Editor's Note

Toward Sociological Re-Imaginations of Science and Peer Reviewing

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Abstract: To what extent does the traditional and prevailing models and practices of "science" and especially of academic peer-reviewing enhance or hinder the advancement of the sociological imagination? More specifically, if the sociological imagination centrally involves the cultivation of an ever deepening link between our knowledges of our personal troubles in everyday life to our knowledges of the ever widening public issues arising from the structures of contemporary capitalism in a world-history context, how does a science still biased in favor of classical notions of impersonal "objectivity," and a peer-review mechanism structurally bent on "blind" peer reviewing and subtraction of the "personal" from the texture of reviewed manuscripts, help us advance the sociological imagination? The juxtaposition—in this issue of *Human Architecture*—of a symposium of papers on the public issues related to the malfunction of science and peer reviewing on the one hand, and a series of innovative, reflective self-explorations by students and/or faculty of their experiences of learning and teaching the sociological imagination on the other hand, can hopefully and "empirically" illustrate the difference our sociological re-imaginations of science and peer reviewing can make for students and faculty alike in understanding and transforming their everyday lives, on- and off-campus.

To use the parlance of peer reviewing, it may initially appear as "unfitting" to include a symposium of important articles by two international scholars and specialists on the sociology of science and peer reviewing in this issue of *Human Architecture* titled "Sociological Imaginations From the Classroom"—a journal issue which also includes innovative papers by various international faculty and UMass Boston students and faculty focusing on teaching and learning of the sociological imagination. How can these two themes relate to one another and "fit" into the same thematic issue of a journal?

The sociological imagination according to C. Wright Mills[1], readers may recall, is a quality of mind that enables its holder to relate his or her own and others' personal troubles to the ever larger public issues facing society and humanity as a whole. It is the ability to relate reflections on the here-and-now dynamics of one's everyday life and personal troubles to the larger social is-

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[1] See C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959).

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sues of the prevalent society, of the times, and in the context of ever wider world-historical landscapes.

As editor of this journal and this issue, however, I find the two to be quite intimately linked and fitting with one another. In fact, I would argue that exploring and understanding the nature of this intimate link between the symposium and other substantive papers published in this issue is a much needed effort in cultivating our sociological imaginations of science and of peer reviewing.

The question that may direct us to see more clearly the link between the two kinds of inquiry may best be expressed as follows: To what extent does the traditional and prevailing models and practices of "science" and especially of academic peer-reviewing enhance or hinder the advancement of the sociological imagination? More specifically, if the sociological imagination centrally involves the cultivation of an ever deepening link between our knowledges of our personal troubles in everyday life to our knowledges of the ever widening public issues arising from the structures of contemporary capitalism in a world-history context, how does a science still biased in favor of classical notions of impersonal "objectivity," and a peer-review mechanism structurally bent on "blind" peer reviewing and subtraction of the "personal" from the texture of reviewed manuscripts, help us advance the sociological imagination?

The way we view and practice science as a public issue and phenomenon, and how we come to understand our personal troubles in their intimately private and inter/intrapersonal dimensions are closely interlinked. In prevailing traditional practices of peer reviewing where "blind" reviews[2] are treated as somehow more "scientific" than personally transparent ones, the very point of the sociological imagination involving an exploration of intimate events and issues of the scholars' own per-

sonal lives are sacrificed in the name of scienticity and presumed scientific functionalism. The two symposium papers by Klaus Fischer and Lutz Bornmann—kindly and especially translated from German and Swiss for publication in this issue of *Human Architecture*—shed significant light on the extent to which the taken-for-granted structures of science and peer reviewing have been and continue and need to be problematized in favor of more liberatory scientific and peer reviewing practices that, I would argue, can be also much more conducive and favorable to the advancement of the sociological imagination.

