



## The Order of Social Sciences: Sociology in Dialogue with Neighbouring Disciplines

### THE ORDER OF SOCIAL SCIENCES: INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

The development of academic thought during the twentieth century is marked by a rapid and continual process of accumulation of a vast quantity of scientific material. If the field is narrowed down and the social sciences are considered merely, a considerable accumulation of academic output is evident during the course of the twentieth century. The result is that the social sciences find themselves in an entirely different position at the beginning of the twenty-first century than the one they occupied at the end of the nineteenth or beginning of the twentieth century (Wallerstein, 1991). What is the background to this change? The increasing consolidation and delimitation of economics and the social sciences is of prime importance. Social sciences for their part have separated into autonomous subjects: history, sociology, political science, pedagogy, media studies, geography and, of course, economics, as well as a few others. Taking Michel Foucault's view as he delivered it in his famous *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (1970), one can discover permanently new landscapes of scientific arrangements.

This chapter was initially conceived as a plenary address at the 3rd Forum of Sociology of the International Sociological Association held in Vienna in July 2016. Therefore, the audience was a sociological one, and the message was by a sociologist to sociologists, arguing that the academic subject should be framed by an acknowledgement and reflection of global

contours of scientific change. Permanently new topics arise in economy and society and provoke and modify the division of sciences. When discussing the up-to-date status of our academic domains it is essential to take into account that our current body of knowledge is itself part of a permanent storm of renewal. What the Greek philosopher Heraclitus said once, namely that “everything flows,” must be valid for our own domains too: we have to employ historicizing reflections as a tool in order to find the current location and related opportunities and challenges.

Taking a less narrow perspective, which goes beyond sociology and takes the sociological reflections just as an example for different other disciplines and their positive or even negative destinies, the discussion provides some ideas about the academic interplay of different subjects. The whole system of social sciences can be treated as an involuntary concert, which, analogous to the Italian “concertare” or “concerto,” means both, fighting, competing, struggling on the one and bringing together, harmonizing, and unifying on the other hand. The division of labour between economics, sociology, anthropology, history, psychology, and regional and urban sciences has and has always had fragile balances. It seems that economics as the only academic field in which Nobel prizes are awarded has become a rather dominant actor in the concerto, but even this view may be deceiving. One of the main messages of the chapter is that, most recently, many substantial concepts, from psychology, history, and sociology have been taken up by economists and incorporated into their body of knowledge without really or fully being informed by their early originators. This relative idea theft could be seen negatively or, indeed, positively as the emergence of new interdisciplinary domains and synergies. In fact, from a perspective of philosophical economics, one can speak about an ongoing social-scientification of economics (Bögenhold, 2010), which is increasingly incorporating ideas brought forth by neighbouring social science disciplines.

### LOOKING BACK OVER THE LAST 120 YEARS

Even at the beginning of the twentieth century, prominent academics in social sciences held professorships and chairs in the fields of economics. Economics existed without competition as a subject, since professorships for the newer subjects, such as sociology, that have now become standard, did not exist yet. These academics concerned themselves with themes, which, from the modern standpoint, were the property of history,

sociology, business studies, economics, legal, or administrative sciences. The development of scientific disciplines goes hand in hand with other changes. The structure of professions has changed and social and economic structures have developed many new traits (Rosenberg, 2012). Furthermore, new times bring with them new questions and new discussions. To a great extent, the new contours of intellectual debate reflect the process of historical change (Gordon, 1993).

The essentially positive process by which subjects have gained recognition also has a downside. The price was an increasingly specialized knowledge, which, for systematic reasons, lost sight of respective neighbouring disciplines. Bridges between the islands of knowledge were even more rarely sought or found. This meant that forms of scientific knowledge disciplines and intra- and inter-disciplinarity faded even more into the background. The paradoxical effect is that the apparently relentless growth of both economics and sociology, which continues to the present day, is by no means combined with a process of academic consolidation. On the contrary, subjects lose out in numerous aspects, since they are scarcely able to communicate with one another any longer. The subjects appear to have become fragmented theoretically, methodically, and practically (Hollis, 2002).

The principal developments in the rise of sociology and the demarcation of different branches of economics have mainly taken place since the Second World War. Today the subjects are characterized by their impressive plurality in terms of the diversity of topics and methods. As a result, these subjects themselves have become differentiated further, to the extent that it is even more difficult to conceptualize them as closed, single-type disciplines (Rosenberg, 2012; Cedrini & Fontana, 2017; Bögenhold, 2018).

There was clearly no real correlation between the delineation of the system of disciplines and the corresponding increase in their recognition. Auguste Comte was probably the primary influence on the conception of sociology. In his *Cours de Philosophie Positive* (1830–1842, 1907) Comte formulated the necessity and unavoidability of academic specialization and differentiation. At the same time, he recognized the danger of isolation and insularity of knowledge.

