
International Political Sociology as a mode of Critique: fracturing totalities¹

Jef Huysmans & Joao Nogueira

abstract

This paper asks how can international political sociology (IPS) articulate its criticality so it can continue to engage with lineages that privilege processes and practices emerging from the always fluid and multiple entanglements of fragments without resorting to totalizing logics. IPS and IR more generally have experienced an intensified interest in situated and micro analyses. Engaging a fragmentation of the international, however, has gone hand in hand with pulls towards thinking big and wholes as a condition for critical analysis. We share the position that critical thought needs a conception of the structural if it does not want to remain locked in simply describing un-connected fragments of life. However, the challenge is to do so without making the meaning of fragments derivative of conceptions of wholes that re-insert horizons of totalization. Drawing on Deleuzian thought, the paper opens towards a conception of the structural and its relation to fragments that embraces heterogeneity, multiplicity and fluidity with the express intent of vacating lingering totalities and foregrounding creativity in life. In a context of fragmenting international relations, we see re-engaging the question of how to separate structural thought from horizons of totalization as a contribution to ongoing debates on the nature and limits of critique.

introduction

The question of this paper is how to critically engage with the fragmentation of the international without referring to instantiations of wholes, such as, capitalism, global governmentality, or the neo-liberal world order, as the condition for critique. We are particularly concerned with how an intensified interest in the local, micro, and situated is understood to be insufficient for critical knowledge and how this assumption of insufficiency inscribes horizons of totalization into international political sociology (IPS). A conception of critique that is conditioned by reintroducing 'totalities' and 'totalization' is a problem for an IPS that takes the fragmentation of the international and global as the condition of the contemporary and that defines itself as developing transversal and fracturing

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knowledges. (Ansems de Vries et al. 2017, Basaran et al. 2016, Huysmans and Nogueira 2016) Moreover, in our understanding IPS derives much of its creativity from intellectual lineages that explicitly aim at vacating horizons of totalisation from critical lines of knowledge.² (Bigo and Walker 2007, Foucault 2013) The importance of these lineages lies in their debunking of history as a unified process moved by its immanent contradictions and given direction and coherence by a conscious subject and in rejecting the consequent analytical standpoint according to which concrete society was to be treated as a whole. Despite its rich and controversial trajectory, the concept of totality remains mobilized in contemporary critical thought as both a philosophy of practice with emancipatory concerns and a strategy to unify the experience of modernity in its concrete historical instantiations. Such conceptualizations of critique are resilient in different intellectual milieus, including at times those indebted to post-structuralist assaults on totalizations.³ (Grumley 2016, 133)

The aim of the article is not to present an exegesis of 'critique' and its different conceptions. We seek to engage a distinctive problem within IPS that is expressed in the tension between Marxian and post-structuralist critical lineages of thought: the problem of totalisation and how to do structuralist analysis without totalising. This is a particular question within lineages of critique that combine challenging dogma with developing non-dogmatic structuralist analyses that engage the problem of silences, discriminations, forgetting, subjugated knowledges and so on.

Keeping the main thrust of deconstructing the international⁴, we propose a revisiting of criticality through fracturing analytics. Fracturing is a mode of thought that allows for making structural sense of instances without positing normative and/or analytical horizons of totalization that hold the re-assembly of the fragmented social in the global together. Its aim is not to delete or fragment critique but to revisit criticality through a distinct mode of doing IPS that reconceptualizes the relation between fragment and structure in ways that explicitly work against returns of grand narratives and presumed wholes.⁵ Drawing mostly on post-structuralist lineages, it seeks to invest criticality in democratic sociological analytics that write worlds without centre (Lefort 1988), conceptualise social

² This paper is not meant to be defining a state of the art of IPS but making an interference in ongoing debates on the fragmentation of the international and critique in IPS.

³ The question of critique and its limits seems to be gaining a renewed and intense interest, among others on the back of claims of the end of critique and post-critical modes of analysis: e.g. Bargués-Pedreny, Pol. 2019. "From Critique to Affirmation in International Relations." *Global Society* 33: 1-11; Austin, Jonathan Luke, Rocco Bellanova, and Mareile Kaufmann. 2019. "Doing and Mediating Critique: An Invitation to Practice Companionship." *Security Dialogue* 50: 3-19.

⁴ 'Deconstruction' does not refer here to a technical, Derridean method of reading texts. Deconstruction is used to identify the post-structural lineage in IR within which we work, with its emphasis on denaturalising the international and challenging thinking in terms of binary oppositions.

