

## **Foreword: the Self, Anonymity and Non-blind Review: a Circulatory Perspective of Academic Global Commons**

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All published ESBB papers have been through a very thorough NON-BLIND review process. Non-blind review is a research interest of several ESBB members, many of whom are or have been chief editors of journals which practice DOUBLE BLIND review. In this brief introduction to our second ESBB journal issue, I would like to consider anonymity in relation to what it is that members of international academic communities do, but especially in relation to who they are and how they interact with each other when they publish.

While the Internet appears to offer an unprecedented opportunity for true multi-centricity with circulation around, between and among different centres, we also observe counter currents that gravitate to traditional elite centres that dominate the ranking and indexing of journals. Younger academics are caught in a spider's web of performance appraisals and promotion criteria and are soon made aware that they normally have to conform to the norms of (often anonymous) others in this respect. When 'competence' is operationalized in these terms, the complex notion of intrinsic quality is bypassed and original, competent but non-conformist scholars may easily be considered 'periphery'.

From the world of history, Prajensit Duara (2015) has a translatable paradigm based on the very real notion of 'circulatory' networks, which are historically and potentially ecologically sustainable:

By raising the profile of circulatory histories to their true role and identifying those groups and networks who are still –or have more recently become--committed to the inviolability or sacrality of the commons, we can try to overcome the disastrous consequences of a national sovereignty paradigm and collectively tackle the crisis of an unsustainable planet (Duara, 2015).

Duara's extensive work is not a denial of the nation as a real entity. It is more a means of better

understanding how the 'nation' exists in a circulatory world in which the sustainability of 'global commons' becomes increasingly important.

If we translate this concept to our own field, we can easily affirm that most English learning takes place beyond traditional 'centres', and scholarship is generated in a variety of locations with complex circulatory relations with the traditional and with non-traditional centres. The meaning of 'peripheral' needs careful scrutiny here. Once we are defined as, or even define ourselves as, peripheral, 'peripherality' is reinforced. This carries an implication that our way of doing is deviant because it does not conform to norms or standards defined by and for other centres. There is a circularity about this logic that denies *circulatory* truths.

As an academic, I consider that the 'other' is inevitable present in anything I think or create. I cannot communicate academically without referring to the work of others. However, as academic publishing has somehow evolved an impersonal and anonymous culture using so called objective criteria for evaluation, it is difficult to construct a meaningful relationship with the anonymous 'other'. It is interesting that, beyond academia, in our era of online reviews for products we buy, hotels we book, films we watch, there is a recent awareness that there is an increasing issue with the anonymity of reviews. Amazon for example is now taking action to try to counter manipulation of online reviews by business rivals. The solution appears to be – what a surprise - that we need to know the reviewers' identities. Anything short of this is open to abuse and manipulation by rogue companies who are paid to manipulate reviews so that they no longer represent any lived reality.

I have emphasized that Duara (2015) underlines the importance of a circulatory view of global interaction, given the increased need to protect our environmental 'global commons'. In this foreword, I would like to draw a parallel with our Academic "Global Commons". Duara's summary below sheds some light on our own tentative attempts to work out how English has its own circulatory history that is complex, supranational and interdependent.

The taken-for-granted nature of the modernizing nation was secured by their tunneled, linear histories which obscured the actual histories of circulatory and interdependent

forces that shaped these societies. This argument suggests that histories are not principally linear and cannot justify arguments of national sovereignty; histories are circulatory and part of a collective heritage. Even while the historical record of per-capita emission and consumption levels of different societies cannot be ignored, theories of sovereignty must begin from this understanding.