Thus, he wrote, “It is evidently this division of various types of research amongst various groups of scholars that we have to thank for the level of development that knowledge has reached in our time. However, this division means that it is no longer possible for a modern scholar to engage himself with all disciplines at once—a kind of engagement that was easy

and quite normal in the past” (Comte, 1907, p. 33). Comte argued that the expansion of the knowledge base goes hand in hand with the increasing differentiation and division of labour. The onset of this process, so the argument continued, also had a converse effect. “Even recognising the great results that have been achieved because of this division of labour, and accepting that this is now the true foundation of the general organisation of the academic world, it is still impossible, on the other hand, not to be adversely affected by this current division of labour for the reason of over-specialisation of ideas, which each person pursues with great exclusivity. ... We must take care that human intellect does not finally lose its way in a host of details” (Comte, 1907, p. 33).

Comte’s analysis, formulated in the 1830s, has proved to be extremely accurate. In particular, since the beginning of the new millennium, the process of increasing specialization within disciplines has reached a new level. Also, a separation of literature and science had started at that time (see Snow, 2012). Social sciences have evolved, but have disintegrated into various small and ever new academic territories, which themselves have divided further. In addition, literature and science have increasingly become separated from one another. Boundaries began to develop between them during the process of self-definition. This development led Max Weber, who, like most of the classic scholars known today, was an interdisciplinary generalist, to conclude in his famous article “Science as Vocation” that a high academic reputation can best be achieved by withdrawing to extremely specialized subject matter. “In our time, the internal situation, in contrast to the organisation of science as a vocation, is first of all conditioned by the fact that science has entered a phase of specialisation previously unknown and that this will forever remain the case. Not only externally, but inwardly, matters stand at a point where the individual can acquire the sure consciousness of achieving something truly perfect in the field of science only in case he is a strict specialist” (Max Weber, 1988, p. 134).

Through the explosion of new academic publications in sociology and in the different branches of the economic sciences, internal lines of differentiation and segmentation emerged. The subjects multiplied in a vertical and a horizontal direction, and within the course of constantly new subjects, new separate universes of discourse emerged, each with separate research organizations, global conferences, journals, curricula, academic career opportunities, as well as patterns and publication routines. Finally, a vulcanization of the research landscape in the social sciences was revealed,

indicating a variety of new islands of knowledge, which increasingly shared fewer reciprocal ties and active links of information and communication (Wallerstein et al., 1996).

Compared to the situation in sociology, the situation in other academic fields, economics, history, psychology and others, was more or less the same, although slightly different between North America and Europe. While Émile Durkheim wrote in the introduction to the first issue of the journal *Année Sociologique* under his editorship that it is the destiny of sociology and economics that they will merge in the long run (quoted in Swedberg, 1991), the opposite was true. The subjects separated, although a few major authors in historical sociology like Wallerstein, Bendix, Elias, and Mann continued to work in both fields. For the most part, long-term processes were forgotten, and scientific analysis was based on short-term observations. Much later and initially in the US academic context, positions came up arguing that observations over longer time periods are a necessity for methodological reasons: “First, those shifts formed the context in which our current standard ideas for the analysis of big social structures, large social processes, and huge comparisons among social experiences crystallized. Second, they marked critical moments in changes that are continuing on a world scale today. Understanding those changes and their consequences is our most pressing reason for undertaking the systematic study of big structures and large processes. It is important to look at them comparatively over substantial blocks of space and time, in order to see whence we have come, where we are going, and what real alternatives to our present condition exist. Systematic comparisons of structures and processes will not only place our own situation in perspective, but also help in the identification of causes and effects” (Tilly, 1984, pp. 10–11).

Today, it is even difficult to speak about sociology in terms of a general understanding, since the coexistence of many sociologies can be observed. Sociology has proven to become a field, which reminds us of a patchwork rug with diverse individual “universes of discourse.” Now, the International Sociological Association (ISA) has nearly 60 independent Research Committees, 3 Working Groups and 5 Thematic Groups, which have their own organizational life under the roof of sociology without feeling the need to contribute to a common project of grand theory. Taken together, the academic field looks like a diffuse bazaar of ideas, projects, and related people. Instead of coherence, sociology presents itself as a patchwork of fragmented interests, topics, and approaches. However, sociology has also

evolved into some other different directions. There is not only the professional sociology, but the spheres of policy advice and critical sociology also exist and, last but not least, public sociology as introduced by Burawoy (2005). Public sociology, in particular, is an area of knowledge, which exists outside of universities and penetrates to us through schoolteachers and mass media so that everybody has some kind of command of sociological expressions as if they are part of the everyday language, for example, we talk about lifestyles, classes, family structure, or social opportunities as if we were trained sociologists (without being so). Public sociology has become manifest in the increased use of sociological terms in public communication. According to Burawoy (2005), one has to raise the questions of knowledge for whom and for what in order to define the fundamental character of sociology as an academic discipline (critically see Calhoun, 2005).

