

Social Sciences between the Systems: The Ecuadorian University between Science, Education, Politics and Economy

Journal of Interdisciplinary Economics
29(1) 48–66

© 2017 SAGE Publications India
Private Limited
SAGE Publications
sagepub.in/home.nav

DOI: 10.1177/0260107916674075
<http://jje.sagepub.com>



Philipp Altmann¹

Abstract

Universities are, like all organizations, at the intersection of different functional subsystems. They are not only dedicated to research (science) and teaching (education) but are also place for communications that form part of politics, economics and so on. But, what happens to universities, and, more precisely, social sciences in university, if the social system they work in is not differentiated in the way the social sciences in the Global North are used to? What if there is no clear distinction between science and politics? Does academic autonomy lead in this situation to some kind of 'university as a subsystem', complete with its own code and autopoiesis? Or will the different subsystems de-differentiate increasingly, as predicted by Luhmann?

This contribution will analyse social sciences in Ecuadorian universities as an example for organizations at the intersection of functional systems that are not fully differentiated. The development, the operative closure, the institutionalization and the self-production of a concrete discipline under constant pressure of other social systems will be analysed. The goal is a further insight into processes of differentiation in the Global South and the role of institutions in these processes. Part of this is the attempt to actualize and criticize Niklas Luhmann's approach of systems theory to regions outside of the Global North.

JEL: O300, Z130

Keywords

University, systems theory, inclusion, exclusion, Global South, dependency theory

¹Escuela de Sociología y Ciencias Políticas, Universidad Central del Ecuador, Quito, Ecuador.

Corresponding author:

Philipp Altmann, Escuela de Sociología y Ciencias Políticas, Universidad Central del Ecuador, Avenida América, Ciudadela Universitaria, Quito, Ecuador.

E-mail: PhilippAltmann@gmx.de

Introduction

Social sciences are highly unequal—especially so if observed on a global level. There are only few countries of the Global South that produce research that is considered relevant in global social sciences. While this inequality is generally understood in terms of poverty—lack of funding, low salaries, bad professional qualification, bad work conditions—there are other factors that create and maintain the conditions for a closure towards non-northern social sciences. A series of studies prove the systematic lack of participation of researchers of the Global South in high-ranking publications,¹ but generally without the necessary theoretic background to go beyond a negative (lack of) explication. The underlying problem has been described by the Gulbenkian Commission (1996). Nevertheless, most studies work without a theorization what ‘global’ could mean.

Systems theory, especially the version developed by Niklas Luhmann, offers tools that allow for a more complex and complete understanding of exclusions within global systems. By understanding social sciences as a global system of communications that reproduces itself in operative closure, the reductionist view on the material background as cause of inequality can be prevented. In other words, effects within a given system have to be explained by an understanding of the system and its internal logic and not of its environment. A conceptualization of institutionalizations and institutions as product of communications and learning as proposed by Douglass North within social systems can be one way to explain differences within a given system.

Therefore, this article is based on a conception of society as global system. This makes a local case study interesting. In order to ground the theoretic considerations on global social sciences backed by systems theory, the case of Ecuadorian social sciences will be used. However, this reduction to one specific case does not mean a reduction in the scope of the developed model. This article tries to establish a theoretic framework for social sciences in the Global South.

First, this text will define how science can be understood from the point of view of systems theory. In the next section, a definition of university as organization with institutionalizations will be elaborated. The third section is dedicated to the problem of the Global South in the global social system. The fourth section consists of a short introduction into the development of social sciences in Ecuador. The final section will analyse the factors that impede full inclusion in global social sciences for the Global South in general and for Ecuador in particular with an amplification of the difference between inclusion and exclusion.

Science as System

Science can be understood as an autonomous and autopoietic system of communications—that is, science consists of communications that regulate and reproduce themselves following rules established by themselves. These communications are what define science. For modern science, this would be publications,² participation in conferences, applications for funding, invitations for

presentations, general contacts to other academics and so on. As such, science continuously establishes and maintains the difference to its environment, which consists of everything but science. Therefore, its boundaries are not defined by territorial frontiers. Science, economy and other functional systems

spread over the globe [contained only by] the difference between meaningful communication and other processes. The inclusion of all communicative behavior into one societal system is the unavoidable consequence of functional differentiation. Using this form of differentiation, society becomes a global system. (Luhmann, 1982, p. 132)

The boundary of any system with its environment realizes a re-entry in the system as binary code that runs along all communications within the system itself. This code has always a positive side, reproducing the system, and a negative side, reproducing the environment, and is constituted and maintained by the autopoietic production of communications. In the case of science, there are two complementary codes: the code true–not-true is applied in the context of general rules or programmes—theories and/or methods (Luhmann, 1990, p. 197). This code is about what is considered part of science by science itself. The secondary code is reputation, the ‘concentration of attention and selection of what deserves more attention than something else with a higher probability’ (Luhmann, 1990, pp. 245–246). It is derived from what is considered as academic achievements and tends to be interdisciplinary as it can mobilize attention in the whole system of science and not just a part of it (Luhmann, 1990, pp. 249–250). Both codes interact and allow for a reduction of complexity within the system: while it is impossible to read every publication in one given field, and with this, always assess the code true–not-true, the names of authors, theories, academic institutions, journals and so on, can help to stick to those publications that with a high probability are on the positive side (true) and will have impact in the field.

Concrete academic disciplines, for instance social sciences, can be understood as subsystems of science, sharing its global characteristics, especially considering autopoiesis and the code used. The differentiation into subsystems works through a differentiation of programmes, that is, theories and methods that define a given discipline and that are redefined over time. ‘[D]isciplines are considered to be the primary unit of internal differentiation of the modern system of science and, as such, vital to any analysis—historical or systematic—of scientific developments’ (Stichweh, 1992, p. 4). It is here where the concrete form of communication in specialized scientific publications develops, especially since the nineteenth century. Publications are one of the central types of communication in science and have the potential to predetermine the rest of communications.

