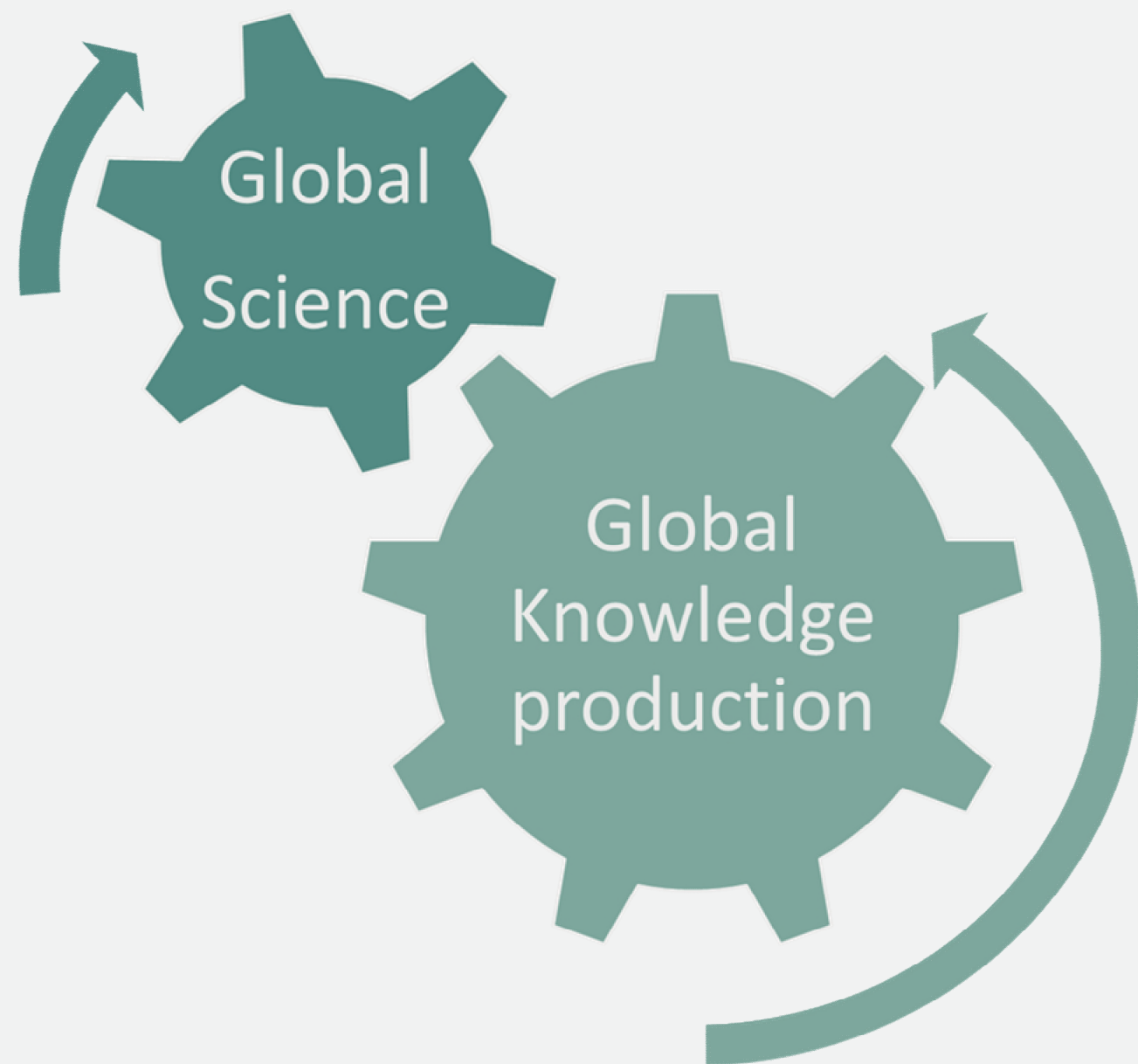

SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH IN INDIA NAVIGATING THE BORDERS OF 'GLOBAL' AND 'LOCAL' TERRAIN

VEDIKA KEDIA



Global Research Environment



The dynamics of knowledge production:

In social sciences, canonical literature was organised around “colonial difference” (Connell, 2018).

- The ‘Occident’ created disciplinary knowledge (Mignolo, 2012) projected on the ‘Orient’ as universal theories (Tlostanova et al., 2016). The ‘Occident’/‘Orient’ divide mapped the difference between disciplinary/particular knowledge.