The divisional order of sociology is characterized by a practice, which mirrors the multiplicity of academic production and a rather accidental development rather than a systematic reasoning about how to design an academic subject (Backhouse & Fontaine, 2014). With respect to the definition of what sociology is and how it is organized into different subfolders, two trends overlap each other. (I) There is a long-term trend of the development of sociology in which the discipline increasingly gained firm ground and recognition and in which a process of differentiation started to evolve. This trend took place within the last century. The field of sociology also started to become a professional system with clear curricula, degrees, academic societies, and university departments, with an increasing number of publications and related journals. (II) Parallel to the consolidation process of sociology, the subject formed borderlines to neighbouring fields. Looking over the course of the last hundred years, topics of sociology have modified and multiplied.

Even today, no clear definition exists of what sociology is. Of course, sociology has to do with the study of societies. Already Norbert Elias in his attempt to contribute to the question: “What is Sociology?” (Elias, 1978) had to keep it very general: “It is customary to say that society is the ‘thing’ which sociologists investigate. But this reification mode of expression greatly hampers and may even prevent one from understanding the nature of sociological problems” (Elias, 1978, p. 14). The same descriptive definition can be found in the work by Giddens (2006): “Sociology is the scientific study of human life, groups, and societies. It is a dazzling and compelling enterprise, as its subject matter is our own behaviour as social

beings. The scope of the sociological study is extremely wide, ranging from the analysis of passing encounters between individuals on the street to the investigation of global social processes such as the rise of Islamic fundamentalism” (Giddens, 2006, 4).

Looking at sociology from the outside, sociology is effectively identified as sociological theory, which is just one research committee within the ISA. Even the sociological theory is not a unique and common field, but is segmented into many competing approaches in which stakeholders follow their own practices and routines. For example, the fact that Jonathan Turner’s *The Structure of Sociological Theory* (2004) has 36 chapters, each one portraying a separate theoretical approach, shows the heterogeneity of sociological theory. There is no stratified unique sociological theory, but diverse camps coexist. Today, sociology is a wide cosmos of knowledge and working islands regarding quality, quantity, and address labels. There is not necessarily any communication between them.

#### FROM INVITATION TO SOCIOLOGY TO DISINVITATION

It was the famous book by Peter L. Berger (1963), which served as a plea for the academic subject of sociology. The book claimed a sociological perspective to investigate social phenomena: “Sociology is not a practise, but an attempt to understand” (Berger, 1963, p. 4), because “statistical data by themselves do not make sociology. They become sociology only when they are sociologically interpreted, put within a theoretical frame of reference that is sociological” (Berger 1963, p. 10). About 30 years later, the same author turned his invitation into a disinvitation (Berger, 1994) and accused the sociology of his time of having four different negative symptoms, which he called parochialism, triviality, rationalism, and ideology (Berger, 1994, p. 9). “While parochialism and triviality may be taken together, also rationalism and ideology have some internal link. The impeachment of parochialism means that sociology is too often centered with just one case or social experience or practice: Sociology, the discipline par excellence to understand modernity, must of necessity be comparative. .... It is the source of crippling failures of perception. It should be part and parcel of the training of every sociologist to gain detailed knowledge of at least one society that differs greatly from his own” (Berger, 1994, p. 9). Therefore, “triviality too is a fruit of parochialism, but in the case of sociology the more important root is methodological. ... Identification of scientific rigor with quantification has greatly limited the

scope of sociology” (Berger, 1994, pp. 9–10). Finally, Berger criticized sociology for being too often normative in a sense of stating how societies or social relations should be. Instead, sociology should remember the claim for an absence of value judgements: “Sociology is a rational discipline; every empirical science is. But it must not fall into the fatal error of confusing its own rationality with the rationality of the world” (Berger 1994, p. 10).

These modern forms of critique received several updates. Alexander (1995) and Münch (1991, 1995) debated about the so-called McDonaldization of sociology, asking if sociology has national specifics and identities or if the US-American standards of writing and quoting would increasingly direct and dominate the rest of world sociology. It was a time when, at different locations and in different organizations, the future of sociology in the wider context of social sciences was being questioned. And, Ulrich Beck (2005)—ten years later—said in discussing Burawoy (2005) that “all forms of ... sociology are in danger of becoming museum pieces. ... sociology needs to be reinvented” (Beck, 2005, p. 335).

Analogous to Berger’s critique that sociology may have lost some degree of attractiveness, is the relative loss of theory. Not only does sociological theory mark just one research committee among nearly 60 others, but, in general, the “current imbalance between methods and theory” (Swedberg, 2016, p. 5) has been criticized. It is said that methods “dominate modern social science” (ibid.). Although the rise of sociology after the Second World War was centred around methods, and mainly had to do with the introduction of quantification into the sociological analysis, in the future, sociological theory and also the process of theorizing should be upgraded and more strongly acknowledged in the organization of academic sociology (Swedberg, 2016, p. 20). The problem with Swedberg’s claim is—despite the strong advantages the discussion delivers—that ultimately, the terms theory as well as theorizing, remain a bit empty (Bertilsson, 2016; Krause, 2016), not defining clearly where theory starts to be theory (and ends up as well) (for further perspectives see Swedberg, 2014, Zima, 2004). The plea for theory fits with Adorno’s enlightenment, where he criticized the transformation of sociology into statistics and administrative science as the emergence of the known form of “administered society” (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1997, p. 264). The “imbalance” between theory and empirics is easy to state if no one has a firm idea of the ideal point of balance. Adorno, Horkheimer (1997) as well as Swedberg



(2016), each with very different ambitions, are correct in claiming that the process of gaining data cannot be regarded as an end in itself.

