violence, Vesna Požgaj Hadži presents the problems of language confronted by immigrants excluded from society in present-day Slovenia, as issues of linguistic human rights.

Daniel Lebaud comments on Wieviorka’s ‘subject of violence’ from a linguistic point of view. He re-examines the interpretation of *sujet* in French from the perspective of lexicology. *Sujet* in French can be interpreted as: *sujet de* (subject of something), as well as *sujet à* (subjected to something). The former represents the linguistic subject as ‘the subject’, meaning the protagonist who creates linguistic expression and forms discourse; the latter is the linguistic subject constructed by language. If we follow the latter, the linguistic subject is ‘subjugated’ to language. Lebaud analyses *sujet* as a lexicological item of modern French. The discussion opens further questions, such as what lexicological functions can be observed in other languages, and more particularly, what impact does Lebaud’s lexicological analysis have on Wieviorka’s theory of violence?

How should creations of art and culture be comprehended in the age of globalisation? By its very nature, artistic creation can exert great influence, enchanting and moving people with its unique ideas and inventiveness, with its subversion of conventional values, its constant refinement of technique. Artistic

creation, therefore, can invite people to a ‘sacred place’ where there is no pressure, no oppression or persecution by power, no economic disparities or racial differences. It can be a completely free, fundamentally liberated, and equal place. Be it through poetry, music, painting, or any other art form, artistic creation can be a pathway to an otherwise unattainable sacred place. In this regard, art diametrically opposes the ‘logic’ of the political/economic/societal systems that rule and manage people, and it secures the conditions that allow human beings to be human. The question of artistic creation assumes even more importance in a fragmenting, globalising society, as it is the ‘last resort’ to restore and maintain humanity.

Seiichi Kondo gives a summary of the elements of power of art and culture, emphasising the importance of people’s involvement with art from a variety of positions in society. For Kondo, it is indispensable for the realisation of a free society that people be connected to each other and share values through their own artistic experiences.

In contrast, Margareta Kastberg Sjöblom argues in her study of the *tragédie en musique* (musical tragedy) of French baroque music, established under the Bourbon dynasty, that art can be used as a basis for control, in this case ‘control by King’. To support her hypothesis she gives an in-depth lexicological analysis using *hyperbase*. A reminder that art is not, in fact, entirely free of the political system and that it can be turned to exalt political power, that it can be exploited to establish identity, authority and sovereignty. This is not a phenomenon limited to seventeenth-century France, but one that occurs in any time and any place and will continue to present a concern in the future.

Political power can be the impetus not only for creating forms of art, but also be the cause of massive destruction (the Cultural Revolution in China is one such example, barbarous acts, such as the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas, is another). The power of art in relation to the individual, society, politics, the state, the international sphere, humanity, the earth, is indeed a double-edged force.

As to issues of culture and identity, two distinct aspects are discussed: the construction of identity within a culture, and the communication, or dialogue, between different cultures. Focusing on the Creole identity of Cabo Verde, Kay Aoki examines how a musical genre, (*Morna*) has been a motor for identity

formation for the peoples from a group of islands where, originally uninhabited, there was neither indigenous language nor culture. He posits that in a shared common music the essence of a common identity has been able to take form. Jérémie Bride highlights the relationship between karate, a traditional martial art of Japan, and the *jo-ha-kyu* rhythm inherent in Japanese *noh* music. He projects a form of homotopy onto the seemingly unrelated movements of *noh* and karate, and postulates that there is a principle of underlying movement density common to all expressions of Japanese culture.

In so far as intercultural communication is concerned, Sébastien Laffage-Cosnier and Rie Inaba present data analysis to determine the impact of sports animation films on young audiences in Japan and France. Far from a random examination of an exotic topic, their analysis shows how, even in the internet-age when information can be shared instantaneously across the globe, the value attached to cultural content changes according to the recipient society. From the discussions, it would seem that intercultural dialogue does not necessarily lead to intercultural understanding.

In her commentary on the research of Aoki, Bride, and Laffage-Cosnier & Inaba, Irène Tamba demonstrates that there are certain points of convergence linking what would seem three rather disparate studies; not the least in the singular nature of the subject of research and the multi-disciplinary approach adopted.

Issues of migration and civil society are also addressed from the perspective of fragmentation and divergence. The present volume gives a summary of the two discussions held by Hervé Le Bras and Yutaka Tsujinaka, along with the pertinent commentaries of Irina Chongarova-Aron and John Eade, and Andrej Bekes and Muneo Kaigo respectively. With regards to migration, Le Bras, co-author with Emmanuel Todd of *Le Mystère français* (Le Bras and Todd 2013), shows that the movement of people is not simply a question of economic movement. For the issue of civil society, Tsujinaka analyses the response of Japanese non-profit associations to the Great East Japan Earthquake of the 11th March 2011 and the subsequent nuclear disaster.

The discussions of the present volume do not presume to provide an answer to the problems brought about by world transformations, but they have given greater depth to our understanding of the world and its issues, they have given a new direction to the research of the human and social sciences, and to the question of fragmentation and divergence. It is evident that we can no longer shut ourselves away in our ivory towers of learning when the issues to be confronted are intricately bound up with the greater systems of human society and the earth.

This, at least for the time being, brings our thoughts on fragmentation and divergence to a close.

We welcome your response.



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