

# Resisting Piratic Method by Doing Research Otherwise

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## Abstract

The reconstruction of sociology into connected *sociologies* works towards a truly global and plural discipline. But if undoing the overrepresentation of European epistemology in sociology requires a deeper engagement with epistemologies of the South or *worlds and knowledges otherwise*, how can we ensure that such engagements do not simply reproduce colonial forms of appropriation and domination? Here I consider means of resisting extractive, or 'piratic' method in sociology research by drawing lessons from recent debates around geopyracy and biopyracy in geography and the life sciences. The core claim of this article is that any decolonial knowledge production must involve a consideration of the political economy of knowledge – its forms of extraction, points of commodification, how it is refined as intellectual property, and how it comes to alienate participating knowers. Against this I suggest a relearning of method in an anti-piratic way as a means of returning our work to the intellectual commons.

## Keywords

biopyracy, connected sociologies, decolonial, epistemology, fieldwork methodology, geopyracy, Global South, Indigenous, knowledge, political economy

Ideas run, like rivers, from the south to the north and are transformed into tributaries in major waves of thought. (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2012: 104)

How can we work towards plural and equal epistemologies within sociology when global academic institutions are so embedded within a colonial political economy? The systemic extraction of raw commodities from (formerly) colonised countries finds its analogue in academics' piratic practices of 'raw' data extraction for processing into refined intellectual property, to be published at prices which exclude the original contributing 'knowers' (see Alter, 2000: 63; Rivera Cusicanqui, 2012: 104). Such 'piratic methods' are broadly understood here as methodologies which do not value knowledge until processes of

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extraction, commodification and value addition have been applied through academic refinement, generally in the Global North. If we are to avoid these colonial extractive processes in our treatment of knowledge within sociology, the current venture to pluralise epistemology requires a parallel relearning of research ethics and a reconstruction of method. Here I build on existing work aimed at the decolonising of methodology within sociology (for example, Hunter, 2002; Smith, 2012[1999]) by drawing means of identifying and resisting piratic method from geopyracy and biopyracy debates.

The central claim of this article is that any decolonial knowledge production within sociology must involve a consideration of the political economy of knowledge, and thus of extractive academic tendencies. Against this I suggest a relearning of method which begins by challenging the implicit fiction that such a thing as 'raw' knowledge exists to be extracted. Further, and in a direct challenge to the linear and static conceptions of time which have been ascribed to the subjects of sociology and anthropology respectively, I suggest a deeper engagement with diverse Indigenous conceptions of time. Building on the work of Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, researchers should anticipate archaic and spiral impulses within the colonial academy, appropriations of the language of social justice, and appropriations of knowledge itself. Once we expect the archaic to recur and repeat, we are better equipped to resist. As such, the article goes on to suggest equally spiral responses in the form of creative shifts in methods, widened co-authorship, inventive uses of institutional privilege in the service of social justice, and other means of returning our work to the intellectual commons. The following section will begin by positioning this methodological intervention within a wider project to decolonise sociology by undoing the primacy of European epistemologies and colonial methodologies.

## **Sociologies Otherwise**

In recent years, scholars have begun to engage more closely with the disciplinary history of sociology in relation to the European colonial project, at the same time as examining the discipline's parameters, central concepts and subjects of study. Reflections have in part focused on the racialised disciplinary divide between anthropology and sociology, which can be roughly mapped onto the societies of the coloniser and colonised; with sociology narrating the (former) colonial metropolitan societies, and anthropology commenting on (former) colonised societies (see Bhambra, 2014; Patel, 2014: 440). As correlate to this, sociology has traditionally imagined linear temporal development to be a unique feature of European societies and for this to be the outcome of immanent processes rather than external relations. At the same time, anthropology has imagined societies beyond Europe and its liberal settler colonies to be traditional and locked in stasis, lacking Europe's immanent dynamism to act in the world, while instead being acted upon by European forces (see Bhambra, 2014: 2; Patel, 2014).

The implication of anthropology as a discipline in the European colonial project has been much more immediately discernible than that of sociology. Anthropology's direct engagements with peoples figured outside of the dynamism of European modernity has perhaps made reflection on the colonial relation between researcher and researched unavoidable. In contrast, sociology, as a discipline which claims to study modernity and which is thus constituted by modernity (Bhambra, 2013: 298; Boatcă and Costa, 2010:

13), has been much more insulated from the imperative to address the coloniality of its make-up. If Europe's dynamic social change stems from immanent processes, why would the rest of the world and colonial entanglements even figure in its scholarly narration of itself?