The asymmetries in global science:

- Citation Indexes (Mills, 2022) (Mishra et al., 2015)
- Open Access Publications (Demeter, 2020) (Kaushik 2023)

Scholars tend to rely on the global recognition systems of the North and thus align with the Eurocentric theories and methodologies.

Social Science Research in India

PRE-1947

Establishment of universities of Madras, Calcutta, Mumbai and Delhi

1950'S

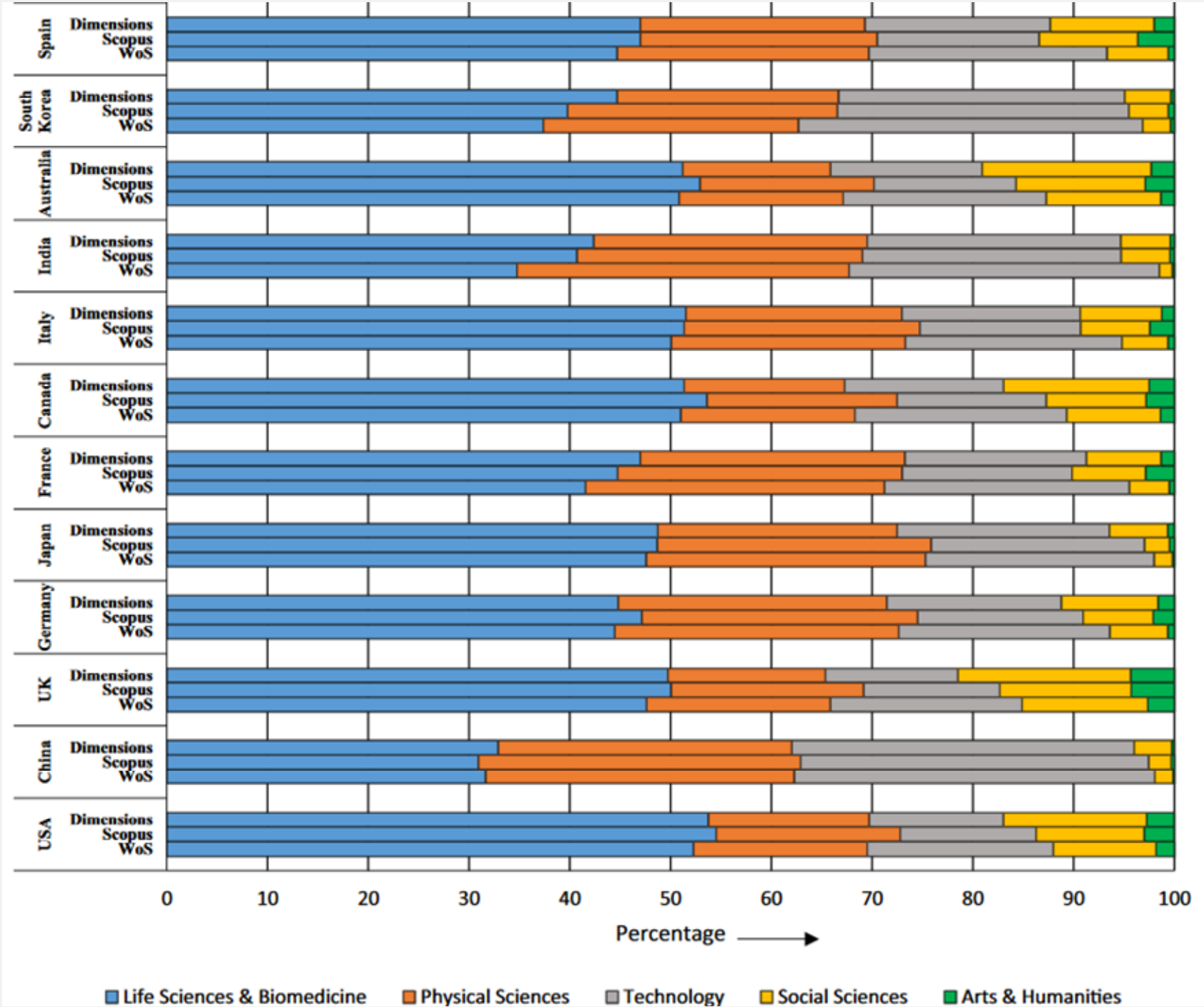
Focus on chronic Economic Issues like Poverty and Unemployment

1960'S

Establishment of Indian Council for Social Science Research and increased salience to other fields

1990'S

Expansion and privatisation of HE; reduced proportional enrollment at PhD programmes



Research Questions

RQ1: How do social science researchers in India, in the discipline of International Relations , navigate the research environment, including the global research system?

