S-94 – Science In Their Own Wor[l]ds: Histories, Ontologies and Knowledge-Making from the South

Global South

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Abstract:
The prominence of the so-called “global” histories of science and medicine in their colonial and post-colonial incarnations have broadened the scale and scope of research possibilities for the historical examination of these fields outside Europe and the United States. Standard models for researching the histories of knowledge production about nature in regions like Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, South Asia and Oceania remain, however, shaped by the metaphysics of an individualistic, modern, scientific, capitalist “West.” These histories rely heavily on the ontological parameters of an imagined western modernity, its geographies, ideas about ethnic boundaries, and “bifurcationist ontologies” of nature. They depend on models that talk about, for instance, colonial relationalities, hierarchies of development and scientific knowledge, or north-south binaries that model “global” commercial and informational exchange. Discussions about intellectual, cultural and social mestizaje (hybridization/creolization) between “non-western” groups and “western” ones also depart, with few exceptions, from these “modern” categories. This panel will discuss the possibilities and challenges of new methodologies for studying the ontological “variabilities” of histories of knowledge production about the natural world coming from a variety of historical spaces outside the normative “West.” The papers will examine historical spaces in South Asia, Latin America, and Oceania with the common aim of developing alternative temporalities and spatialities that escape the paradigms of stagist development, interaction and cultural progress.

Keywords: Global South – Non-Western – Ontology – Methodology – Transnational.

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