However, recent calls to disrupt and unravel the colonial episteme which structures sociology and to reconstruct a global discipline have been launched from various global positions and have gathered momentum in recent years. Gurminder K Bhambra's 'connected sociologies' approach works towards a comprehensive disciplinary reconstruction which involves both the active recovery of historical sociological perspectives as well as the cultivation of an alternative future configuration of the discipline (Bhambra, 2014). Emerging out of a resemblant ethical commitment, Boaventura de Sousa Santos has pursued global *cognitive* justice through his 'sociology of absences' approach with its emphasis on replacing a monocultural episteme with multiple epistemological projects (Santos, 2004, 2006).

Further, and along similar lines, Sujata Patel has traced projects emerging from within India which worked towards the construction of alternate theories of modernity informed by an anticolonial nationalist sociological imagination. Such projects were productive, Patel argues, precisely because they overturned anthropological understandings of Indian society and replaced these with sociological frames. These intellectual interventions are cognate with other contemporary endeavours within sociology which tend to combine an ethical project to reveal the colonial foundations of European social thought and modernity itself with an active project to recover epistemologies from beyond the West (see Alatas and Sinha, 2001; Connell, 2007; Magubane, 2013; Patel, 2010; Ray, 2013).

Considering the boundless forms of epistemology across the globe, endeavours to undo European epistemic singularity promise to be extensive and therefore potentially long-lasting. But this also presupposes a similarly extensive parallel revision of the ethics of sociological methods, considering that methodology and epistemology are so closely related. Further, if active projects to blur the epistemic boundary between sociology and anthropology mean that each discipline begins to move across the terrain of the other, then research within sociology is more likely to reach across more pronounced colonial power relations – those precise power relations that such disciplinary divides helped to manufacture in the first place. With this in mind, attention to extractive methods becomes all the more pressing.

Research involving Indigenous communities in particular, even when led by Indigenous researchers, presents acute predicaments which demand new depths of reflection on research ethics. This is largely because, as Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012[1999]: 1) explains, 'The word itself, "research" is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary', in part because research has been a means of embedding the 'underlying code' of colonialism across social life (Smith, 2012[1999]: 8). Research was institutionalised in the Global South through colonisation – hence the colonial constitution of disciplines and institutions; these institutions have, in turn, also been agents of colonisation. As such, the history of research with communities beyond European societies is very much:

a history that still offends the deepest sense of our humanity [...] it appals us that the West can desire, *extract and claim ownership* of our ways of knowing, our imagery, the things we create

and produce, and then simultaneously reject the people who created and developed these ideas and seek to deny them further opportunities to be creators of their own culture and own nations. (Smith, 2012[1999]: 1 [emphasis added])

Researchers expressly concerned with engaging with Indigenous knowledge and knowers, therefore, should be especially cognizant of reproducing extractive relations.

The most sustained and comprehensive decolonising engagement with methods has been made by Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012[1999]) within the editions of her book *Decolonizing Methodologies*. Smith's ethical questions begin, not from the positionality of a white researcher from the Global North conducting research in the Global South, but from an Indigenous scholar working with Indigenous communities she considers to be her own. As a Maori academic frustrated by the shallow existing research guidelines in methods texts, Smith felt there had been little critical interrogation of what methods actually *do*, in an ethical sense (2012[1999]: 228). Hence, Smith's ethical engagement with methods was therefore not developed across the most pronounced colonially rooted power relations but simply across the researcher/researched divide in an Indigenous context.

Although methodological innovations within the broader literature on social justice, such as participatory action research and oral histories, are applicable for those with a commitment to conducting 'research in the margins' (Smith, 2012[1999]: 205), Smith's approach more squarely confronts the problems of conducting research within communities for whom *being researched* is synonymous with *being colonised* (Smith, 2012[1999]: 102). In other words, Smith's decolonising methods will help non-Indigenous researchers to have more ethical critical engagements with any marginalised community (Smith, 2012[1999]: 231), but broader social justice methods will not always be suitable for structuring researcher engagement with Indigenous communities. This article seeks to complement Smith's intervention through a closer examination of extractive disciplinary practices and their lessons for sociological methods.

Before examining these disciplinary piracies, we might consider thinking in/of spirals as we seek to relearn method. If sociology's own disciplinary time is linear, would the application of this onto societies previously ascribed the static time of anthropology simply be a further colonisation? Linear time is understood here in terms of the unfolding of events in progressive sequence, an understanding which has been closely linked to the concepts of work and progress (see Smith, 2012[1999]: 56–58). Modernity itself is broadly understood as a temporal concept emerging out of 'a temporal rupture between a premodern past and a modern industrial present', one that has been mapped onto a spatial distinction between European societies and the Others of Europe (Bhambra, 2013: 298). As modernity has been sociology's central subject, distinct conceptions of time therefore separated the peoples studied by anthropology and sociology. Anthropology was established as a 'science of other men in another Time', a static, separated time which denied the coevalness of Europe's Others (Fabian, 2014[1983]: 143). In contrast, sociology was centred on a conception of linear time which:

affirmed a belief that social life and its institutions, emerging in Europe from around the fourteenth century onward, would now influence the making of the New World. In so doing, it 'silenced' its own imperial experience and [its] violence, without which it could not have been

modern. These assumptions framed the ideas elaborated by Hegel, Kant, and the Encyclopaedists and were incorporated in the sociologies of Durkheim, Weber, and Marx. (Patel, 2014: 439)

Therefore, the unravelling of European epistemic frames of time and space became of vital importance to the projects studied by Patel to construct a distinct Indian sociology.