RQ2: How do they perceive the 'value' of their social science research in the system?

Research Design

Ontology

- Social constructivist (Hartas, 2010)
- Reflexive standpoint (Braun & Clarke, 2022)

Selection of Cases

- International Relations as a discipline
- Institutional Location as New Delhi

Methods

- 16 In-depth Qualitative Interviews (60-90 minutes each)
- Semi-structured open-ended questions

Participant Profiles

Gender

Male	Female
8	8

Instiutional Affiliation

Private Universities	Public Universities and Colleges	Think tanks
8	7 (incl 2 College Teachers)	1

Research Experience

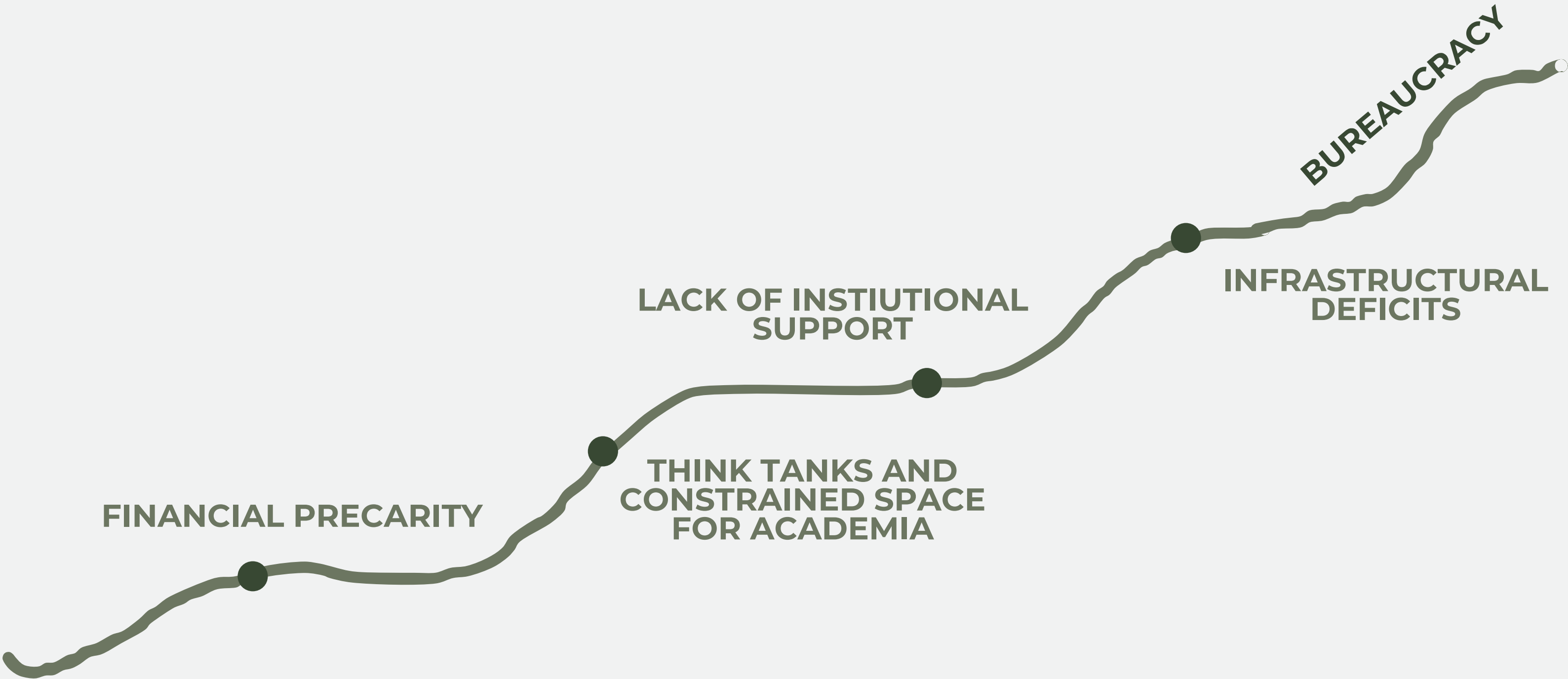
MPhil Student	PhD Students	Assistant Professors	Associate Professors	Professors	Research Analyst
1	2	3	4	5	1