Increasingly restrictive conditions were defined regarding what communication was acceptable for publication. These conditions included the requirement of identifying the problem tackled in the article, sequential presentation of the argument, description of the methods used, presentation of empirical evidence, restrictions on the complexity of the argument accepted within an individual publication, linkage with earlier communications of other authors—using citations and other techniques,—and the admis-

sibility of presenting speculative thoughts. In a kind of feedback loop, publications, as the ultimate form of scientific communication, exercised pressure on the scientific production process (research) and were thereby able to integrate disciplines as social systems. (Stichweh, 1992, p. 11)

The development of academic publications and academic associations as the main form of academic communication goes hand in hand with the development of both the system of science and the different subsystems—above all, academic disciplines—within it. In order to be included in the system of science, a participation in those mechanisms of communication is mandatory. This is why systematic exclusion, especially if regionalized, could harm the autopoiesis of science—it just cannot maintain the idea that science is global if the actual communications that form science are not. In this concrete field, there is a series of studies proving the global inequality concerning publications, the probably most illustrative one being Graham, Hale and Stevens (2011, pp. 14–19).

Universities as Organizations between Science and Education

The development of the system of science and of its disciplinary subsystems is tightly connected to the development of the modern university. It was in universities that the idea of discipline left behind its characteristics of ‘a classificatorily generated unit of the ordering of knowledge for purposes of instruction in schools and universities’ (Stichweh, 1992, p. 3) and became a marker for actual social systems. While the internal logic of subsystems of science is relegated to autopoiesis, the universities provide the necessary background for every academic discipline.

The scientific discipline as primary unit of the internal differentiation of science has, since its genesis, been stabilized by two conditions: (a) The fact of a science differentiated into a plurality of (competing, mutually stimulating) disciplinary perspectives becomes the chief causal factor underlying the developmental dynamism of modern science; (b) Similar to the way in which the discipline functions as a cognitive address within the system of science, science also links the discipline up as a structural unit (utilized in both systems) with curricular structures in the system of education—i.e., it is stabilized by the central system/environment relation of science. (Stichweh, 1992, p. 3)

This means that the organization of university is the connection of the functional system of science and the functional system of education. The coexistence of both systems in the same organization and the same persons does not lead to a de-differentiation but rather to the creation of specialized programmes that can allow a certain interaction (Luhmann, 1998, pp. 784–785).

As organization, the university has a mode of autopoiesis that is based on membership and decisions that affect this membership. It is an operatively closed system that ‘produces decisions from decisions’ (Luhmann, 1998, p. 830).³ While

organizations can produce communications that belong to functional systems, they can never take over those systems completely. Science and education always also exist outside of universities (Luhmann, 1998, p. 841). Besides that, organizations are opposed to functional systems because they are necessarily exclusive—only a highly selective membership can allow the organizations to work as such (Luhmann, 1998, p. 844).

The special characteristics of universities as organizations open them to influences from functional systems. It is here where a political interference considering research and academic production (and education) can work. This interference is of course indirect—a given law, scholarship or funding programme or something else is observed by the organization university, and as a consequence, this organization decides to do something or not. Concretely, the attempts of other systems, like politics or economy, to control universities work only via the transformation of external control into internal control, maintaining the autopoiesis of universities (Stichweh, 2014, p. 32)—the only other option would be to effectively destroy universities as autopoietic organizations. Nevertheless, this autonomy as a privilege was historically bought with ‘the existence of social roles, that represented the givers of privileges in the university’ (Stichweh, 2014, pp. 34–35). The same applies to the institutions of control within universities. Historically, the closeness of universities to certain functional systems is a succession from politics in the context of the formation of territorial national states in the sixteenth century, to science in the context of the development of academic disciplines in the nineteenth century and economy in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, when knowledge-based professions became increasingly important (Stichweh, 2014, p. 36). Universities can be considered multifunctional organizations that engage always in several functional systems at the same time, putting them into interrelation.

The internal rules of the university, one of the products of a succession of decisions, can be described as institutions or institutionalizations that ‘form the incentive structure of a society’ (North, 1994, p. 359).⁴ Those formal or informal structures ‘are the humanly devised constraints that structure human interaction’ (North, 1994, p. 360). By this, institutions define the way a given actor can act (or communicate) in a given context—if they want to be successful. Institutions are in this sense culture—the result of collective learning that is defined in part by those with the power to actually implement changes (North, 1994, p. 364). Institutions and organizations are tightly connected, ‘[i]f institutions are the rules of the game, organizations and their entrepreneurs are the players’ (North, 1994, p. 361). However, if we want to stick to a systems theory framework, we should ask ourselves how to behave in relation to North when he puts institutions first and understands organizations as result of them.

Social Sciences in Ecuador

In Ecuador, social sciences have been established relatively recently.⁵ The first chair of sociology was created in 1915, as part of the Department of Jurisprudence

of the Central University of Ecuador in Quito (Campuzano, 2005, p. 407), led first by Agustín Cueva⁶ and later on by Benjamín Carrión. The first publications in sociology appeared mostly after 1915 in the journal of the Central University (Campuzano, 2005, p. 419). This early sociology was dependent on its surroundings, both considering science and academic disciplines—especially legal studies and politics—between conservative and liberal tendencies. Most actual sociological references used were the positivists of the nineteenth century, in some cases mixed with a questionable understanding of Durkheim (Campuzano, 2005, p. 421). This is why this first sociology does not accomplish ‘to construct an exclusive domain of investigation and method, that would specialize it as an academic discipline’ (Campuzano, 2005, p. 426). Campuzano qualifies this early sociology as ‘rhetoric scientificism’ (Campuzano, 2005, p. 443). This pseudoscience was highly exclusive and elitist and had no connection to systematic research embedded in academic communities nor to any kind of empirical research (Campuzano, 2005, pp. 426–427). In short, this ‘lawyers’ sociology’ (Briceño-León & Sonntag, 1998, p. 15) was part of the then dominant essayistic version of social sciences in Latin America.