The Aymara scholar-activist Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, quoted in full here, shows us another way of understanding time and event which escapes sociology's temporal constructions:

There is no post or pre in this vision of history that is not linear or teleological but rather moves in cycles and spirals and sets out on a course without neglecting to return to the same point. The indigenous world does not conceive of history as linear; the past-future is contained in the present. The regression or progression, the repetition or overcoming of the past is at play in each conjuncture and is dependent more on our acts than on our words. The project of indigenous modernity can emerge from the present in a spiral whose movement is a continuous feedback from the past to the future—a 'principle of hope' or 'anticipatory consciousness' [Ernst Bloch]—that both discerns and realizes decolonization at the same time.

The contemporary experience commits us to the present—*aka pacha*—which in turn contains within it the seeds of the future that emerge from the depths of the past [*qhip nayr uñtasis sarnaqapxañani*]. The present is the setting for simultaneously modernizing and archaic impulses, of strategies to preserve the status quo and of others that signify revolt and renewal of the world: *Pachakuti*. The upside-down world created by colonialism will return to its feet as history only if it can defeat those who are determined to preserve the past, with its burden of ill-gotten privileges. (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2012: 96)

If we can escape the disciplinary construction of linear time and come to expect circular colonising repetitions, then we might be empowered to evade these. Linda Tuhiwai Smith also displays an anticipatory consciousness when she recognises that 'policies aimed at Maori continue to resonate and recycle colonizing narratives' (2012[1999]: 212). The intention of Indigenous thinkers like Smith and Rivera Cusicanqui, then, is not to resist perceptions of stasis by simply recreating European understandings of linear time in which a society understands its own progress in terms of itself; instead, an anticipatory consciousness disrupts both of these constructions. Understanding varied Indigenous concepts of time is vital to any decolonising epistemological project and a means of overcoming the binary presentation of linear, dynamic time against traditional, static time which shapes the way in which societies have been knowable as the subject of either anthropology or sociology.

But can we recognise the 'modernising and archaic impulses' as they encircle us? If the past is preserved and present, what do we do with its 'burden of ill-gotten privileges'? Rivera Cusicanqui suggests that the current decolonial scholarly endeavour is also burdened by such privileges, and that decolonial scholars themselves are snared in the traps they seek to dismantle. Quijano, Mignolo and others have built an 'empire within an empire' she says (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2012: 98) and North American postcolonial studies more broadly, with its Third World tributaries, 'is not only an economy of ideas, but it is also an economy of salaries, perks, and privileges that certifies value through the

granting of diplomas, scholarships, and master's degrees and through teaching and publishing opportunities' (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2012: 102–103). With this in mind, a political economy of knowledge is proposed by Rivera Cusicanqui for the sake of understanding the material processes behind ideas and schools of thought. Here this can be deepened and detailed with reference to disciplinary debates within geography and the life sciences, beginning with the latter.

## Biopiracy

We in the Global North find ourselves deeply in arrears to the Global South in more than one sense of the phrase. Yet deepening further still the ecological and knowledge debts owed North to South (Alter, 2000), a 'genetic imperialism' (Kloppenburg, 2000: 511) continues in the form of the extraction and sale of 'raw' genetic resources and knowledge of those resources. This has been the concern of Vandana Shiva and of other scholars who have sought to expose the means by which nature and knowledge are appropriated and commodified. These scholars have shown that the enclosure system of 'ecoliberalisation' facilitated by international trade laws subjects genetic material to the market mechanism (Kloppenburg, 2000) and international systems of life-form patenting serve to transform forms of knowledge which are collectively produced into forms of individuated property-for-ownership (Shiva, 1997: 7).

Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Law (TRIPs) are inherently colonising in at least two respects. Firstly, by extracting ethnobotanical knowledge, commodifying it, and claiming ownership of it, TRIPs mimic colonial processes of resource extraction. Secondly, these colonise by forcing a social translation in communally organised societies in that they apply pressure for those communities to conceive of knowledge as property to be owned by individuals, because unless knowledge can be attributed and registered to the individual, it cannot be protected.