⁵ IPS remains a quite heterogenous intellectual terrain. Multiple assemblings of this heterogeneity are continuing, however, in particular through handbooks, this journal and multiple IPS sections in national and international professional organisations. We do recognize this heterogeneity and seek to contribute to it by working up a mode of doing IPS that is explicitly embedded in one of its formative lineages.

and political lives as inherently heterogeneous and connected-but-never-totalising, and cultivate a sensitivity to the emergence of possibilities and creativity.

We do this work in three sections. The first section introduces how an intensified interest in the micro and situational coexists with the continuing presence of horizons of totalization in IPS and why this is a problem. The second section unpacks the concept – and problematic nature of – totality and horizons of totalization and their link to critique by explaining their importance and contested nature in Western Marxist intellectual lineages from which poststructural theories emerged as a fracturing mode of thought. Ways of reworking totality culminated in an attempt to decouple structure from totality to free critique from horizons of totalization but ultimately could not be realised from within Marxist thought. Various works that are now referred to as ‘post-structural’ engaged this same stake of decoupling structure from totalities more successfully and therefore provide the basis for an analytic of fracturing. In the final section, we draw on Deleuzean thought to start developing a non-totalizing conception of the structural that retains the unreducible multiplicity and heterogeneity of situations.⁶

post-globalisation, critique and totality

The starting point is the intensified interest in the political significance of daily practices, the local, little things of life and the situational in IPS, and IR more generally. This development operates in multiple research areas, including conflict analysis, studies of peace building and intervention, security studies, and international political economy. It speaks to and shapes what can be referred to as a post-globalisation agenda. (Bigo 2011, Brown 2010, Elden 2005, Hindess 2009, Larner and Walters 2004, Latour 2005, Ong and Collier 2005, Opondo and Shapiro 2012, Vaughan-Williams 2009, Walker 2010, Salter 2008) The intensified interest in the micro seeks to avoid oscillations between fragmentation, in particular of an inter-state world ruled by sovereignty, and processes of planetary political and economic integration that characterised the globalisation agenda. (Clark 1997) For example, the global can then be read as only really shaping lives through local appropriations and mediations. Research lines in this area are often presented as a correction on international relations knowledge that focuses on macro, global, patriarchal, Euro-centric and elite processes. Multiple concerns and lineages of thought inform and drive these intensified interests in reading world politics through micro practices. They include feminism and gender inequalities, fragmentation of counter-political practices, changing peace and state building agendas, the oppressive and violent politics performed in the name of world histories and humanism, and decolonial and post-colonial criticism of IR.

⁶ For some excellent work in international studies based on Deleuze’s philosophy see: (Gammon and Reid 2010, Grove 2016, Lenco 2011, 2014, Lundborg 2012, Reid 2010, Shapiro 2016, Kessler 2009, de Vries 2015)

Here, we take privileging the micro to be a sociological expression of the continuing impact of post-structural analysis and deconstruction in IR. The latter instituted a critical disposition that challenged the saliency of grand narratives and universalising claims, questioned humanist knowledges and politics, and worked through a sceptical view towards global ontologies and theories of world order. Although its introduction in IR is usually presented as a high theoretical – meta-theoretical and philosophical – move, it implied a need for situated analytical tools and approaches that allowed for studying events, phenomena and process in their heterogeneity and multiplicity without making their significance dependent on globalising or world historical processes that would unify the ‘fragments’ back into a constitutive global whole. Sociologically this required a revisiting of the micro/macro relation in ways that prioritised the micro and retained an irreducibility of the fragments within macro processes or entities.⁷ A significant body of the work that has taken place in IPS is an expression and working through of these issues (Huysmans and Nogueira 2016).⁸

Yet, at the same time this interest in the micro, heterogeneity, multiplicity of the situated continues to experience integrative pulls towards thinking big and through wholes. These pulls can take on different forms. They are formulated as the need to engage ‘the universal’ in relation to particularities or the question of ‘the global’ in relation to the local. Most explicitly, the imperative for thinking big can be observed in work that demands analyses of structural stabilities and continuities for understanding dominations (Koddenbrock 2015) or that defines IR as a macro-level discipline (Nexon & Pouilot 2013). They are more implicitly at work when studies of the local or everyday slip into mentioning the need for some global perspective (Solomon and Steele 2017). Their lingering presence can also be seen in the continuing concern with global or world order in some of the most interesting work that seeks to rethink the relation between the particular and universal (Prozorov 2009, 2014) and between differentiation and wholes (Albert 2016, Kessler 2012).