Human Architecture has had a continuing commitment to publishing undergraduate and graduate student papers as scholarships of learning, in addition to papers from faculty and more senior scholars, both local and international.[3] As noted in the founding statement of the journal, "*Human Architecture* provides a forum for the exploration of personal self-knowledges within a re-imagined sociological framework. It seeks to creatively institutionalize new conceptual and curricular structures of knowledge whereby critical study of one's selves within an increasingly world-historical framework is given scholarly and pedagogical legitimacy. The journal is a public forum for those who seek to radically understand and, if need be, change their world-historically constituted selves. It is a re-

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[2] I have previously argued that in fact, strictly speaking and from a sociology of knowledge and science perspective, no peer reviewing can be "blind." See my previous editor's note, "Peer Reviewing the Peer Review Process" (*Human Architecture*, vol. IV, issues 1&2, pp. vii-xv).

[3] See the table of contents of previous issues of *Human Architecture* at the end of this volume, full-texts of which are freely available online at http://www.okcir.com. Student and other papers published in *Human Architecture* are regularly used as required or recommended readings in course instruction. Contents of *Human Architecture* are also compiled in the Sociological Abstracts and SocINDEX with Full-Text (and, forthcoming, in ProQuest's "Social Sciences Journals").

search and educational microcosm for fostering de-alienated and globally concerned, self-determining human realities."

Such a substantive commitment on the part of the journal to helping advance the sociological imagination requires new and innovative structures of scientific investigation and peer reviewing that do not habitually take for granted the traditionally narrow definitions of "objectivity" and "blindness," but seek to expand the standards of "objectivity" and of peer reviewing to a level that makes the scholars' and authors' globally informed personal self-reflexivity a transparent requirement of the scientific and peer reviewing process.[4] Such functional alternatives to the prevailing regimes of peer reviewing may initially seem odd and "unfitting" in the broader context of what has come to be known as science and peer reviewed scholarship. But it is the very questioning of such presumptions that can open new horizons for the re-imagination

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[4] In fact, turning the tables around, "objective" science can and should be conducted with a self-reflective awareness of how the scholar is doing research. See the interesting discussion of "Interactive Ethnography" by Frank Nutch and Dick Butcher in "Reflections on Doing Interactive Ethnography" (*Discourse of Sociological Practice*, v. 2, no. 1, Fall, 10-14), and Frank Nutch's "In the Field: Reflections on Selected Aspects of Sociological Field-Work" (*Discourse of Sociological Practice*, v. 5, n. 1, Spring, 15-19). As I have noted elsewhere reflecting on Nutch's approach, interactive ethnography involves "collective and reflective participation with a research partner in a common filed work in such a way that the representational goal of understanding the field 'object' is deemed secondary and a means to the end of self-reflective study of what goes on in the cross- and inner dialogues of researchers as they prepare for, conduct, and evaluate their work" (Tamdgidi, "Rethinking Sociology: Self, Knowledge, Practice, and Dialectics in Transitions to Quantum Social Science," *Discourse of Sociological Practice*, v. 6, no. 1, Spring 2004, pp. 61-81). In the latter, appreciating Nutch's perspective, I continue to problematize the requirement of doing interactive ethnography "with a research partner" and argue that, given the multiplicity of selves constituting the inner lives of persons, including scholars, an interactive *auto*ethnography is also possible and required.

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not only of our personal lives, but also of what our public scientific and scholarly pursuits can achieve.

In this issue and in his sociology of science reflections on general notions and dys/functional practices of science and peer reviewing, Klaus Fischer[5] provides us with new reasons to continue publishing and appreciating the voices of students and faculty that chronicle the pages of *Human Architecture.* Klaus Fischer aptly writes,

The refusal of all attempts to support radically new ways of thought and points of view, let alone to develop them, preserves the disciplinary matrix (cf. Kuhn) and the informal social structure attached to it. At the same time it also impedes the career of those scientists, usually young, who are connected to what is new (which always involves an informal social structure) and leads to an unjust distribution of recognition for achievements. Normal science rewards the guardians of the ruling consensus and punishes those who threaten to violate it. As a rule those succeed best who appear competent while adhering to current conventions of thought. Only in the best of all scientific worlds, in which many different paradigms compete with one another, would the negative effects of these innovation-impeding reward structures be sufficiently mollified. (p. 3)