Shiva made clear how, since the end of the era of formal political colonialism, shifts have taken place in sites of enclosure, from this being at one time a predominantly territorial endeavour to encompassing enclosure through patents on life, on genetic codes, on human bodies, animals and plants (Shiva, 1997: 7). The 'blank' territorial space once mapped and claimed by the coloniser has become a multitude of 'blank' spaces to be claimed and patented, or in Shiva's words: '[t]he vacancy of targeted lands has been replaced by the vacancy of targeted life forms and species manipulated by the new biotechnologies' (Shiva, 1997: 2).

This basic assumption of 'vacancy', 'blankness', or 'essentiality' underpins bioprospecting endeavours which draw 'nature' into 'science' for commercial development. The idea that bioprospectors can appropriate nature in its pure state is a fiction in most cases, as Indigenous and farming communities have largely altered the natural environments they inhabit, developing biotic resources and medicines from the natural world around them (Kloppenburg, 2000; Shand, 1998). Ana Isla (2005: 57) goes as far as to argue that 'genetic changes achieved by Indigenous agriculturalists over the millennia have been more important than changes from the systematic efforts of science'. So this is where the analogy of knowledge extraction/raw commodity extraction reaches

its limit. There is no 'raw' knowledge and there are few 'raw' genetic resources that have not already been extensively refined by intelligent human intervention.

However, this knowledge is vulnerable because, like other forms of Indigenous 'property', it is collectively generated, communally guarded, often codified and communicated orally, and openly shared and used (Kloppenborg, 2000). And global systems of private property exclude these communal forms of production of ethnobotanical knowledge, as well as those produced through 'informal innovation' (Harry, 2002: 42). As such, these forms are easy to extract without compensation for development in northern laboratories. The objective of such laboratories might then be to extract the active essence from an organism or to develop a medicinal plant in isolation. Isla (2005: 59) argues that once plants are in this way 'located in the commodity world', they are deprived of 'species association', and begin to show altered properties outside of their ecosystem context, a point further echoed by Shand (1998: 163) in relation to genetic decline. But more broadly, this extraction and commodification of nature and knowledge is often appended to land enclosures, which combine to turn Indigenous people into criminal trespassers on their own land and pirate users of their own knowledge. This connection is also made apparent in Ana Isla's work as she argues: 'campesinos [peasants] and Indigenous people are impoverished as their local environments move from abundance to scarcity in a commodified world, and they themselves become displaced, marginalised, even criminalised, and unwaged in a waged global world' (Isla, 2005: 61).

Overall, biopiracy debates have illuminated the logics of enclosure at work in international intellectual property law. Shiva (1997: 3) roots the primacy of capital's freedom to enclose in Western thought and in particular in Locke's treatise on property in which:

only those who own capital have the natural right to own natural resources, a right that supersedes the common rights of others with prior claims. Capital is thus defined as a source of freedom that, at the same time, denies freedom to the land, forests, rivers, and biodiversity that capital claims as its own and to others whose rights are based on their labor. Returning private property to the commons is perceived as depriving the owner of capital of freedom. Therefore, peasants and tribespeople who demand the return of their rights and access to resources are regarded as thieves.

This freedom of capital has disturbed all aspects of life. Shand (1998: 165), for example, draws on the cases of claims of ownership on chickpeas and quinoa to illustrate how people of the Global South end up 'having to pay royalties on products that are based on their own biological resources and knowledge'. While in the most extreme example, the Australian company Autogen Ltd bought the rights to the gene pool of the people of Tonga, which then opened 'the way for the commercialisation and patenting of the genetic material of indigenous peoples' (Harry, 2002: 43).

What emerges from the literature on biopiracy is a picture of the enclosure of communal knowledge, through which the researcher is implicated in the commodification of information and genetic material, and even the 'interior spaces of the bodies' (Shiva, 1997: 7) of human beings. This literature has exposed the political economy of the life sciences, and the ways in which this enriches the North at the expense



of the South, where southern peoples are often faced with the alienating prospect of buying back their own commodified and reparcelled knowledge in the form of a polished product.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012[1999]: 102–107) relates the treatment of biotics and genetic matter back to the treatment of social life in research, seeing these as part of a wider whole. Colonising projects are set within a global political economy which continues to advance accumulation by the dispossession of Indigenous communities. Complicit in this are environmental and scientific communities, as well as corporations, governments and international institutions. ‘Embedded within each of these sectional interests are views about knowledge, more specifically about the inherent dominance of Western knowledge. Local or indigenous knowledges are even more at risk now than ever before’ (Smith, 2012[1999]: 103). Social research may be just as complicit in maintaining this as the biosciences and geography are, which is why broader debates over extractive methods are so important. There is an overarching rationality which facilitates the commodification of human physical substance, biotic life – including that engineered through human effort – and social knowledge. As such, it is insufficient to isolate these debates according to discipline, and deal with them as though they were fragmented along the lines of invented disciplinary boundaries; instead, wider lessons must be learned. But before drawing together broader lessons for a non-piratic disciplinary method, the debates around geopiracy will be reviewed.