### THE CREDO OF THE REINVENTION OF SOCIOLOGY

What might a reinvention of sociology look like? That was already the topic in the 1990s in the study carried out by the *Gulbenkian Commission for the Restructuring of Social Sciences* (Wallerstein et al., 1996). The premise of discussion of the Gulbenkian Commission was that, in an increasingly globalized and digitalized world, the landscape of the social sciences (including the location of sociology) must be affected by those changes. Adaptation and reinventions are a consequence and the sterile division of order cannot be adequate for the future anymore. Instead, practical interdisciplinarity and reciprocal synergies will be the claim of the twenty-first century. “The degree of internal cohesiveness and flexibility of the disciplines varies today, both between disciplines and among the forms a discipline assumes around the world” (Wallerstein et al., 1996, p. 97).

As a consequence of those processes of the simultaneous multiplication and fragmentation of academic knowledge, new frontiers of academic organization (must) evolve: “What seems to be called for is less an attempt to transform organizational frontiers than to amplify the organization of intellectual activity without attention to current disciplinary boundaries. To be historical is after all not the exclusive purview of persons called historians. It is an obligation of all social scientists. To be sociological is not the exclusive purview of persons called sociologists. It is an obligation of all social scientists. Economic issues are not the exclusive purview of economists. Economic questions are central to any and all social scientific analysis. Nor is it absolutely sure that professional historians necessarily know more about historical explanations, sociologists more about social issues, economists more about economic fluctuations than other working social scientists. In short, we do not believe that there are monopolies of wisdom, nor zones of knowledge reserved for persons with particular university degrees” (Wallerstein et al., 1996, p. 98).

The division of academic branches today is a bit reminiscent of the peaceful oligopoly behaviour of firms, where terrains of competencies and power are claimed by definition and reciprocal acknowledgement instead of reasoning. Our brief points mentioned before indicate that sociology is always incorporated in a flux of societal and scientific change and many shifts have taken place within sociology, and a lot of critiques have emerged.

However, much of this discussion is centred around the topic of how sociology as an academic field could be modernized or optimized. Less discussion has been carried out on the issue of the expansion of the domain of sociology, interdisciplinary exchange, and going to new frontiers. Reinvention may also imply claiming more competences in the wider field of human sciences or in a broader modern concept of a universal social science. The integration and conversion of sociology may signify some losses of denominations and some gains of authority simultaneously.

Not only the *Gulbenkian Commission on the Restructuring of Social Sciences* (Wallerstein, 1999), but also the first *Social Science Report* by UNESCO (1999) pointed to the problem that academic competencies are often handled in an exclusive terminology. “Disciplines are classified under either the one (for example, economics, sociology, political science, as social sciences) or the other (for example, psychology, anthropology and linguistics, as human sciences)” (UNESCO, 1999, p. 12). Despite the need for specialization in academic training, transdisciplinary attempts are also necessary in order to increase the potential of insights: “There is no doubt that disciplinary separations are part of the scientific endeavour and have a clear heuristic and educational value. It is also obvious that a competent social scientist is a person with a high level of training and expertise in one of the core disciplines, without which he/she cannot cross, with relevance and usefulness, disciplinary frontiers, to cooperate with other specialists. However, at the cutting edge of science, in advanced research, interdisciplinarity or transdisciplinarity is required, combining theories and methods from different disciplines according to the nature of the research” (UNESCO, 1999, p. 12). The conclusion, which has been reported so far across different platforms of science management is that the “future is cross disciplinary” and “social science is central to science” overall (Campaign for Social Science, 2015).

#### SEPARATION OF SOCIOLOGY FROM ECONOMICS, PSYCHOLOGY AND HISTORY, AND RE-INTEGRATION

The division of work between sociology, economics, history, and psychology has so many fluid borders and areas of overlap that it is not only a difficult task to draw clear and sterile lines between these, but it would also not contribute to an appropriate understanding of knowledge domains (Fourcade et al., 2015). The academic silos of knowledge are overfilled; an

exchange in a sense of reciprocal decomposing has become increasingly necessary. The recent question about the relationship between sociology and neighbouring disciplines such as economics, psychology, or history has not been discussed often. While Max Weber published his *Economy and Society* (1978 [1921]), with which he addressed both items equally, suggesting a coexistence between economy and society, the process of scientific differentiation over the following decades changed academic practice, its division, and related questions. In the 1950s, Parsons and Smelser wrote in their book *Economy and Society* (1956) that only a few authors competent in sociological theory have “any working knowledge of economics, and conversely ... few economists have much knowledge of sociology” (Parsons & Smelser, 1956).