Duara further suggests that “we will need to affect human behavior at the level of individual and societal desires and identities” given our inevitable interdependence. Duara also issues an important warning that also applies to English education. We do not argue against centralizing philosophies – some label them with slogans that I prefer to avoid such as ‘hegemonies’ - for ideological reasons. We argue against them because they fail to address or reflect realities. In the world of publishing, for example, if we claim that only a few centralized journals are valid, which are most often owned by a small number of publishing houses competing for commercial profit, these very journals will become irrelevant because they attempt to appropriate and control what is actually circulating globally. Academic interaction around English scholarship is only sustainable when we recognize the complexities and pluralities of its circulation. I am therefore arguing that what Duara expresses for history is translatable to our own field.

Geo-engineering of the environment is unlikely to yield the answers perhaps because each application also yields unknown problems; we will need to affect human behavior at the level of individual and societal desires and identities. I call the new paradigm, ‘sustainable modernity’ and it embeds a set of values that could shape research agendas in the humanities and social science disciplines and also entails collaboration with scientists imbued with the goals of sustainability (Duara, 2015).

Importantly Duara underlines “The methodologies of linking the self to locality, community, environment and the universal”. In fields like ours this might be achieved when:

- The self makes a conscious effort to ‘bracket’ inevitable pre-judgements and does not underestimate the difficulties involved in this always recognizing that the ‘other’ also has a ‘self’
- ‘Locality’ is seen as an important (perhaps ‘the’ important) locus of action but is no longer seen as impermeable to circulatory forces of translatable practices
- ‘Community’ is seen as a pluralistic multi-centric notion that can cross narrow linear borders – it is also a notion impacted by circulation of people, goods and ideas
- Our academic ‘environment’ is no less ‘at risk’ than our physical environment, because

we do not fully grasp the relevance of circulatory forces

- The ‘universal’ pervades all of the previous four, as what circulates, what we share, is more significant than what separates us.

### **Rethinking Phenomenological Views of National Community**

Duara (2014) provides us with a conceptual ecology that can allow us to transcend the nationalist limitations of traditional phenomenology and so-called “enlightenment” to engage with global, local and practical issues, but also with plural communities that are subject to and attempt to make sense of universal issues of our own time.

In Nunn, Deveci and Salih (2015) we introduce ‘translatability’ as a view that knowledge is re-constructed and used subjectively and inter-subjectively in any new context. Each new context is unique so reconstruction within the particular characteristics of the local context is inevitable. A phenomenological perspective (e.g., Husserl, 1960, Merleau-Ponty, 1945) underlines the way that data extracts need to be interpreted from both insider and outsider perspectives. An impersonal approach, sometimes misleadingly labelled ‘objective’ ignores the reality that any ‘object’ under investigation is translated by a ‘self’. Bias, whether personal or cultural, can only be countered when it is acknowledged to be inevitable and powerful. Claims to stand outside our own knowledge need to be tempered by the reality of inevitable bias. I am biased myself, I cannot be ‘neutral’. If I am biased, this is part of my definition of ‘self’ – my ‘self’ and your ‘self’ - so it follows that you are also ‘biased’. If, and only if, we accept that bias is inevitable, can we start communicating meaningfully. The positive side is that diversity is the spice of life and obliges us to circulate and connect as we do so. It is a means of escaping from the ‘self’ in order to enrich the ‘self’. Every member of this ESBB community is different. Each member has an identity that I can only know partially. I cannot have a meaningful exchange anonymously within a community. A community is not a healthy community if its members can hide behind anonymity. As an author it is important for me to know who I am communicating with. I will understand critical comments better if I know my reviewer’s own work. Are there reasons to assume that publishing in academic journals can remain impervious to this view?

I will not attempt to summarize the papers in this issue as in a traditional foreword – following our dialogic review they speak for themselves in their own words. What is important to ESBB is

that each author has an original voice but has been made aware of other perspectives through an interactive process, normally with other authors publishing in this volume and occasionally for logistical reasons with some other ESBB members who do not contribute to this issue as authors. The process has been more time-consuming than a traditional review but we hope beneficial to all who took part. All authors would welcome your feedback too. If you would like to learn more about - and experience - our review process, please join us at our next international event in Taiwan.

**References**

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