## Geopiracy

Colonialism is foundationally implicated in the discipline of geography, and, in this sense, geography has much in common with anthropology, as both disciplines have been concerned with the detailing of ‘human terrain’ for the purposes of control. This is not solely an historic claim and anthropologists have been enlisted by the United States Army in recent years to assist in the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq (see Price, 2011). Notwithstanding this, anthropology as a discipline appears to have dealt more forthrightly than geography has with the issue of creeping military funding in its disciplinary economy.

Joel Wainwright’s recent text on geopiracy sought to confront this military funding issue in US geography, while also scrutinising extractive forms of empiricist method more generally. The book itself was ‘partly motivated by the intuition that there is a lingering relationship between empiricism and empire’ (in part) as ‘a result of the calculation of the world for empire in a fashion that draws upon the empiricists’ privileged synthesis of sense-experience, sovereignty-property, and calculative reasoning’ (2013: xiii). In Wainwright’s text, the term geopiracy (*geopiratería*) comes directly from a group of Indigenous Zapotec communities of Oaxaca, Mexico, who, mainly under the collective ‘Union of Organizations of the Sierra Juárez of Oaxaca’ (UNOSJO) published letters of protest at the conduct of a group of geographers from the US (Wainwright, 2013: 5). Their concerns were directed at those involved in *México Indígena*, an original research project under the wider ‘Bowman Expeditions’ which involved detailed mapping of the land use of Indigenous communities.

Ultimately, through a further letter from the San Miguel Tiltepec community reaffirming that their General Assembly ‘was tricked by the researchers’, there was a



clear request made for the information to be returned, any copies to be destroyed and any published work to be deleted from the internet. The communities also requested that a public apology be issued before making the following appeal:

Finally, we call out to the communities and indigenous peoples of Mexico and the world, for them not to be taken unawares by researchers of the Bowman expeditions, or by other researchers who only follow their interests or those of the people they represent. It is the communities and peoples themselves who should decide what they want to have researched about themselves, and who should carry it out. (Hernández and Montaña Mendoza, cited in Wainwright, 2013: 4)

The communities felt violated because, although they were aware of the involvement of the American Geographical Society (AGS) and the Mexican Secretary of Environment and Natural Resources, as well as three collaborating universities, they were unaware of funding from the Foreign Military Studies Office (FMSO) of the United States Army, and of the involvement of Radiance Technologies, a private military technology firm. Later, the Bowman geographers defended themselves by showing that they had made details of their military funding public on websites; however, this information had been in English, a language not known to the communities studied. The Bowman geographers also forwarded the defence that their method was beneficial overall because ‘geographic ignorance’ was responsible for past ‘blunders’ in American foreign policy, in Iraq for example (Dobson, cited in Wainwright, 2013: 11), and that more and better knowledge of human terrain would put an end to these US foreign policy failures. This logic somehow implies that by disclosing detailed human terrain data to the US military, Indigenous communities are less likely to be the victims of ‘blundered’ invasions rather than simply rendering themselves more easily invaded.

The Bowman projects began from the departure point of two core problematics: the first being that ‘disaggregated data on the world’s people and places are not in accurate and meaningful formats with geolocational precision for matching place with ethnicity, populations, resources, loyalties, etc.’ and the second being that ‘Foreign digital geographies or “human terrains” demand accurate, on-the-ground field knowledge of the “cultural terrain”’ (*México Indígena*, cited in Wainwright, 2013: 9). Wainwright interprets this as ‘the need to *represent social difference in spatial form*’ (2013: 9 [emphasis in the original]). But the Bowman geographers’ deeply held faith that social difference should be *known* in spatial form by the US military is troubling. Their mission to make communities legible (on which see Scott, 1998) for their own good is evidently not informed by the realities of the uses of human terrain data by the US in counter-insurgency operations and invasions. Their position also denies communities the right to illegibility; that is, the right to live their everyday lives without being ‘read’ and monitored by the US military.

More troubling still is that their attempt to make legible the detailed human terrain of communities was couched in terminology that we would recognise as belonging to the language of social justice. One explicit defence of the Bowman expeditions held that these were ‘designed from a deep ethical commitment to *help* indigenous people’ (Herlihy, cited in Wainwright, 2013: 12 [emphasis added]). Such a ‘we are here to help you’ position with its missionary tones is familiar of course, and colonising endeavours

have often been cloaked in the language of altruism. These are the spiralling archaic impulses of which Rivera Cusicanqui warns will continue to return to us in the present.