Findings - IR Conceptual and Methodological Toolkit

“Normally when we study IR, we begin with Peloponnesian war between Athens and Sparta, and then we go on to discuss the 30 Years War. Then the whole idea of urbanisation, industrialisation, capitalism, it's export to non-Western parts of the globe...All the theories that we had were inspired by Western historical, political, sociological realities. (Scholar P)

Methods usually rely on existing Euro-centric theories and testing with a case study . “There is something to Indian IR which is beyond what the West has theorised and conceptualised and says is the practice” (Scholar G)

Findings - The Research Landscape in India



Making the System Work - Fieldwork

In order to capture their lived realities, researchers in India felt the need to diverge from existing methodological inclinations of “armchair analysis” and incorporate primary evidence (Suthar 2016).

The need for empirical work is greater in India “as there is more to prove” (Scholar O)

“When you are visiting the field, you are being one of them, you tend to know a lot” (Scholar K)

Challenges :

- Bureaucracy and access
- Fieldwork outside India

Making The System Work- Drawing from Theory

- Making Theory Work
 - Contributing 'Middle power' perspectives
- Outside the 'mainstream' canon
 - While the IR we knew of today was "foreign" (D), women's studies or feminism was strongly rooted in Indian theories
- Alternative Conceptualisations
 - "It's like fusion music, you know, like mixing Carnatic music with Western music. Then you have something new" (Scholar P)

Contributing to 'Global' Design

- Global Bias
 - “People in the South know that they are doing area studies, but those in the Western world don't. They think they are doing theory” (Scholar N)
 - “Scholars globally would be keen on looking at work coming on India. However, how are Indians thinking about, let's say American or European issues may not draw so much of traction. So to make inroads and speak authoritatively on Europe, America would I think still be tough” (L).
- Influence of the Global Connection
 - “Being in India and working on (Indian) international relations, one does often get cast into this role of sort of the India explainer to outsiders” (Scholar C) Indian IR experts are expected to provide an analysis of Indian foreign policy. For example, “What is India's position with regard to China?” (Scholar F)

Participating in the 'Global' Conversation

- Access to Global Publications
 - Resource- crunch
 - Due to “archaic” syllabus in universities in India, students and professors alike were often not exposed to “cutting-edge research” (Scholar P)
 - Academic Conferences
 - The visa process is too hectic, the paperwork, everything is very bureaucratic in India” (Scholar K)
 - Collaborations
 - Scholars with prior international study experience felt they could be “more fluid into international networks” (Scholar O)
-

Agency in Peripherality

- Forego mainstream recognition and delink from global imaginaries

“Part of the endeavour should also be to not want to be part of the club in some senses. Because that means their concerns become your concerns” (Scholar P)

Challenges :

- Professional Costs



Personal is Academic

- Personal experiences of the participants provided an impetus to go beyond the conventional theories

“You've grown up listening to all of that (history of the migratory movement) the hardship that they went through, the whole lot of stories, narratives of how your friends saved you and looked out for you while they were also the horror stories which we hear about even now.”

Knowledge at the 'Borders'

Border thinking emerges from the intersections of the 'borders' of local histories that project global designs and local histories that enact them (Mignolo, 2012). The 'situated awareness' of the borders emerges from the researchers' positions at the

- Border of Disciplinary Terrain:
 - Attempt to influence Global Design but been regarded as particular knowledge
- Borders of Global Science Structure:
 - Desire to belong but facing challenges of 'distance' from the Global North

Navigating the 'Borders'

In navigating the discipline of IR and its Eurocentric concepts, they feel a “discrepancy between having to live in the colonial matrix and never really belonging to its memories, feelings and ways of sensing” (Tlostanova et al., 2016, p.217). This discrepancy is reflective in most scholar experiences.

This journey illustrates how Indian scholars attempt to bridge the distance between universal and particular, knower and the known, personal and the academic.

When values of the scholars in India (personally-relevant, contextually-relevant, depicting realities, teaching) are not reflected in the values of the global science (citations, collaborations), some researchers exercise their agency and choose to delink themselves from the global dialogue.

THANK YOU!

THANK YOU !

LOOK FORWARD TO YOUR QUESTIONS!



SCAN THE CODE TO FIND MY DISSERTATION ON OXFORD RESEARCH ARCHIVES

PLEASE REACH OUT TO ME AT VEDIKAKEDIA@MSN.COM FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION!

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