In this paper, we are particularly interested in how the insufficiency of the micro analytical and pulls towards thinking bigger are not simply an expression of the micro/macro question but reopen a distinctive debate within Marxian and post-Marxian lineages of critical thought: the problem of totalization. Deconstructive thought and the articulation of philosophies, histories and sociologies of heterogeneity and multiplicity were not just questioning grand narratives, master signifiers, and hegemonic truth claims; they did so partly to free critical thought from the grip totality and horizons of totalization held on it, in particular in the context of crises in Marxist thought and a questioning of Hegelian dialectics. In other words, we are particularly concerned with how lingering pulls of thinking big, in responses to the insufficiency of the micro and situated are re-inscribing horizons of totalization into IPS.

⁷ For an overview of the revisiting of the micro-macro relation in sociology in the 1970s and 80s: (Knorr-Cetina and Cicourel 1981)

⁸ See among many others: (Austin 2016, Connolly 2013, Enloe 2014, Grumley 2016, Schouten 2014, Sylvester 2002)

The most explicit call for the re-insertion of horizons of totalisation as a necessary condition of critique and as a response to the limitations of situated analysis has been raised in particular – and in a sustained way – in Marxian lines of thought. They combine the two elements of totalizations in critical thought most explicitly: a philosophy of practice with emancipatory concerns and a strategy to unify the multiple concrete experiences of modernity. Koddenbrock (2015) is a recent example in IR drawing on this lineage of critique to question the critical potential of approaches focusing on little things and fluidity. He does this in reference to post-structural thought – Foucault and Deleuze – and certain modes of pragmatic sociology – including Boltanski, Law and Latour. His main point of concern is that they undermine the possibility for a critique of capitalism because they ‘inhibit attempts to think big, to assert stability, totality and structure.’ (p. 246) In a similar vein, Beardsworth argues that a renewed critique of actual (and historical) forms of domination has to answer to the challenge of ‘shaping the world as world’ in which any local processes are to be understood under a global framing of the economic and the political. As he finds poststructuralist approaches to contemporary irrationality (mostly in the work of Derrida) falling short of the critical, he reclaims a world politics that responds to ‘planetary capitalisation’ by means of an articulation of a historical continuum on the basis of which a practical engagement with fostering a future and more just world polity becomes possible.(Beardsworth 2005, 235). Both these authors claim to articulate a clearer notion of critique by means of a strategy grounded in a historical process of ‘totalizing concretization’ that makes a world beyond capitalism thinkable.(Koddenbrock 2015, 245) Other Marxian efforts to articulate a critique of the international from the interstices of a ‘fractured and scarred world’ seek to affirm the possibilities of an aesthetics capable of representing totality in the context of late capitalism. For example, Bosteels et al in an essay on the politics of totality explore the possibilities offered by literary genre to restore meaning to the social whole from the fragmentation of the postmodern condition and thus make criticism possible.(Bosteels, Mirella, and Schilling 1996) This position, influenced by Adorno’s and Jameson’s reflections on totality as fiction, informs recent trends to revive Marxian critiques of global capitalism and restore an interest in emancipatory projects, ideologies and political engagement. All three are among the explicit expressions of how claims for vesting criticality in totalities are making a return at the moment of an intensified interest in the micro and fragmentations.

Not only Marxian lineages are relevant here, however. While the richness of international political sociological investigations lies for us in its attention to the multiple forms of fragmentation of the international and its situated reassembling in diverse social sites, the treatment of the fragment, the micro and the transversal continue to be referenced (either analytically or normatively) in totalizing logics and categories, such as ‘the expanded terrain of the global.’(Ong and Collier 2005) In an attempt to give the micro and heterogeneous practices significance beyond themselves we see a turn to master-signifiers such as ‘neo-liberalism’, ‘capitalism’, ‘humanity’, and ‘sovereignty’ that dampen the creativity and heterogeneity of these practices by making them expressions of or link them to (grand) narratives that introduce an overarching structural and historical rationale.(Bartelson 2009a, Hindess 2009, Huysmans 2009) For example, Mitchell Dean in his contribution to a recent volume on

international political sociology introduces the necessity to re-insert sovereignty as a key category in Foucaultian analysis.

“Doesn’t this immanent analysis of *dispositifs*, agencements, economies or assemblages of power amount to a kind of economic or technological neutralization of sovereignty and the modern institutional form of the state? More prosaically, how can we retain Foucault’s insights into different kinds of power relations without erasing that which defines sovereignty as sovereignty? How can we think the international if we cannot think sovereignty?” (Dean 2017)