After the foundation of the Latin American Association of Sociology⁷ in 1950 and especially its third congress at the Central University of Ecuador in 1956 (Campuzano, 2005, p. 439), the efforts to create a proper degree course of sociology are concentrated and lead to the foundation of the School of Political Sciences⁸ as a part of the Department of Jurisprudence in 1961. This first academic infrastructure was understood in the context of ‘the need to academically train the officers of the state’ (Campuzano, 2005, p. 440). After an intervention by the military dictatorship in 1964, the School of Sociology and Anthropology was created and run in the context of a convention between the Central University and the University of Pittsburgh, financed by the Inter-American Development Bank and US Agency for International Development (USAID). This School was heavily influenced by the then dominant paradigm of structural-functionalism. This short time could be described as ‘sociology of modernization’ (Briceño-León & Sonntag, 1998, p. 15). After the end of the dictatorship in 1968, both Schools were combined, eliminating anthropology and, following a general strike of the students, ending the convention with Pittsburgh. The courses in legal studies are eliminated and an own faculty is established, separated from the Department of Jurisprudence (Campuzano, 2005, pp. 442–445). It is only after this moment that Ecuadorian sociology can be considered as academic discipline in its own right—however, influenced heavily by Marxist thought and a positioning on the political left (Campuzano, 2005, p. 403).

The most important persons of this renewed sociology were associated with the profound break in thinking and understanding society that Rafael Polo calls ‘tzantzic moment’⁹ (Polo, 2012, p. 92). These persons—including Agustín Cueva, Alejandro Moreano and Bolívar Echeverría—were involved since the early 1960s with a cultural movement proposing a re-thinking of Ecuadorian identity that led them to political radicalization (Polo, 2012, pp. 42–45). Around 1968, some of those persons went from a cultural environment to an academic one, supported by the then rector of the Central University Manuel Agustín Aguirre, a socialist

activist (Polo, 2012, pp. 47–48). This may also be a reason why political activism was preferred over scientific research, leading at times to ‘anti-academic attitudes’ (Campuzano, 2005, pp. 441–442). Around the mid-1970s, the diverse leftist visions turned into a somewhat more coherent structuralist Marxism, that—at least in its beginnings—leaves aside a wide range of Marxist streams of thought of that time (Campuzano, 2005, pp. 445–446). This focus on historical materialism both as academic method and as political weapon persisted for a long time (Polo, 2012, pp. 138–139). Nevertheless, the academic style remained essayistic (Polo, 2012, p. 94). More generally speaking, at that time, both ‘sociology of dependency’ (Briceño-León & Sonntag, 1998, p. 16) and ‘Marxist sociology’ (Briceño-León & Sonntag, 1998, p. 18) can be found at the Central University.

It is in this context, when the efforts to build up an own sociology finally reach a mayor state of institutionalization: in 1976, the First National Congress of Schools of Sociology of Ecuador¹⁰ is organized at the Central University. In it, the debate over what a critical sociology could be showed its relevance, even if it could not surpass the struggle over the exegesis of Marx’s thought. Some contributions were published in the following year in the first edition of the first Ecuadorian journal for social sciences simply called *Ciencias Sociales*¹¹ published by the School of Sociology and Political Sciences of the Central University (Polo, 2012, p. 140). *Ciencias Sociales* starts as a forum for theoretic debate but begins to include, after a few years, more and more case studies (Campuzano, 2005, p. 449). However, this institutionalization does not go much further. In the 1980s, the separation between theoretic reflections and actual social processes visible in the complete lack of research infrastructure in the Central University led to a deep crisis of the social sciences that went on until the years after 2000 (Campuzano, 2005, pp. 453–454).

The panorama would be incomplete without another important experience that is hardly studied. Around the year 1975, the private Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador (PUCE) opened a School of Sociology and Political Sciences. A series of internationally funded research projects were executed, considering, especially, questions of development (Jácome, 2005, p. 128). As the university lost interest in social sciences during the 1980s, they were re-directed towards the needs of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other actors external to academia (Campuzano, 2005, pp. 452–453). This situation was improved by a reform in 1995 (Campuzano, 2005, p. 455). During the 1990s, a series of university programmes in social sciences were created, both at public and at private universities, leading to a panorama that is hard to describe in a few pages. While there is a lot of teaching in the field, systematic and long-term research remains reduced to very few research institutes.

Interferences work over the organizational side of social sciences, that is, the research institutes and universities. The systematic lack of public funding in the 1980s and 1990s did influence Ecuadorian social sciences and the institutionalization in them just as the attempts of control and the considerable amount of funding during the government of Rafael Correa since 2007. Several laws around the Organic Law of Superior Education (LOES),¹² issued in 2010, establish the functions of all universities in the country, highlighting teaching, research and community work, all embedded in a general political direction defined by the

government. While this would be a surrounding that encourages inclusion into the global system of social sciences, the observation that the universities realize respond to their own autopoiesis, that is, their previous decisions and the institutionalizations realized by them. For instance, the obligation to reserve 6 per cent of their budget for publications in indexed journals and post-graduate scholarships for the professors and research (República del Ecuador, 2010, Art. 36) is hardly met, just as the maximum of 16 hours teaching per week for full-time professors, established by a secondary law (República del Ecuador, 2012, Art. 11). Both requirements meet with institutional resistance as universities understand themselves as institutions of teaching above all.