It is my firm understanding that the trend described by Parsons and Smelser (1956) can also be confirmed for the relationship of sociology and psychology, and sociology and history. However, recent developments point to circumstances indicating completely new directions, which should be acknowledged. In particular, economics has started to re-open in the direction of psychology, history, and sociology. We observe an increased social-scientification of economics (Bögenhold, 2010), in which more and more contents of one or the other neighbouring disciplines are increasingly incorporated into economics. What was a process of de-coupling for most of the twentieth century has started to move in the opposite direction; this is an ongoing re-integration. When reasoning about sociology and its problems, challenges and destiny, one may be well advised to compare the scientific potentials of different academic work settings and their topical and methodological overlaps and divergences. Established subjects of sociological experiences and competencies are increasingly seen as being of interest for other academic disciplines and sociology should be aware of these—let’s say—“imperialistic” advances (Granovetter, 1992, 2017; Davis, 2016; Chafim, 2016; Marchionatti & Cedrini, 2017), especially from the directions of economics and management studies. At least, sociology should be aware that there are many subjects, which are seen positively from neighbouring fields without receiving any attention here.

Looking at current international trends and topics show considerable thematic analogies in neighbouring disciplines, which should be analysed and explored in order to see how the contours of the academic landscape and division change and in which directions the development is evolving (Rosenberg, 2012). Ultimately, sociology is concerned with the question

about what people do and why they do it in the way they do. Swedberg compared sociology with the cognitive sciences: “Sociologists have failed to address a number of topics that are important to theorizing, and that cognitive scientists have already been working on for several decades. ... Cognitive scientists have also developed some important insights in other areas where sociologists are active but have not been particularly innovative. Studies of meaning, memory and emotions are some examples of this” (Swedberg, 2016, pp. 18–19).

Scientific progress is often contingent and never rational in a sense that it follows arithmetic rules of combinations. The “market” for ideas is not precisely an efficient or perfect market. Academic progress is also related to a series of mistakes by which intellectual resources are wasted, and, as a consequence, there are indeed intellectual gems lying unexploited and waiting for someone to grasp (Collins, 2002). However, actual textbook knowledge in economics often remained the same over decades (Granovetter, 2017).

Classic economics started with the conception of “self-interest” for reasons which can be reconstructed logically. Parsons engaged in a sociology of economic thought and concluded that the abstraction was due to the “fact of finding a plausible formula for filling a logical gap in the closure of a system” (Parsons, 1940, p. 188), which is characterized by Parsons as a doctrine. Thinking in terms that culture matters implies that people are guided by, at least, a set of goals, which are implicit or explicit, conflicting or overlapping. Social psychology and phenomenology contributed much information about these spheres and a sociology of emotions is based on the premise that people are not fully rationally controlled (Stets & Turner, 2007, Turner & Stets, 2009; Elster, 1998, 1999). Although famous economists like J. M. Keynes or J. A. Schumpeter already referred to non-rational and psychological categories to integrate into their framework of thought, economic orthodoxy ignored those voices for a long time. Over the past few decades, scientists from outside of core economics have increasingly been awarded Nobel prizes for behavioural works, for example, psychologist Herbert Simon for his theorem of “bounded rationality” (Simon, 1982) or Daniel Kahneman (2012) for his distinction between experience and memory, or the most recent Nobel laureate Richard Thaler (1994, 2016). Later, we come across Nobel laureates quoting extensively from sociological literature like Polanyi (1957) or Berger and Luckmann

(1966) for their work on institutions. D. G. North said that economics treats the issue of motivation of human beings like a black box. Another Nobel laureate in economics explicitly claims sociology as the science that is responsible for social norms and constraints. Akerlof (2007), in his function as outgoing president of the American Economic Association, recently voiced a plea to turn the academic focus towards issues of motivation and cognitive structures. Elsewhere, Akerlof and Kranton (2000) referred to dimensions like identity and social norms, which belong much more on the sociological or psychological ground than on economic terrain. Akerlof and Shiller worked out in their study “Animal Spirits” (2009) that the functioning of the whole capitalist system is heavily based on sociopsychological foundations. “Animal Spirits” (2009) takes up several questions, which were already raised by J. M. Keynes many years earlier.

Performing this turn, economics has demonstrated flexibility and moving away from conventional practice and its own textbook knowledge. The widely used concept of *homo oeconomicus* has started to erode in economics since Herbert Simon’s “bounded rationality” (Simon, 1982). However, it was already Max Weber who had concluded that economics “argues with a non-realist human being, analogous to a mathematical ideal figure” (Weber, 1990, p. 30, transl. D.B., orig. 1898). Being distant to such a procedure as provided in “standard economics,” Weber distinguished between four ideal types of social action, which are the rationality of (1) traditional action, of (2) affective action, of (3) value-orientation and of (4) purposive-rational utilitarian action (Weber, 1978, part I, ch. 1), of which only the last point of classification matches with the supposed rationality of *homo oeconomicus*. Wallerstein (1999) discusses very thoroughly exactly this rationality conception in Max Weber’s work; for a more general discussion of Weber see Lachmann (1979), Collins (1986), Swedberg (2003).