Wainwright asks the question ‘Why do we geographers have such difficulties facing up to the myriad ways that our discipline remains implicated in the work of empire?’, and he poses by way of answer an identification of the problem in ‘a traditional commitment to empiricism in service to the state/military’ (Wainwright, 2013: 87). Schlosser (2014: 198) takes the argument further by distinguishing a specifically geopiratic form of empiricist research which ‘asks what truths can be gleaned from the field and processed into expert knowledge later in the research process’. Focusing not on the source of funding but on the separation between extraction and processing which reinforces the epistemic value of the ‘expert’ against the amateurism of the source of information. This was certainly the form of empiricism subscribed to in the Oaxaca case. In a public speech, Herlihy, one of the Bowman geographers (cited in Wainwright, 2013: 12), managed to defend the military-funded mapping of Indigenous lands as a counter-colonial act at the same time as claiming that this aids ‘the legitimization of popular knowledge and its conversion to scientific knowledge’. In this statement, Herlihy reveals that to him, the Indigenous knowledge of the Oaxaca communities is not legitimate until it is made so by the researcher and, further, that it is not scientific until it has been converted in a similar way.

By subscribing to this binary of illegitimate, Indigenous, popular knowledge, against the legitimate, scientific knowledge of the northern researcher, he is reaffirming the condition of possibility for geopiracy, even as he seeks to defend himself against the geopiratic charges. This may all be rooted in what we conceive of as science itself. In contrast to Herlihy’s binary understanding, Shiva’s (1997: 9) conception of science as a ‘pluralistic enterprise’ encompassing diverse ‘ways of knowing’, as well as the comparable turn towards connected sociologies, work against this condition of possibility. Such approaches hold that legitimate, scientific knowledge is already in existence, known within the Indigenous communities themselves.

It is vital to understand Herlihy’s binary here precisely because it pivots on the point of commodification at which Indigenous knowledge can be converted into ‘science’. And this artificial separation of two forms of inseparable knowledge is enabled by a deeply embedded ‘production of a divided world’, as Wainwright hints at here:

For if the expeditions were no mere misunderstanding or ethical lapse, but a more general assault by ‘parasites upon our region,’ then we can appreciate that geopiracy names a process of imperial extraction that is not temporally limited to the present, not ethically limited to the acts of discrete individuals, nor a simple matter of winning the consent of subjects. Rather *it reflects the afterlife of the Colombian encounter and its production of a divided world*—the same world that empirical geographers take unproblematically as the object of analysis. (Wainwright, 2013: 89 [emphasis added])

In the colonial present then, reflected in a divided world, researchers maintain a distinction between Indigenous knowledge-*extra-commercium* and scientific knowledge-as-product. The standard job of the researcher has long been to convert the former into the latter at its point of commodification.

Further, narrative-based self-reflexive critiques of method do not necessarily counteract or erase this division. Schlosser (2014: 198) argues that efforts to ‘locate’ the subject-position of the researcher do not tend to disrupt the assumption that ‘people in the communities being researched [are] lacking expert knowledge about themselves, their history and lives, their communities, and about how to solve their problems’. More meaningful ways to move beyond hand-wringing discussions of positionality and towards confronting piratic tendencies in research will therefore be discussed in the section to follow.

Another method question derived from the Bowman failings would concern whether to even gain ‘on the ground’ knowledge at all, considering the likelihood that information can be later used for control and intervention just as any other human terrain data are. Projects motivated by solidarity, resistance, the need to expose corrupt corporate practices and so on, often fall into the snare of exposing this human terrain data, which can ultimately be used against communities. In recent years, for instance, there has been an increase in counter-cartography endeavours which begin with an objective of social justice – primarily the defence of lands against corporate expropriation – only for the data to be used by states or corporations in their own interests.

The Oaxaca communities had originally agreed to participation in the Bowman projects precisely because these were couched in the language of social justice. Ostensibly, they sought to monitor a government privatisation programme which had served to enclose *ejido*, or communally owned lands. In other words, the researchers had proposed mapping as an exercise in resistance, holding the Mexican state to account, only to forward the interests of the US state instead. As such, this form of geopyracy enacts a double extraction, firstly through the appropriation of community data to enhance ‘human terrain’ knowledge, and secondly through the appropriation and application of the language of social justice. In this sense, both decolonial methods and the vocabulary of decolonial struggles can and do become pirated by colonial interests. Once again, the archaic returns in spiral forms.