Society as a World System: The problem of the Global South

If we understand social systems as global systems—as we have to do, if we follow Luhmann—we will meet with the problem of global inequality and limits to communications, especially concerning the Global South. While all functional systems are based on the possibility of universal inclusion (Luhmann, 1982, p. 131), it is quite obvious that this does not always happen:

functional differentiation presupposes equality and creates inequality. It presupposes equality because it can discriminate only according to special functions (e.g. in schools according to school performance and prospects of further education) and because it operates best if everybody is included on the base of equal opportunity in each functional subsystem (avoidance of exclusions, of ‘marginalidad’ and so on). But it creates inequality, because most functional subsystems (particularly the economic and the educational subsystem) tend to increase differences. Small differences in the beginning—be it in credit, in educational prospects, but also in scientific, artistic, political ‘reputation’—become large differences in the end, because functional subsystems utilize differences, employ differences in pursuing their specific functions, and there no longer exists a superior mechanism such as stratification which controls and limits this process. The whole society, therefore, tends to proceed in the direction of increasing inequality, it accumulates differences between classes and between regions without being able to make use of these differences or to provide functions for them, i.e. without being able to regress into the state of meaningful stratificatory differentiation. (Luhmann, 1982, p. 134)

This inequality as such is not a problem for modern society insofar as it does not put its autopoiesis into danger, or ‘as long as this does not interrupt communication’ (Luhmann, 1982, p. 133). Actually, the need of modern society for functional differentiation and the construction of autopoietic subsystems, that is, the use of difference instead of identity as guiding principle of modernity, can turn a high degree of social integration into a problem for the system (Luhmann, 1982, p. 133). As modern society can only process differences, the lack of differences leads to the impossibility to work with what is not different.

This also means that regional boundaries are not able to stop communications or separate societies, and they are nothing but ‘political conventions, relevant for the segmentary differentiation of the political subsystem of the global society’ (Luhmann, 1997, p. 72). Considering all other functional systems, we can actually talk about ‘one world’: ‘The world-wide communicative system constitutes one world which includes all possibilities’ (Luhmann, 1982, p. 133). The only thing that limits society is the functioning of society itself. Instead of territorial boundaries, modern society operates within ‘the boundary of communicative behavior, i.e. the difference between meaningful communication and other processes’ (Luhmann, 1982, p. 132). Not geography but communication separates the world.

This is why Luhmann proposes the difference between inclusion and exclusion instead of hierarchy as guiding difference. ‘The predominant relation is no longer a hierarchical one, but one of inclusion and exclusion; and this relates not to stratification but to functional differentiation’ (Luhmann, 1997, p. 70). While regional inequalities do not cease to be important, they have to be explained from the perspective of functional differentiation. It is not about ‘exploitation or suppression but [about] global neglect’ (Luhmann, 1997, p. 73). This neglect is highly functional—for each functional system but not for the people concerned. It is based on the memory function of each system that is derived from a long series of selections that are selectively remembered (Luhmann, 1997, p. 71)—what could be described as institutionalization. This means that one exclusion can lead to another one.

Modern society includes and excludes persons via function systems, but in a much more paradoxical way. Function systems presuppose the inclusion of every human being, but, in fact, they exclude persons that do not meet their requirements. Many individuals have to live without certified birth and identity cards, without any school education and without regular work, without access to courts and without the capacity to call the police. One exclusion serves as an excuse for other exclusions. At this level, and only at this level, society is tightly integrated, but in a negative way. And modern values, such as equality and freedom, serve as cover terms to preserve an illusion of innocence—equality as equal opportunity and freedom as allowing for individual (and not societal) attribution. (Luhmann, 1997, p. 70)

Luhmann calls the possibility of a meta-code of inclusion/exclusion the ‘worst imaginable scenario [...] that the society of the next century will have to accept’ (Luhmann, 1997, p. 76). As functional differentiation and with it the binary logic of inclusion and exclusion spread all over the world starting in Europe, this meta-code has always been embedded in modern society. And while Luhmann is talking about a possibility, a current development or the future (Luhmann, 1998, p. 632), it could be argued that inclusion/exclusion has been a meta-code for a considerable part of the population already with the beginning of modernity, especially in the Global South.

Global Social Sciences and Inclusion/Exclusion

As hierarchy or stratification have to be excluded as factors that explain the lack of participation of most countries of the Global South in global social sciences—it

is not about poverty, lack of funding or unequal access to resources—the difference between inclusion and exclusion into the global system of science is the only factor that can help to understand why some research institutes or researchers are able to participate in it and some are not. It is important to bear in mind two major characteristics of this logic of functional systems: on the one hand, the institutionalization or memory function associated with inclusion and exclusion, eventually perpetuating them, and on the other hand, the fact that the accumulation of exclusions leads to a negative integration of society (Luhmann, 1998, pp. 630–631). Applied to social sciences, it is obvious that not every person participates always in them—some never do. Nevertheless, it is an open question why some people who consider themselves social scientists and participate in some kind of related communication system cannot produce communications that surpass some regional border—and therefore do not participate in the global social sciences (and maybe never have). Luhmann claims that descriptions in the system of science do not have a ‘possible regional explanation [...]’. They do not have an “origin”, and one may doubt whether or not they have a “function” (Luhmann, 1997, p. 67). Considering what has been explained earlier, we have to contradict this: for the system, it is irrelevant where some idea comes from, but the same system applies mechanisms of exclusion that are accumulative and institutionalized (based on memory) and are related to the factor region.

For the case of Latin American social sciences, this has been much discussed, but generally without a clear theoretic perspective. Some researchers get quite close to the argument developed here: the existence of special conditions for Latin American and Ecuadorian social sciences because of a special institutionalization that cannot be found in the same way in social sciences elsewhere.