Further academic applications in economics may be shown where economists have crossed borders. A. Sen (1999) was recognized with a Nobel Prize for his seminal works on choice and his capability approach, which contributed to a better understanding of happiness and well-being by adding a relative perspective of interpretation. Another thematic field in which sociology makes waves is social network research as a mapping of patterns of communication and support. Even here, it is an interesting convergence between developments in economics as well as in management studies. Sociologists should know about this to claim intellectual property rights where necessary and to defend their own profession. Hodgson

(2012, p. 46) verified six Nobel laureates in economics since the 1970s who were recognized, among different topics, also for their concept of being very critical of the concept of the rational egoistic man.

The seemingly paradoxical situation is that, on the one hand, textbook knowledge is taught in economics, which is very much concerned with neoclassic economics, and on the other hand, economists are awarded the prestigious Nobel prizes, for criticizing principles of neoclassic thought. Robert M. Solow (Nobel Laureate in 1987) belonged to this last category: “All narrowly economic activity is embedded in a web of social institutions, customs, beliefs, and attitudes .... Few things should be more interesting to a civilized economic theorist than the opportunity to observe the interplay between social institutions and economic behavior over time and place” (Solow, 1985, pp. 328–329). A few years later, Douglas G. North (Nobel Laureate in 1993) argued in the same direction by sharpening the awareness for historical research: “Improving our understanding of the nature of economic change entails that we draw on the only laboratory that we have—the past. But ‘understanding’ the past entails imposing order on the myriad facts that have survived to explain what has happened—that is the theory. The theories we develop to understand where we have come from the social sciences. Therefore, there is a constant give and take between the theories we develop, and their application to explain the past. Do they improve our understanding—is the resultant explanation broadly consistent with the surviving historical evidence?” (North, 1977, p. 1).

What, among many other authors, Solow or North explain is the trivial fact that each economy is integrated into a permanent flux of changes. They both confirm what Schumpeter had expressed much earlier: “The essential point to grasp is that in dealing with capitalism we are dealing with an evolutionary process. ... Capitalism, then, is by nature a form or method of economic change and not only never is but never can be stationary” (Schumpeter, 1942, p. 82). When history was forgotten by wide parts of economics, works by Solow or North clearly rediscovered history for specific reasons. There is nothing else that provides empirical facts on capitalism other than the history of capitalism. Even to undertake future forecasts, one has to refer backwards. Those economic activities are embedded in social institutions, customs, beliefs, and attitudes that reflect the simple credo that culture matters, which implies that sociology matters.

If culture makes a difference, capitalism does not exist in a vacuum, but in a context with specific social regimes of living, producing, and exchange.

Institutionalist approaches have no other aim than to highlight that different social organizations and institutions (including religion, language, law, family structures and networks, systems of education and industrial relations) make differences when trying to come up with statements regarding general principles of capitalist societies and economies. As known, capitalism in Singapore differs from capitalism in Zimbabwe, which differs from capitalism in Switzerland. Accepting the idea that economies and societies are not filled by abstract but by real entities, one has to refer to concrete coordinates of time and space. If economics rediscovers history, the economic theory goes far beyond abstractivism (Hodgson, 2001). Taking culture as an analytic variable indicates different settings of norms and related behaviour (North, 1990; Jones, 2006). Culture serves as a framework of rational behaviour and is the factor, which indicates real societies as opposed to abstract ones. Historian David Landes put it concisely when he said: “Culture makes almost all the difference” (Landes, 2000, p. 2).

The concept of the “social embeddedness” (Granovetter, 1985, 2017) of institutional actors and human behaviour is a common label for approaches that attempt to deal with the interplay of individual and corporate actors in a dynamic and joint process. The impact of such a perspective is that modern economics could be linked with a constructive view that provides a new division of work between economics and the other social sciences (Granovetter, 1992). Granovetter’s formulation of a “social embeddedness of economic behaviour and institutions” (Granovetter, 1985, 2017) has subsequently become widely known. It was in the same year in which Solow (1985) used the term of embeddedness. Granovetter’s argumentation is based upon three premises: firstly, that economic action is a special case of social action; secondly, that economic action is socially situated and embedded; and thirdly, that economic institutions are social constructions. A synthesis is sought between conceptions of over-socialized and under-socialized human beings in order to articulate a theorem, which takes into account both the determination of society and the relative openness of human activities as a process (Granovetter, 1992, 2002).

