

## **Sociology in the periphery:**

### **Some reflections on the global South**

By

Tina Uys

Department of Sociology  
University of Johannesburg

#### Abstract

In her book *Southern Theory*, Raewyn Connell argues that there is a general tendency for theorizing in the social science domain to be considered the prerogative of the global North, while the global South is relegated to the location where data-collection and application take place. The theory that is produced in the periphery tends to be issue / phenomenon based (i.e. race, gender) and therefore does not qualify for inclusion within the canon of key sociological theories as it covers specific issues, in specific contexts. The metropole as well as the periphery tend to only value social science knowledge production if it is grounded in northern theory and disseminated in so-called 'international' publications, which mostly entail English language publications published in the USA or the UK. In this brief presentation I am going to consider three issues. First, I will describe the global division of sociological labour, in particular as set out by Raewyn Connell, Farid Alatas and Wiebke Keim. Secondly, I consider some examples of scholarship in the periphery. By using South Africa as a case study, this paper considers issues of the validation of social science knowledge and scholarship in the periphery, in particular the debate around indigenous knowledge systems, indigenization or Africanisation of curricula, and the natural versus social science bias debate so prevalent in third-world contexts. As South Africa has both third world and first world components, it provides an especially rich context for this kind of analysis. I conclude by considering ways in which the underdevelopment, dependency and marginalisation of peripheral sociology can be addressed. This entails the bolstering of alliances among scholars in the periphery to demonstrate the value of southern theory, in particular through comparative research and the strengthening of avenues for the publication of knowledge production in the global South.