Social science for Latin America has vacillated between two major tendencies: either to answer to its people, its society in the latter’s uniqueness, and its urgent needs, or to answer to its era, its time, and the demands of scientific rigor and universal knowledge. The great promise of Latin American thought, its crowning ambition, was summed up a century ago by José Martí when he wrote that the aim was to try to answer to both needs and to be a person of one’s time and one’s people. (Briceño-León & Sonntag, 2000, p. 808)

Those two major tendencies correspond with a systematic inclusion of political interferences that would make an autopoiesis of social sciences hard to achieve and maintain and the autonomization of social sciences against direct interests that are manifest both in the persons concerned and in the organizations where this science is supposed to take place. Social sciences in the region are defined against interferences of their environment, be it the functional system of politics or university as a specific organization.

The position of Ecuadorian social sciences in a global system of social sciences can be understood in terms of inclusion and exclusion—but this has to be explained in detail for every possible option. In the following part, the consequences for the maintenance of the system and possibilities of external influence will be detailed for each option. In this, the quite diffused model of including exclusion versus excluding inclusion has to be opened considerably. This model,

elaborated for the case of social aid institutions, distinguishes including exclusion, that is, inclusion into institutions, such as prisons, orphanages and educational faculties, that combine education with restrictions and a separation from other systems (therefore exclusion), and excluding inclusion, that is, inclusion into youth gangs and other illegal organizations that lead to the exclusion of other systems (Stichweh, 2009, p. 39). Here, we will work with four options.

Complete Inclusion

The possibility of complete inclusion is listed here merely in function of logical completeness. While the system of science and its subsystem of social sciences allow for an inclusion of all communications that refer to those systems, processing them with programmes for the application of the binary code involved, this is obviously not the case with Latin American social sciences. The reason cannot be found in territorial boundaries between Global North and Global South—this would be part of a stratificatory society. And there cannot be communicational boundaries if we part from the hypothesis of complete inclusion. The option of complete inclusion presupposes a fully functional and global autopoietic subsystem. If Ecuadorian social sciences do not fulfil those criteria, they cannot be considered an equal part of global social sciences. So, the main question would be: why isn't there connectivity? And, given that communication in social sciences does not flow freely between Ecuador and Europe or Northern America, we can take for granted that there is no complete inclusion of all communications referring to the same global system.

It is possible and actually quite common to ignore those problems as temporal ones, that is, it is possible to part from a 'totalitarian logic' (Luhmann, 1998, pp. 625–626) of complete inclusion that considers exclusion as something to be overcome. Nevertheless, if we reintroduce the problem of development, we also have to provide concrete steps how to overcome the problems that impede complete inclusion. So, the recourse to a totalitarian logic will not help much if we want to explain why Ecuadorian social sciences do not (yet) participate fully in global social sciences.

Partial Inclusion

The second possibility would be a partial inclusion. While there is a general inclusion of Ecuadorian social sciences into the global system of social sciences, there are some specificities that stand against a complete inclusion. This partial inclusion can be understood in two sub-types: as marginalizing inclusion and as diversified inclusion.

The category of marginalizing inclusion refers to an inclusion of communications and their producers as subaltern. They can participate in the functional system in question, but only as receivers or marginal producers—for instance, interesting case studies elaborated by thinkers of the Global South that are integrated into major theories by thinkers of the Global North. This model presupposes an idea of international inequality as established for instance by dependency theory.

The early Luhmann accepted certain elements of this idea. In 1977, he explained functional differentiation as the expansion of certain subsystems over territorial boundaries. 'Hence, regional differences are going to be transformed into different degrees of participation within the framework of one global society, and, therefore, we have a problem of "underdeveloped countries"' (Luhmann, 1977, p. 43). Later, he emphatically rejects dependency theory as tied to 'ideas of stratification that were already outdated at this time' (Luhmann, 1997, p. 75). Those ideas part from the conception of a centre that does not exist anymore in modern society and cannot grasp the fact that '[w]e have to live with a polycentric, polycontextural society' (Luhmann, 1997, p. 75). However, the same Luhmann integrates the idea of centre/periphery within functional systems in the sense that selections can lead to concentrations (Luhmann, 1998, p. 167)—only that those concentrations would be not of a geographical nature, but of a communicative one. Well-known research institutes, journals or thinkers influence science more than those not so well known. And most well-known research institutes, journals or thinkers are based in the Global North.

The idea of unequal relationships between centre and periphery that define international relations within the system of science is too strong to be simply rejected. So, the position pointed out earlier will be taken: those unequal relationships are not an explanation, but they are something that has to be explained. It is hard to deny that there actually exists inequality that corresponds to regional differences:

Globalization has increased the number of contacts and exchanges among people located in different countries. In the academic world, this has meant a growth in the international flow of knowledge and the possibility of increasing cooperation. Nevertheless, in many ways, such trends have mirrored unequal relations existing within larger structural globalization processes. Theory has flown from metropolitan centers to non-metropolitan centers while the flow of 'raw data' has made the opposite move. [...] This global university system operates as a world system of intellectual production [...] whereby hegemonic centers define canons and professional standards as well as accumulate global symbolic capital. (Lins Ribeiro, 2005, p. 3)

Maybe Ecuadorian social sciences can be understood as receiver of theory and producer of data—and case studies—in the periphery for the social sciences of centre in the Global North. By this, they would be included, but not as equals—they would be included in a marginalizing way, for instance, in some kind of semi-periphery that forms a centre for the periphery—but a periphery for the centre. While there are no clear boundaries, there are differences in the organizations involved. The difference between periphery, semi-periphery and centre could be defined by the degree of autonomy and functionality of the universities and research institutes. This would also explain why two of the most well-known Ecuadorian sociologists, Agustín Cueva and Bolívar Echeverría, opted for developing most of their professional careers in Mexico since the 1970s—going from the academic periphery, where nothing but raw data are produced and the reception of theories is limited, to the academic semi-periphery, where institutional possibilities to participate in a wider system of social sciences are given.