Bounded rationality is very much to be understood in relation to asymmetric information and complexity. Bounded rationality mirrors the fact that societies, organizations, and economies are fragmented, they are organized along different lines and zones of contact, familiarity, and information exchange. In our view, modern economics could benefit significantly by integrating recent network concepts, which are a fantastic tool to bridge micro and macro perspectives (Bögenhold, 2013). Social network

analysis continues to develop many themes enunciated by pioneering social psychologists. “At its best, social network analysis draws from traditions of research and theory in psychology, sociology, and other areas to describe how patterns of interpersonal relations are associated with diverse behavioral, cognitive, and emotional outcomes. Looking for the future, we are deepening interest in the psychological underpinnings of why some people more than others engage and benefit from the networks of contacts within which they are embedded” (Burt et al., 2013, p. 543).

Markets are always in transition, they come up, they go down, and they change. These markets are carried out by actors having sets of people they know and whom they trust, while other people may be regarded as hostile competitors. However concrete markets may look, they always have very social traits, and economics would fall short if it did not ask about those issues. Competition processes must also be analysed and understood as ongoing social processes, which are involved in social structures and which are permanently in processes of reorganization (Burt, 1995). The presently existing, largely categorical description of social structure has no solid theoretical grounding; furthermore, network concepts may provide the only way to construct a theory of social structure (White et al., 1976, p. 732). In many respects, network analysis is an excellent exemplification of what the term of social embeddedness can deliver. Network analysis furnishes those popular formulations, which have become “economic sociology’s most celebrated metaphor” (Guillén et al., 2002, p. 4).

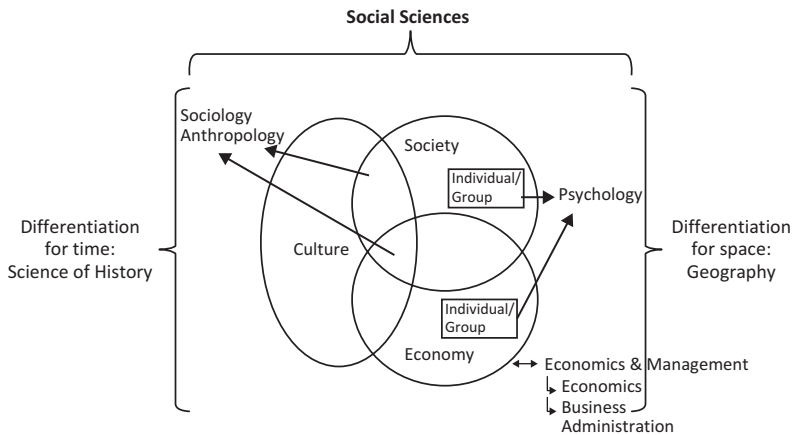
A point of initial discussion was that up-to-date economics is increasingly in a process of social-scientification as Bögenhold (2010) has coined it. Among the implications are an obvious willingness to open up for topics of cognitive structures and motivation. Economic sociology and economic psychology share many of the motives behind those trends, since the arguments in favour of these trends form the foundations of their own academic identity, but one should be curious as well as careful when meeting those new tendencies. Nothing should be taken for granted, but one should always try to see if pieces of the puzzle fit. As ideas about an economy and society in concreto are increasingly accepted again, so the relative autonomy of culture and its specification in different historical variations is also increasingly accepted. In case that one agrees on the formulation that culture matters, one has to agree on the formulation that sociology as the academic domain widely dealing with culture also matters. A plea for the academic existence of sociology must be the ultimate consequence. In particular, historical and comparative sociology, socioeconomics and



economic sociology and, of course, social network research, prove to be innovative, when highlighting national and international variations and specifics.

The so-called “imperialism of economics,” which is criticized by Granovetter (1992, 2017), increasingly looks towards traditional academic fields of history, psychology, and sociology. The public image of sociology may have declined during recent decades, but the strategic use and importance of (economic) sociology has never been greater, even if many stakeholders in sociology are not aware of this. Sociology seems to have become an upgraded discipline since social networks, communication processes, institutions, and culture are increasingly considered as core dimensions. The reciprocal integration of economy, society, and culture must be better acknowledged in academic reflections as a science of science so that disciplinary authorities will be defined accordingly.

Fig. 6.1 above gives an idea of the interplay of different academic disciplines. In order to arrive at a more modern and pluralistic attempt to overcome monodisciplinary studies, one may look at sociology and the institutional interaction with diverse blurred boundaries. Sociology covering society as well as culture is by nature a key player to understand or at least to contribute to an appropriate understanding of many recent phenomena in a globalized world. Sociology has a use in analysing and



**Fig. 6.1** Interplay of different academic disciplines Source: Own illustration, modification of Bøgenhold (2015)

explaining phenomena of social life, firstly, and, secondly, to reason about the interplay of different academic branches in the form of the sociology of science. Wallerstein et al.'s (1996) claim to “open the social sciences” should be taken seriously. Sociology can play a crucial part in that orchestra.