Fischer continues:

… This enmity toward innovation manifests itself at many levels. Many examples show that phe-

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[5] Fischer, Klaus. "Science and Its Malfunctions." *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge*, v. VI, no. 2, pp. 1-22).

nomena which institutionalized science at first and in some cases for a long time had vehemently rejected originally, because they were not compatible with the disciplinary matrix of current research and hence had appeared unbelievable, were later able to prove themselves to be genuine … (p. 3)

… Complementary to those "unbelievable" phenomena are those which science had viewed as certain for years, decades, even centuries, until finally, sometimes in a very short time, they literally dissolved as theoretical frameworks changed… (p. 4)

I think the best compliment one can provide to the above observation and to the student and faculty voices contained in this volume is that they are "unbelievably" courageous and pioneering in advancing their sociological imaginations, taking in consideration, of course, their differing backgrounds and levels of preparation ranging from freshmen undergraduate students to senior international faculty. Likewise, it is important to note what Lutz Bornmann[6] also observes in this issue regarding the prevailing structures of peer-reviewing in the world today and how more rigorous theoretical reflection and intervention in the taken-for-granted scientific and peer reviewing habitus can contribute to widening and deepening our knowledges of our selves, of our world, and their interrelations. Bornmann writes,

… [T]he theories in sociology of science (especially the more recent theories) have remained unconsid-

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[6] Bornmann, Lutz. "Scientific Peer Review: An Analysis of the Peer Review Process from the Perspective of Sociology of Science Theories." *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge*, v. VI, no. 2, pp. 22-38).

ered in empirical analysis of the scientific peer review process. The suppositions of the North American school are often viewed as outdated, and a more extensive theoretical analysis of peer review from the perspective of social constructivism and social systems theory has so far failed to appear. Therefore, the goal of the present contribution is to present a theoretical framework for peer review that also considers more recent theory developments and that can serve as a basis for future empirical peer review research.

The present issue of *Human Architecture* chronicles thoughtful papers by students aimed at cultivating their sociological imaginations. The authors of these papers (see the two papers by Jacquelyn Knoblock, the essays by Henry Mubiru, David Couras, Dima Khurin, Kathleen O'Brien, Nicole Jones, Nicole [pen name], Eric Reed, Joel Bartlett, Stacey Melchin, Laura Zuzevich, Michelle Tanney, Lora Aurise, and Brian Ahl) make serious efforts at developing their theoretically informed sociological imagination of gender, race, ethnicity, learning, adolescence and work in dialogue with scholarly sources, relevant theoretical frameworks and concepts, and various other texts such as films and works of art.

The volume also includes papers by faculty (see Satoshi Ikeda, Karen Gagne, Leila Farsakh) who self-reflectively explore their own life and pedagogical strategies for the cultivation of sociological imaginations regardless of the disciplinary field in which they do research and teach. Two joint student-faculty papers and essays (see Khau & Pithouse, and Mason, Powers, & Schaefer) also imaginatively and innovatively explore their own or what seem at first to be "strangers'" lives in order to develop a more empathetic and pedagogically healing sociological imaginations for

their authors and subjects. These papers include innovative classroom exercises that help cultivate the sociological imagination in their students, and can in turn serve as aids to the narrative explorations and presentations of the pedagogical approaches invented and used by faculty in the course of their teaching career. These papers amply demonstrate the extent to which scholarships of teaching and learning can complement and enrich one another while advancing the sociological imagination in comparative and international frameworks.

I would like to take this opportunity to especially thank the dedicated care, attention, and energies that Anna Beckwith, lecturer of sociology at UMass Boston, offered to this issue of *Human Architecture* as its guest co-editor. As noted in each of the contributing student papers, nine of the student papers published in this volume were written in the courses Beckwith taught at UMass Boston during the 2007-8 academic year. These included courses on the Sociology of Work, Youth and Adolescence, and Race and Ethnic Relations. Six other papers by UMass Boston students were written in various sections of the course, Elements of Sociological Theory, taught by Tamdgidi at UMass Boston.

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