

'Recentering Political Theory: The Promise of Mobile Locality' by Leigh Jenco

Rejecting cross-cultural dialogue as inadequately respectful of foreign claims to knowledge, Leigh Jenco (Political Science) suggests we take the more radical step of "re-centering" our knowledge-production within the traditions of cultural others to enact a more truly global theoretical enterprise.

This paper argues that de-parochializing theory production can go beyond recent experiments in comparative and cosmopolitan political theory to enhance self-reflexivity, and extend to theorizing within—rather than about—other sites of knowledge production. Rather than construct a "third space" of dialogue or contrast with historically excluded (read: "non-Western") others, we should take seriously the broader ambitions of their claims to wider-than-local significance. To do this we must re-conceive the "local" not as a cultural context that permanently conditions our understanding and argumentative claims, but as a particularized site for the circulation of knowledge. Two examples—indigenization movements in China and Taiwan and the practice of sinology by Japanese and Euro-American scholars—demonstrate the mobility of such knowledge, in that parochial starting points do not circumscribe subsequent attempts to pursue inquiry on differently-localized grounds.

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