Another type of partial inclusion could be called diversified inclusion. There is a global tendency towards the separation of teaching-oriented and research-oriented universities, especially strong and old in the Global South. In this model, most universities in Ecuador would be teaching-oriented universities with weak research. Of course, this orientation is the result of a historical development that has to do with politics of superior education, funding and the lack of it and specific interests of the involved persons and organizations. In short, we could find an institutionalization within universities that tends to neglect research and favours teaching and other activities. This means that Latin American and Ecuadorian social sciences have been relegated to a position of less inclusion in global social sciences in the last decades.

The height of international visibility of Latin American theoretical contributions occurred in the 1970's with the consumption of dependency theory in Northern hegemonic centers and elsewhere. Since then, in spite of important works by Latin American scholars (see, for instance, Néstor García Canclini's work on hybridity; Aníbal Quijano's on the coloniality of power and Enrique Dussel's on multiple modernities), the region has not produced theoretical discourses that have impacted upon global audiences like dependency has. (Lins Ribeiro, 2005, p. 5)

The lack of research and therefore the lack of possibilities of inclusion into the global system of social sciences could also explain the persisting 'brain drain' of Ecuadorian social scientists towards universities and research institutes of the Global North. They can rely on reputation as a resource that is external to the organizations they belong to but that is part of the system of science (Luhmann, 1990, p. 680). At the same time, they have a hard time to follow the institutional rules (North, 1994, p. 360) that actually go against reputation inside global social sciences. The fact that this tendency to migrate to other research institutes in other countries is mostly ignored on the level of universities can be related to the systematic ignorance of academic reputation—universities see themselves as places of teaching and understand research as nothing but an extension of teaching.

This could be a hint that both types of partial inclusion can lead to problems in the autopoietic closure of social sciences. Through their organization, universities, they are included as providers of raw data (marginalizing inclusion) or they are relegated to the receiving end of science and put under heavy pressure to engage in teaching only (diversified inclusion).

Complete Exclusion

The idea of a complete exclusion from the system of science does not necessarily lead to an exclusion from all subsystems (albeit it increases this danger). There are not always the drastic consequences that Luhmann foresaw (Luhmann, 1998, pp. 631–633). For the case of Ecuadorian social sciences, we can establish two types of exclusion: virtual inclusion and institutional exclusion. Of course, as the result is the environment, those types look quite the same from inside the observing system, but they correspond with a different perception by the actors involved.

Virtual or imagined inclusion works as if the local social sciences were part of the global system, but there is no connectivity to it at all. It is a game of ‘as if’. Academic titles are created *as if* they would be accepted elsewhere, as in the case of the ‘doctorate’ in the School for Sociology of the Central University of Ecuador that consisted in visiting a series of courses after graduating—but not in a regular thesis (Jácome, 2005, p. 143). Publications are created *as if* there was an actual public for them, even if they are never cited, conferences are held *as if* they were international and *as if* there were more people attending than the speakers themselves. Here, we have a case of an organization ‘occupied to an extreme degree with itself and therefore not sensitive to how its scientific output is judged externally’ (Luhmann, 1990, p. 680). This leads to ‘a too idiosyncratic occupation with self-created problems’ (Luhmann, 1990, p. 680) and perpetuates the exclusion. The relatively open rejection of empirical data and actual research (Campuzano, 2005, pp. 426–427) in favour for a continuous debate over ‘what Marx really meant to say’ (Campuzano, 2005, p. 447) would be symptoms of this virtual inclusion. The recurrent references to ‘academic knowledge’ (Campuzano, 2005, p. 426) works merely as a legitimization for the special brand of Marxist sociology professed—the ‘academic’ habitus is some kind of compromise with the environment (Campuzano, 2005, p. 446). The local system of social sciences works with the same code (true/not-true) but with programmes that are completely unrelated to the programmes of the global system of social sciences. This would mean that the institutionalization there is different from the way it works in universities elsewhere. Strategies employed in order to be successful create the conditions for the exclusion by global social sciences. This does not destroy the system or its autopoiesis (Luhmann, 1990, p. 431) but creates a border hard to surpass.

The option here called institutional exclusion has been worked more. The fact that an inclusion into the global system of science is not possible does not necessarily lead to the establishment of some kind of local system of social sciences but to the inclusion of what could be considered as social sciences in other systems. This is visible in the lack of academic references even to the own circle of researchers.

Marcelo Neves is a pioneer considering the problem of functional differentiation in Latin America. In his vision, the increase of complexity of Latin American society did not lead to the predominance of functional differentiation. The resulting un-structured and de-structuring complexity cannot be perceived adequately by the existing social systems (Neves, 2012, p. 19)—the process of selection cannot work properly leading to a lack of certainty in expectations and therefore constantly endangering the autopoiesis of the existing systems (Neves, 2012, p. 20). The codes of a specific system can be replaced or blocked by those of another one, leading to what Neves calls ‘corruption of systems’ (Neves, 2012, p. 21). The result can be a predominance of organizations as form of differentiation. The guiding difference is not the operation of functional systems, but the inclusion or exclusion in certain organizations, understood as networks of favours (Luhmann as cited in Neves, 2012, pp. 23–24). The membership to a certain network defines if it is possible to communicate in one or another functional system or not, leading to an excessive complexity of the environments of those functional

systems (Neves, 2012, p. 24). Aldo Mascareño and Daniel Chernilo talk in this context about ‘particular communities that impose normative conditions and particular mechanisms in order to obstruct access’ (Mascareño & Chernilo, 2012, p. 53). There is a filter applied before a communication can enter a certain functional system—if you are not part of the group involved, it will be hard to participate in science, education, politics and so on. But it is even more complicated:

The mixture of formal and informal procedures makes the decisive situations paradoxical. Informal actions have to appeal to mechanisms of influence (violence, coercion, or even money) in order to become formally executed decisions. Their original informality is erased—or at least covered—in the moment in which it begins to act in the context of institutions that process functional differentiation. [...] The system works informally but under a veil of formality. (Mascareño & Chernilo, 2012, pp. 53–54)

Social sciences at the Central University were born out of political engagement. This leads to a weakening of the functional systems involved in favour of the group behind this effort. Science is read politically, but only in function of a predefined definition of politics. This would explain the widespread perception of academic problems, for instance the fight over certain theories, not as scientific processes but political decisions (Campuzano, 2005, pp. 442–443). In those early times, it was not about ‘the conformation of an academic centre but of a nucleus that articulates intellectual practices’ (Campuzano, 2005, pp. 444–445). This also explains the rejection of ‘academic’ behaviour and anti-academic attitudes that are maintained for a long time:

The national revolution conceived as an imminent possibility required much more the certainty of political compromise than the theoretic fluctuation of academia. It is from there that not few of this generation, and this reaches until today, came to consider that ‘academic’ and ‘politically suspicious person’ mean the same thing. (Campuzano, 2005, pp. 441–442)

Political militancy was considered not opposed but superposed to academic scholarship, at least a continuous interchange was needed (Campuzano, 2005, pp. 444–445). But while the Ecuadorian social sciences are not able to constitute themselves as a system, the university is an organization defined by its decisions. This is why the School of Sociology and Politics did not succumb under the pressure of certain political groups that seem like ‘gangs organized around the traditional authority of the leaders’ (Campuzano, 2005, p. 439). The problems considering the exclusion from the global system of social sciences are therefore due to its own decisions (Campuzano, 2005, p. 439). The institutional culture is not directed towards observations of global social sciences but towards more local problems that are—at the same time—more open, including arts, literature and politics.

By this, the strong political influence over Latin American social sciences does not have to be explained by a lack of autopoietic closure of social sciences or a dominance of the political system (as Mascareño and Chernilo (2012) claim), but by a juxtaposition of organizations and functional systems that obstruct each other. The fight for social transformation and the rejection of neutrality in Latin

American social sciences (Briceño-León & Sonntag, 2000, pp. 802–803) could be a result of networks of certain persons that only admit who politically fits their vision. As a ‘social system can change its own structures only by evolution’ (Luhmann, 1982, p. 133), such a system of social sciences will have a hard time to become autopoietic, much less, to be included into global social sciences.

It is here where university reforms can offer external support. The external demand (with the punishment of destruction) to the universities is to produce both teaching and research that is evaluated (again, externally) with international standards the system of politics derives from an observation of the system of science such as indexations and impact factors. The organization university could react to this pressure by an increasing self-inclusion into global sciences which would undoubtedly be the easiest way to fulfil the established standards—or it could leave the production of publications and even of academic titles to a growing informal sector.

Conclusion

Not everything that is called social sciences is part of the global functional subsystem social sciences with its own set of programmes and its specific forms of communication. There are boundaries that define exclusions, boundaries that correspond with regional separations but are not primarily based on them. In some regions, enterprises that are considered and call themselves social sciences do not centre on ‘the definition and elaboration of problems’ (Luhmann, 1997, p. 77), that is, theoretical work that engages with other theories and empirically with a given object of study. They are institutionalized in a different manner. They do not communicate in a larger system that is based on this theoretical work. Global social sciences are highly unequal and defined, largely, by universities and research institutes in the Global North. This phenomenon can be best understood with the difference inclusion/exclusion.

The lack of participation in the global system of social sciences is not necessarily an exclusion. There are factors immanent to the idea of an autopoietic system that can explain an unequal inclusion, for instance, functionally defined structures of dependency or an institutionalization within universities that concentrates on teaching and not research. If we can actually talk about an exclusion from this specific global system, local social sciences could act ‘as if’ they were an autopoietic system, eventually forming an isolated system with a different set of programmes and a different institutionalization than the global system with the same name. Or they could be completely excluded, being integrated in informal networks that have their own agenda and do not necessarily respond to external influences. This would also explain the contra-intuitive fact that there is hardly any interference from the economic system—social sciences and economics seem to be effectively separated in Ecuador. In each case, the fact that the major part of social sciences happens in autopoietic organizations called universities should be taken into account: social sciences may be marginalized or excluded, but, if they happen at universities, those organizations can influence social sciences through

their decisions. A historically produced exclusion through a constant interference between university and system of science can be reversed in just the same way. But here, institutions serving the interests of those in the positions to create and maintain rules (North, 1994, pp. 360–361) have to be taken into account. Universities do not simply decide to do one thing or another—their decisions will always move in a predefined field of institutional culture.

Of course, this does not relieve social sciences of its autopoiesis—only the system of social sciences can do anything related to social sciences. Only the constitution of social sciences as a global autopoietic functional system can create the base for a truly critical perspective that includes a vision for social sciences by themselves or a perspective where ‘the re-entry of the observer into the observed re-enters the observer’ (Luhmann, 1997, p. 77).

Notes

1. Focussing on Ecuador, the study by Milia (2014) can be recommended.
2. For the system of science, they are communications and not a medium in the sense of Luhmann (see for another interpretation Roth & Schütz, 2015, pp. 24–25). Actually, publications could be conceived as medium in the system of mass media, while their content—the arguments and ideas of concrete articles—could be conceived as communications in the system of science.
3. All translations by the author.
4. It is important to keep in mind here that Luhmann considers the concept of institution as a secondary one (for instance in Luhmann 1990, p. 573).
5. This is why there is a lack of studies on social sciences in Ecuador. Beyond the texts used in this section, there are two theses to be recommended: Sarzoza (2014) and Cevallos (2013).
6. Father of the Agustin Cueva that will be treated later on.
7. *Asociación Latinoamericana de Sociología* (ALAS). An analysis of its development can be found in Blanco (2005).
8. *Escuela de Ciencias Políticas*.
9. *Tzantza* refers to shrunken heads, a practice of some indigenous peoples of the Amazon. This group of urban intellectuals referred to themselves by this term.
10. In Spanish: *Primer Congreso Nacional de Escuelas de Sociología del Ecuador*.
11. ‘Social Sciences’.
12. *Ley Orgánica de Educación Superior*.

