

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-88906-3 - The History of the Social Sciences since 1945

Edited by Roger E. Backhouse and Philippe Fontaine

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THE HISTORY OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES SINCE 1945

This compact volume covers the main developments in the social sciences since the Second World War. Chapters on economics, human geography, political science, psychology, social anthropology, and sociology will interest anyone wanting short, accessible histories of those disciplines, all written by experts in the relevant field; they will also make it easy for readers to make comparisons between disciplines. The final chapter proposes a blueprint for a history of the social sciences as a whole. Whereas most of the existing literature considers each of the social sciences separately from one another, this volume shows that they have much in common; for example, they have responded to common problems using overlapping methods, and cross-disciplinary activities have been widespread. The focus throughout the book is on societal pressures on knowledge production rather than just theoretical lineages.

This book is noteworthy because it

- is the first book that puts together histories of the main social sciences since the Second World War, each of which is written by a discipline specialist,
- enables readers to realise that what they see as specific to their own discipline is, in fact, common to several,
- contains a chapter that proposes a blueprint for a history of the social sciences as a whole.

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Philippe Fontaine is Professor of Economics in the Department of Economics at the École normale supérieure de Cachan and a Senior Fellow of the Institut universitaire de France. In 2003–2004, he was Ludwig Lachmann Research Fellow at the Department of Philosophy of the London School of Economics and Political Science. Professor Fontaine is the co-editor (with Roger E. Backhouse) of *The Unsocial Social Science? Economics and Neighboring Disciplines since 1945* (forthcoming). He has written for a number of journals, including *Economics and Philosophy*, *History of Political Economy*, *Isis*, *Science in Context*, and the *British Journal of Sociology*. He is associate editor of the *Revue de philosophie économique*. In 2005, Professor Fontaine received the Best Article Award of the Forum for the History of Human Science. In 2008, he was the recipient of the prix d'excellence en sciences sociales (Foundation Mattei Dogan/CNRS).

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Notes on Contributors

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Roger E. Backhouse is Professor of the History and Philosophy of Economics at the University of Birmingham and Erasmus University Rotterdam. His books include *The Ordinary Business of Life / The Penguin History of Economics* (2002) and *The Cambridge Companion to Keynes* (co-edited with Bradley W. Bateman, 2006).

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Interpreting British Governance (2003), *Governance Stories* (2006), and *The State as Cultural Practice* (2010).

Philippe Fontaine is Professor of Economics in the Department of Economics at the École normale supérieure de Cachan and a Senior Fellow of the Institut Universitaire de France. With Roger E. Backhouse, he is the co-editor of *The Unsocial Social Science? Economics and Neighboring Disciplines Since 1945* (forthcoming).

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Jennifer Platt is Emeritus Professor of Sociology at the University of Sussex. Her most recent book is *The British Sociological Association: A Sociological History* (2003), and she edited *Introductions to Sociology: History, National Traditions, Paedagogies*, a monograph on national textbook traditions, for *Current Sociology* (2008, vol. 36, no. 2). Her current work is on the social structure of international Anglophone sociology.

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Preface

In January 2006, we initiated a seminar series, held at the Centre for Philosophy of Natural and Social Science (CPNSS), at the London School of Economics and Political Science, on the history of postwar social science. This was an experiment to create an audience for reflection on the history of the social sciences in general. To start the series, we decided to have papers on the six core social sciences, providing general perspectives against which further work could be placed. In subsequent years, after obtaining the support of the Leverhulme Trust, we explored interdisciplinary figures in social science and a series of social problems.

These papers made us realize the importance of this interdisciplinary approach to the history of the social sciences. There is already work on this, but only as part of histories that have a much longer time frame: historical research on the postwar social sciences remains overwhelmingly discipline based. So we approached Cambridge University Press with a proposal for a short volume based on chapters by four of the participants in the seminar and outsiders. This book is the result.

We do not claim to offer a comprehensive or unified history of the social sciences since the Second World War. Contributors were provided with a common list of themes and were asked to address the ones they considered relevant to the discipline they were discussing, but no attempt has been made to homogenise the chapters, which reflect the different disciplinary backgrounds and concerns of their authors, as well as the peculiarities of the social sciences under consideration. Although the chapters on the six disciplines do discuss relations with other social sciences, albeit to a limited extent, they remain histories of individual disciplines. In the concluding chapter we seek to build on these discussions by sketching an account of how one might move towards a history of the social sciences as a whole. Though it is arguing for a more integrated history of the social sciences,

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it does little more than provide the evidence that, we believe, is needed to make the case that such a history is needed. Though it suggests taking the subject in a new direction, we could not have written it without having read the preceding chapters alongside one another. We therefore suggest that, despite its limitations, the book represents a significant step toward the more comprehensive history that we believe needs to be written.

We wish to thank the Leverhulme Trust, the CNRS Projet international de coopération scientifique (PICS #3758), and the CPNSS for their support. We are also indebted to Robert Adcock, Mitchell G. Ash, David Engerman, Daniel Geary, Craufurd Goodwin, Ron J. Johnston, Jennifer Platt, and Donald Winch for their comments on drafts of the chapters we have written together. We also wish to thank our editor at Cambridge University Press, Scott Parris, for his encouragement and feedback on what we have done and an anonymous reader for invaluable comments on the volume as a whole. It goes without saying that we, not they, are responsible for any errors that remain.

R. E. B.

P. F.

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