## Overcoming Piratic Tendencies in Research

Seeking to draw in wider ways of knowing and what have been referred to as ‘worlds and knowledges otherwise’ (Escobar, 2007) in order to release ourselves from European colonial binds within sociology, risks the paradox of pursuing more extractive research across more pronounced colonial power relations and with communities for whom research has been synonymous with colonisation. Scholars of life sciences and of geography are increasingly being questioned on ethical grounds by communities and individual participants over their piratic methods. For instance, when the geographer Schlosser was challenged by Kristin, an Inuk participant in his research, she made it clear that she was fully aware ‘that her words were the data to be secured and to which value would be added by the researcher somewhere else. This is an issue of *extraction*’ (Schlosser, 2014: 196 [emphasis in the original]).

As noted above, however, the extraction of knowledge is not even fully analogous to the colonial extraction of raw commodities for processing elsewhere, as knowledge is never actually ‘raw’; instead, it always emerges from complex and multi-layered forms

of communal development, often over generations. Yet knowledge continues to be extracted in the same sense as oil through a pipeline to be refined in the Global North.

Avoiding these extractive forms of empiricism first requires consideration of how research is initially framed and enacted. The question of who formulates the research questions and who provides the answers is raised within Linda Tuhiwai Smith's work. To arrive in the 'field' with an established set of concerns framed around what Smith calls 'standard research problems' is to immediately foreclose the many unknowns within that community's social life. Smith laments the fact that research so often silences, rather than centres, the questions raised by members of the communities which are the focus of research: 'How can research ever address our needs as indigenous peoples if our questions are never taken seriously?' (Smith, 2012[1999]: 230). Where the researcher establishes the framing, the issues to be addressed, and the questions to be asked, and the 'researched' may only answer within those narrow frames, not only erasures and silences but also power relations are reproduced. Conversely, research beginning with a reversal of the standard process, that is, by centring the concerns and questions of the community within the study, bears a greater risk of revealing the researcher's – and his/her institution's – own implication in colonial power relations. This is discomfiting for scholars who wish to deny the realities of the colonial episteme but productive for those who wish to dismantle it, in part because it reveals the power relations which structure research encounters.

My own research methods have been partly guided by Kolson Schlosser's reflections on the dangers of reproducing forms of extraction in research, and rely on a 'field informed' approach (Schlosser, 2014: 203). This is distinct from what Schlosser perceives to be more extractive forms of empiricism which begin with a defined theoretical framework and a fixed method through which data are collected and then analysed. Drawing on the work of Law (2004), he argues that methods are the means by which questions are answered, whereas theory informs the questions we ask in the first place, and asking the 'wrong questions' informed by a rigid and inappropriate theoretical frame can produce problematic research (Schlosser, 2014: 202). An extractive empiricist approach is, in part, one which assumes the right theory-guided questions are being asked based on a prior assumption of sufficient knowledge about the field. By contrast, a 'field informed' approach is reflexive and guided at least partly by questions formulated by the participating community. Reflexive field informed research is therefore more receptive to those conditions in the 'field' which may be 'unknown, unknowable, or situationally contingent' (Schlosser, 2014: 203).

In a further methodologically anti-piratic example, Amber Murrey's work *with* communities affected by the Chad–Cameroon Oil Pipeline seeks to move beyond reflections of positionality in methods and towards a 'relational, co-creational and grounded' form of knowledge-making. She does this through the following means:

- (i) attention to emplacement or the place of conscious political dwelling (à la Mignolo 2011),
- (ii) an emphasis on building and maintaining sustained relationships with people where we work and (iii) a grounded ethical and political orientation that is attentive foremost to the voices and experiences of the people in the places where we work. (Murrey, 2014)

This is achieved in part through approaching research as a co-creation among intellectual friends. Conversation and story-telling leads to the collaborative creation of a knowledge which is, in Murrey's terms, 'mindful of the language of the mouth'. Murrey also uses the collaborative production of film in order to make a reflective piece of work which is made and left behind in the community. The film itself was envisaged as a mnemonic tool and included 'local stories, moments, interactions and landscapes with little narrative voice-over'. The value of this work is entirely co-created and nothing is extracted from the community in the process. These echo Smith's methodological innovations involving ways of '[engaging] indigenous communities in research as active participants and as producers of knowledge' (2012[1999]: 231).

On the whole, overcoming extractive tendencies in sociology requires a return to what Shiva (1997: 10) refers to as the 'intellectual commons' in reference to the recognition of a broader field of knowledge production encompassing all communities of producers. All knowers in the intellectual commons should be equally valued for their expertise. With this in mind, we need to identify the point of commodification of knowledge, as well as the points and modes of the certification and addition of value, and disturb these in creative ways. We can consider how we add value to knowledge by making it 'scientific', by certifying it with legitimate methodologies, by processing it into marketable forms, and by packaging it and presenting it as a saleable commodity (a book or a journal article for instance). These publications may then be made available for sale (at alienating prices and in alienating language) back to the communities from which the knowledge was originally extracted. Otherwise they may not be made available at all in the place or language of the participating communities. This may be partly addressed by publishing open-access and by campaigning for publishers to make e-books available globally. Other means of confronting alienation include translating works into the language of the participating community, and by summarising work in local-language blog posts or pamphlets.

