

The Metaconvergence Spiral Rethinking Sociological Working Styles Systemically

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Abstract

In terms of working styles, sociological works can be categorized in relatively few kinds.

1. Qualitative local based works. They are rather focused on small scale ethnographical information and participant observation. Probably the most famous and exemplary sociological research of this kind is Whyte's Street Corner Society.

2. Quantitative middle range works trying to balance theory and empirical research. Robert K. Merton's Theory and social structure is the masterpiece which embodies this working style at its top. Both these working styles had not great generalization standards Merton's key work implicitly framed the problem of generalization when he considered the systematization of the most relevant theoretical-empirical findings to expand their range. The matter of comparison dramatically emerged also though the growing internationalization of what Elias called the civilization process.

3. Comparative Sociology, both diachronically and synchronically, emerged as a key vision to expand the sociological horizons beyond the specific territory and time limitations which features the two other working styles. Comparative Sociology generated high quality contributions to compare "entities" (social and institutional ones). This working style implied very broad but neat and simple scenarios in which the entities were compared thus very wide but simple scenarios in which complex interconnections were rather weak. Variety increases by hybridation and then comparisons become very unlikely and the convergence concept in the age of complexity scenarios is not a mere socio-cultural convergence. What is convergence then? Before answering this question, one further step in mapping sociological working styles is required.

4. One forth working style is general sociological theory which is a great stream focused on the epistemological construction of conceptual and semantic systematization of scientific knowledge by letting converge the key foundations and findings of interdisciplinary studies. No convergence would never be possible without this kind of working style.

Keywords: Convergence, Complexity, System, Variety, Density

1. Introduction.

What Sociological Working styles Do Effectively Work?

Observing the history of sociology in terms of working styles, sociological works can be categorized in relatively few kinds.

1. Qualitative local based works. These works are not featured by wide theoretical frameworks, historical depth or huge amount of data, they are rather focused on small scale ethnographical information and participant observation. Probably the most famous and exemplary sociological research of this kind is Whyte's Street Corner Society (1993) but probably Middletown (Lynd & Lynd, 1929) was the very first champion. These works are craft ship ones, certainly fascinating and intriguing even if at a very low generalization level and scientifically non very reliable and reproducible. Visual ethnography methods introduced since the end of the 1970s were an attempt to develop more valid and reliable procedures (Grady, 2001 and 2008)

2. Quantitative middle range works trying to balance theory and empirical research in a kind of circular and mutual double check between theory and fieldwork. Robert King Merton's Theory and social structure (1949) is the masterpiece which embodies this working style at its top.

Both these working styles had not great generalization standards, especially the former. They were both focused on a territory and time limitation of the research subject Merton's key work (1949) implicitly framed the problem of generalization when he considered the systematization of the most relevant theoretical-empirical findings to expand their range. The matter of comparison dramatically emerged also though the growing internationalization of what Elias called the civilization process (Elias, 1969 and 1982).

3. Comparative Sociology, both diachronically and synchronically, emerged as a key vision to expand the sociological horizons beyond the specific territory and time limitations which features the two other working styles. Comparative Sociology generated high quality contributions to compare "entities" (social and institutional ones) for example though Goudsblom's writings (Goudsblom, 1994 for example) nevertheless this working style implied very neat and simple scenarios in which the entities were compared thus very wide but simple scenarios in which complex interconnections were rather weak.

That is why the editors of the superb Concise Encyclopaedia of Comparative Sociology, sharply wrote: "if, as globalization seem to have implied, there were to be eventual social and cultural convergence in the world, comparative sociological research would wane as there would be fewer distinct entities to compare" (Sasaki *et al.*, 2014: XII)

Beware globalization does not imply fewer entities, globalization implies fewer distinct and neatly separated entities which in the past shaped the stereotypes of the taken for granted world (Berger & Luckmann, 1995). Globalization implies an increasing density and variety of entities but these are recombinational hybridations (genetically and mimetically) which express on one side a variety and density of entities increase and on the other side the vanishing of "pure", specific local entities. Variety increases by hybridation and then comparisons become very unlikely and the convergence concept in the age of complexity scenarios is not a mere socio-cultural convergence.