### ORCHESTRATING THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

Following the ideas of opening the social sciences, the final section will give a brief summary and outlook. In general, one can also argue that sociology, psychology, history, economics, and perhaps partly business administration should increasingly try to reintegrate, because their topics are among the items in a complex web of reciprocal thematic interaction. The concept of the “social embeddedness” of institutional actors and human behaviour is a common label for approaches that attempt to deal with the interplay of individual and corporate actors in a dynamic and joint process. Social networks, communication patterns, family structures, trust and fairness, but also distrust and crime, are all dimensions that matter when trying to analyse economies appropriately. Observing a trend of social-scientification of economics raises chances for all other social sciences to arrive at a more cooperative division of academic cooperation. Of course, talk about inter- and trans-disciplinarity is often more easily spelled out than practically achieved in a controlled manner. However, the reciprocal integration of economy, society, and culture (Granovetter, 2017) must be better acknowledged in academic reflections of a science of science so that disciplinary authorities will be defined accordingly.

Sometimes it also helps to go back in the history of intellectual thought in order to avoid the danger of reinventing the wheel. Sociology offers a rich tradition of different classics, who used a practice in which economy and society were not treated as disparate spheres, but as one and the same unit of analysis. Therefore, Max Weber's book title “Economy and Society” (Weber, 1978, in translation “economy and society”) were already a manifesto. Another example is Joseph A. Schumpeter, who also worked as a scientist of sciences and who developed some ideas on the landscape of academic cooperation. Of course, he considered especially economics and surrounding sciences, but sociologists will gain profit from his explanations as well, since Schumpeter makes clear that academic sciences are not a means in itself. They have to be regarded as tools and they must be checked for the capacity to contribute to a reciprocal enhancement of a better understanding of phenomena. A universal social science

is certainly more of a programme than a status, but some of Schumpeter's ideas (Bögenhold, 2013) may come quite close to that. The substantial preface to *History of Economic Analysis* (Schumpeter, 1954) can be regarded as a manual on how to refer to different academic branches and integrate them into a coherent universal social science, which is far removed from being an autistic, narrow economic science of some modern representation.

First of all, in Schumpeter's discussion theory is always written in quotation marks ("theory"), which links to the discussion initiated by Swedberg (2016): when can we speak about theory, when does a statement deserve the distinction of being a theory? Although it is not the core discussion pursued by Schumpeter, he uses the term theory as if he wants to say "so-called theory," but he explains at least three different meanings of "theory." Then, Schumpeter argues not only in favour of history as rendering a service to theory, but also in favour of "a sort of generalized or typified or stylized economic history" (Schumpeter, 1954, p. 20), which includes institutions like private property, free contracting, or government regulation. Schumpeter offers a long discussion of how much profound knowledge of history is a pre-condition for working as a modern scientist, and he is convinced that his argumentation is true for all scientific disciplines. Everybody needs to have a good command of historical facts but also of the evolution of the own academic subject in terms of the history of intellectual thought and change. Schumpeter explicitly included findings by anthropology and ethnology: "History must, of course, be understood to include fields that have acquired different names as a consequence of specialization, such as pre-historic reports and ethnology (anthropology)" (Schumpeter, 1954, p. 13).

Schumpeter was also concerned with logic, philosophy, and psychology, which are not summarized under techniques of economic analysis, but which are discussed as a basic methodological understanding of his conceptual framework. The most significant statement about economic psychology is contained in the following words: "Economics like other social sciences deals with human behaviour. Psychology is really the basis from which any social science must start and in terms of which all fundamental explanation must run" (Schumpeter, 1954, p. 27).

However, as a further important domain of knowledge Schumpeter (1954) addresses sociology, but also economic sociology: "Economic analysis deals with the questions of how people behave at any time and what economic effects do they produce by so behaving; economic

sociology deals with the question how they came to behave as they do. If we define economic behaviour widely enough so that it includes not only actions and motives and propensities but also the social institutions that are relevant to economic behaviour such as government, property inheritance, contract, and so on, that phrase really tells us all we need” (Schumpeter, 1954, p. 21). There are several statements where Schumpeter speaks with great appreciation about sociology and claims that economics has to seek or to keep closer contact with sociology, because “we cannot afford [...] to neglect the developments of sociology” and especially not the “fundamental field of economic sociology in which neither economists nor sociologists can get very far without treading on one another’s toes” (Schumpeter, 1954, pp. 25–26). There are also further reflections on the use of mathematics and statistics, which shall not be discussed in further detail here.

Our major point is that reading Schumpeter and other classics is an appropriate tool for finding a way back and for shedding light on contemporary questions. Weber or Schumpeter put together a series of different academic domains as if they are a bouquet of flowers and tried to select useful aspects and knowledge islands to bring them together. “Opening the social sciences” is just a catchword. At least a good manual is needed to decide how we may make use of which islands of knowledge in combination with which others. Social sciences are always confronted with the question of which knowledge is produced for whom and combined with which knowledge domains. Sociology has a very important place in the orchestra to generate knowledge, but sociology should be aware of its own positioning in the whole setting in order to know its own address and the neighbours it is surrounded by.

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