In a similar way to our processes of certifying knowledge value, we also add value to ourselves as researchers, and for some this is among the primary objectives of academic study or of an academic career. The epistemic authority gained from study and research in the Global North brings wage increases, promotion and prestige. However, there are means of dispersing our own value as researchers, at the same time as shifting the point of commodification, and one of these may be described as creative co-authorship. If, for instance, our project relies greatly on a contributing interviewee, rather than extracting, commodifying, and later refining, their knowledge, we can co-author academic articles, public commentary, media articles and blog posts with them as an alternative to elevating our own positions as scholars with single-authored works. This can be a beneficial process for the other party and gives more adequate recognition of their epistemic authority as experts in their own life-worlds. I have always viewed the people I interact with as partners in the co-cultivation of knowledge, rather than simply as sources of 'data' to be used in 'my' research. Some pieces of work must necessarily be single-authored, but elsewhere I have collaborated on co-authored work with participants in order to work towards a joint knowledge endeavour (see Mutaqin and Tilley, 2014).

Many would suggest that writing *with* participants, rather than about participants, would compromise our critical position as researchers, yet we are often prepared to co-

author articles with colleagues from academic institutions in the Global North with whom our positions will most certainly not converge on all aspects of thought. Co-authorship must always navigate consensus and dissensus, convergence and divergence, so more creative forms of presenting collaborative work may push us to more honestly reflect this, while allowing for joint publishing with participants without compromising our critical position. Breaking the stale journal article mould, for instance, with documented conversations, discussions and exchanges, would allow us to co-author articles with participants without having to fully concur with their views. One example of this is the recent collaborative article by Wendy Harcourt and others (2015) which braids together the views of researchers in a text of consensus and discord about methods themselves.

Overall, the weight of institutional privilege behind us – however ‘ill-gotten’ this may be – need not be a burden; institutional privilege can easily be put to use in the service of social justice. While there has been a rightful backlash against ‘white saviourism’, the response should not be to retreat into wholly local forms of solidarity. If scholars limit their scope to the local, then this means less scrutiny of social dynamics which are global. With this in mind, there is a case to be made for continuing to forge globally networked responses to global social injustice, especially where this has Euro-centred beginnings. We can, and many scholars already do, use academic funds to facilitate linkages between social movements, strengthening solidarity networks by connecting together scholars and activists working in different countries. We can also use institutional budgets to bring participants to conferences as expert speakers; this international travel can enhance their own solidarity networks by allowing them to visit other activists. On the whole, we can work to disperse our value and privilege by putting centres of learning at the service of local and global social justice.

## In Sum

The present ethical project to broaden sociology into global connected *sociologies* written from multiple epistemic positions should also be reflected in a similar revisionist project to constantly scrutinise the ethics of method. This is especially true for research encounters across the most pronounced power relations, but also for those across the divide between the academy, in its historical-colonial form, and communities and intellectuals outside of it.

Globally, the ways in which knowledge and knowers are classified determines their position on the knowledge hierarchy, which in turn determines how the sharing of their knowledge will be compensated. Extraction of knowledge from ‘amateurs’ for commodification and value addition in the Global North is followed by the alienation of the original knowers, either by the prohibitive expense of the published final product, or by the fact that their own knowledge is used against them for the purposes of control.

The capitalist logics of the academy renew and recycle coloniality in knowledge production, and the archaic impulses of the global colonial return in spiral and shifting forms. We can evade these spiral impulses within sociology through creative subversion, beginning by attending to, and elaborating, what Rivera Cusicanqui calls the *political economy of knowledge*. Knowledge generation is a plural and communal enterprise and



the false binary between amateur/unscientific and expert/scientific remains the condition of possibility for the commodification of knowledge which profits the Global North. This article suggests recognising scientific pluralism and the intellectual commons, and working against forces in sociology which deny these. It suggests using institutional privilege to invert the status of 'expert' and 'amateur' through pursuing co-authorship of academic and media publications where possible, as well as through creative forms of knowledge presentation reflecting the consensus/discord between knowers. Inspiration can also be drawn from projects which have sought to retain 'value' within participating communities, as in the work of Linda Tuhiwai Smith and Amber Murrey.

The piratic tendencies of the Global North are enacted along the well-established routes of academic infrastructure and Rivera Cusicanqui's warning to anticipate the repetition of the archaic can only be done if we confront the political economy of knowledge in which we are embedded. This confrontation opens up the possibility for creative shifts in method within sociology which disturb the false binaries and piratic tendencies of our knowledge-productive processes.

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