What is convergence then? In the theoretical paragraph, I will introduce the metaconvergence spiral to answer, nevertheless before entering the next theoretical paragraph, one further step in mapping sociological working styles is required.

4. One forth working style is general sociological theory which is a great stream focused on the epistemological construction of conceptual and semantical systematization of scientific knowledge by letting converge the key foundations and findings of interdisciplinary studies. No convergence would never be possible without this kind of working style whose masterpieces are Luhmann's Social Systems (1995) and Theory of Society (2012 and 2013)

2. The Theoretical Challenge: Rethinking Sociology Convergently



Figure 1. The Metaconvergence Spiral

As shown in the figure above describing the metaconvergence spiral, there are 5 types of catalogues (coded in the white areas of the spiral) and 6 platforms (coded in the blue areas of the spiral and listed top down in the figure):

- Convergent world organization
- Ring singularity
- Language
- Triffin's world currency
- Memetics

- Mediatech & Ict

While the 5 types of convergent catalogues in the spiral are coded in the white areas listed top down as follows:

5 Types of Catalogues

- A. Ethological Copies (EC)
- B. Symbolic Multipliers (SM)
- C. Functional Equivalent(FE)
- D. Innovations(IN)
- E. Reconfigurations(RE)

The metaconvergence of platform and catalogues is not a mere dialectical synthesis between a thesis (platform) and antithesis (catalogues), the metaconvergence spiral is rather an increasing dematerialization and differentiation process, redesigning and reconfiguring the dynamic and instable flows among EC/SM/FE/IN/RE, in which the increasing EC density implies inflation of copies and deflation of value and the RE variety describes the opposite side of the bifurcation shaping four key scenarios of high/low density linked with high/low variety as follows:

HD/ HVHD/LVHV/ LD LV/LD

Moreover, the variety- density link mirrors the internal differentiation coding of the platform expansion or not. For example, currency plat forming is binary coded with institutional sovereignty and language plat forming is coded with vernacularization, the vernacularization process is currently decreasing (Cavalli Sforza 2001) just like the amount of currencies representing sovereign orders: the Euro is a simple example of how many currencies disappeared in the last decades (the German Mark, the Dutch Guilder, the Spanish Peseta, the Italian Lira and so on). Other currencies keep on existing (mostly in Africa and South America) but they are rather irrelevant and further currencies keep on existing a satellites of just one, stronger currency (the Australian, Canadian and Hong Kong currencies are named dollars). The convergence of currencies and its turbulence can be explained though some meteorology fractal principles (Mandelbrot, 2006).

3. Research Design and Methodology

The hardest challenge for non systemic scholars and public opinion trying to understand complex systems is the ambivalence between complexity ontology and its implicit nihilism (Montuori, 1998). This ambivalence can be solved with a little help from epistemological creativity (Montuori, 2013). Our methodological key question is what are we conceptualizing, classifying, assessing and measuring when we conceptualize, classify, assess and measure complex systemic trends? First of all, we are talking about instable, nonlinear, turbulent flows not about clearly shaped entities: public opinion moods, winds , earthquakes, stock exchange trends and viral pandemics share the same epistemology, methodology and diverge at the

theoretical level and at the technical one, although functional equivalents are pretty evident (Wilczek, 2008).

4. Conclusion

The evolutions of sociological thinking and of social global change have always been interconnected since sociological research was essentially qualitative and by “local” meant communitarian while for “macro” meant “national”. Then the internazionalization trend elicited by the key role of comparative sociology turned “national” into “local”, “communitarian” into “meaningless environmental noise” and “macro” into “global”, but global implied a key paradigm shift: from thinking sociologically as thinking comparatively into thinking sociologically as thinking convergently, and the metaconvergence spiral I presented in this paper is the value added of this writing to towards a convergent sociological thought.

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