References

- Blanco, A. (2005). La Asociación Latinoamericana de Sociología: una historia de sus primeros congresos. *Sociologías*, 14. Retrieved 1 December 2016, from http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1517-45222005000200003
- Briceño-León, R., & Sonntag, H. (1998). La sociología de América Latina entre pueblo, época y desarrollo. In R. Briceño-León & H. Sonntag (Eds), *Pueblo, época y desarrollo: la sociología de América Latina* (pp. 11–26). Caracas: Nueva Sociedad.
- . (2000). Social science and Latin America: Promises to keep. *Journal of World-Systems Research*, VI(3), 798–810.
- Campuzano, Á. (2005). Sociología y misión pública de la universidad en el Ecuador: una crónica sobre educación y modernidad en América Latina. In P. Gentili & B. Levy

- (Eds), *Espacio público y privatización del conocimiento. Estudios sobre políticas universitarias en América Latina* (pp. 401–462). Buenos Aires: CLACSO.
- Cevallos, R. (2013). *El Campo Sociológico: La Escuela de Sociología y Ciencias Políticas de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador* (Licenciatura thesis). Retrieved 1 December 2016, from <http://repositorio.puce.edu.ec/handle/22000/5653>
- Graham, M., Hale, S.A., & Stephens, M. (2011). *Geographies of the world's knowledge*. London: Convoco! Edition.
- Gulbenkian Commission. (1996). *Open the social sciences. Report of the Gulbenkian commission on the restructuring of the social sciences*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Jácome, N. (2005). La enseñanza de la sociología: análisis de los casos de las escuelas de Sociología y Ciencias Políticas de la Universidad Católica de Quito –PUCE– y de la Universidad Central del Ecuador –UCE–. *Ciencias Sociales. Revista de la Escuela de Sociología y Ciencias Políticas*, 24, 119–152.
- Lins Ribeiro, G. (2005). *Post-imperialism. A Latin American cosmopolitics*. Brasília: Série Anthropologia. Retrieved 1 December 2016, from <http://www.dan.unb.br/images/doc/Serie375empdf.pdf>
- Luhmann, N. (1977). Differentiation of society. *The Canadian Journal of Sociology/ Cahiers canadiens de sociologie*, 2(1), 29–53.
- . (1982). The world society as a social system. *International Journal of General Systems*, 8(3), 131–138.
- . (1990). *Die Wissenschaft der Gesellschaft*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
- . (1997). Globalization or world society: How to conceive of modern society? *International Review of Sociology*, 7(1), 67–79.
- . (1998). *Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
- Mascareño, A., & Chernilo, D. (2012). Obstáculos y perspectivas de la sociología latinoamericana: universalismo normativo y diferenciación funcional. In M. Estrada Saavedra & R. Millán (Eds), *La teoría de los sistemas de Niklas Luhmann a prueba. Horizontes de aplicación en la investigación social en América Latina* (pp. 25–68). México: UNAM, Colegio de México.
- Milia, M. (2014). Ciencia, Tecnología e Instituciones de Educación Superior. Un análisis de situación del caso ecuatoriano. *KRÍNEN. Revista de Educación*, 11, 145–172.
- Neves, M. (2012). Komplexitätssteigerung unter mangelhafter funktionaler Differenzierung: Das Paradox der sozialen Entwicklung Lateinamerikas. In P. Birle, M. Dewey, & A. Mascareño (Eds), *Durch Luhmanns Brille. Herausforderungen an Politik und Recht in Lateinamerika und in der Weltgesellschaft* (pp. 17–27). Wiesbaden: Springer.
- North, D. (1994). Economic performance through time. *The American Economic Review*, 84(3), 359–368.
- Polo Bonilla, R. (2012). *La crítica y sus objetos. Historia intelectual de la crítica en Ecuador (1960–1990)*. Quito: FLACSO.
- República del Ecuador. (2010). Ley Orgánico de Educación Superior. *Registro Oficial*, II(298).
- . (2012). *Reglamento de Carrera y Escalafón del Profesor e Investigador del Sistema de Educación Superior*. Quito: Consejo de Educación Superior.
- Roth, S., & Schütz, A. (2015). Ten systems: Toward a canon of function systems. *Cybernetics & Human Knowing*, 22(4), 11–31.
- Sarzoza, G. (2014). *La Emergencia de la Sociología como campo de saber en la Universidad Central del Ecuador: 1955–1976* (Master thesis), FLACSO Ecuador. Retrieved 1 December 2016, from <http://repositorio.flacsoandes.edu.ec/handle/10469/6894>

- Stichweh, R. (1992). The sociology of scientific disciplines: On the genesis and stability of the disciplinary structure of modern science. *Science in Context*, 5(1), 3–15. doi:10.1017/S0269889700001071.
- . (2009). Leitgesichtspunkte einer Soziologie der Inklusion und Exklusion. In R. Stichweh & P. Windolf (Eds), *Inklusion und Exklusion: Analysen zur Sozialstruktur und sozialen Ungleichheit* (pp. 29–42). Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.
- . (2014). Paradoxe Autonomie. Zu einem systemtheoretischen Begriff der Autonomie von Universität und Wissenschaft. *Zeitschrift für Theoretische Soziologie*, 2, 29–40. Sonderband: Autonomie Revisited.