By staging the need for ‘sovereignty’ in this way, Dean is not fracturing sovereignty through Foucaultian *dispositifs* that foreground relationality in heterogeneity but reintroduces sovereignty as a master rationale that defines international relations. A similar insertion of ‘sovereignty’ to pin down the distinctness of the international can be seen at play in Mark Salter’s introduction to an excellent volume that explores analytics of assembling and materiality in relation to multiple objects. (Salter 2015, xvi-xviii). Another example is how work on the micro-physics of power in specific situations is given broader meaning through a grand narrative of neo-liberalism. The latter often appears only as a signifier of a global ordering principle rather than an analytically developed concept of global order but it does do the trick of making sense of a situated practice through reference to a global logic.(Kauppi 2014, Jaeger 2007, Neumann and Sending 2010) Also embracing ‘humanity’ as a fundamental organizing principle of an alternative politics has a tendency to make the sense of specific claims and disputes dependent on a globalising historical foundation.(Bartelson 2009a)

These are among the common mechanisms in IPS through which approaches with an interest in heterogeneity and multiplicity as well as the situated reinsert horizons of totalization and grand narratives. The re-inscriptions are mostly not as programmatic as the Marxian ones but they do invite totalisations as conditions of thought in IPS, including in work drawing on lineages of critical thought aimed at erasing totalisations from its analytics. For us, explicit calls for as well as such lingering presences of horizons of totalization are problematic because they reinstate identity, homogeneity and terrains of the global in research programmes that seek to understand situations in fragmented political settings through the heterogeneity and de-centring of relations. Theorizing under horizons of totalization also tends to neutralise the creativity of life by subordinating it to structural wholes, teleological histories and/or messianic decisionisms. To retain a distinctive mode of critical thought that understand post-globalising life and relations in their irreducible multiplicity, heterogeneity and fluidity, it is currently important for IPS to continue exploring and developing modes of criticality that erase horizons of totalisation but retain conceptions of the structural so as not to fall back into mere phenomenological descriptions of fragments. At first sight that seems a paradoxical demand: how to retain a structuralist mode of thought as a condition for critique that does not fall into reviving horizons of totalisation and that sustains foregrounding the irreducible heterogeneity of a post-globalising contemporary?

the horizon of totalization and the question of a non-totalizing criticality

This question is not new, however. It has been at the heart of debates within Marxism as well as the confrontation between Marxism and Structuralism and the development of Post-structuralist reformulations of Structuralism. It is in the theoretical debates within Western Marxism (Jay 1984) around the crisis of radical historicism and the articulation of theory and praxis that we come to an understanding of how calls for critique are connected to the concept of totality and horizons of totalization. As western Marxists abandon the concept of totality, a logic of totalization remains in attempts to articulate alternative, viable modes of practice and critique. These debates give an insight into the difficulties of and stakes in erasing totality from critical thought and open a demand for reworking critique through a non-totalizing conception of structure.

totality and horizons of totalization as condition for critique in Western Marxism

The philosophical reference point of Western Marxist debates on totality is Hegel. Totality plays a central role in Hegel's philosophical system, in which it is conceived as an expression of the unfolding of a spiritual essence underlying social wholes. Hegel's concept of totality embraced all existing entities within a closed, yet dynamic system which brought together the natural and historical worlds in a process of self-realization of unity within difference. (Grumley 2016, 21) The Hegelian system integrated movement and structure, practical reason and action, historical process and spatially defined social wholes. There was no 'outside' to this totality and yet it moved forward *as a totality* by the work of the subject.

Lukacs' ground-breaking reformulation of historical materialism through Hegelianism was determinant in placing concrete social praxis at the centre of the production of meaning by a conscious collective subject constituted 'by the world of objects' – the proletariat. The challenge to this universal class was then to unify history from a standpoint that is the 'authentic expression of its objective interests'. (Grumley 2016, 132, Lukacs 1971 [1968]) The consciousness of the universal task of the proletariat would develop as the result of the struggles against structures of oppression and alienation – themselves 'moments of a process of historical movement'. (Grumley 2016, 145) For Lukacs this contradictory process in which the collective subject is both object and subject of history could only reveal itself through a totalizing perspective. Totality then, plays a double function of defining the objective world and articulating a theoretical standpoint from which the social is conceptualized as a process in which the tasks of the present are connected to 'the totality of the historical process' through the point of view of the proletariat. (Lukacs 1971 [1968], 24) Put differently, totality defines the conditions of critique of the real by dialectically disrupting the socialisation of the present from the objective point of view of the process of history and society as a whole. The latter can only be

brought into presence by taking the point of view of 'the proletariat', i.e. the historical, revolutionary subject.⁹ In doing so, totality resolves the tension between theory and praxis by conceiving the historical subject as part of the objective world – as being simultaneously subject and object.

Lukacs' optimism about the emancipatory progress of the praxis of the proletariat, and with it the concept of totality, succumbed under the weight of its suppression by the Soviet state and by the expansion of capitalism worldwide. Theoretically, the identification of the subject with an objective world in progressive transformation came to be seen as 'the most insidious logic of identity', incapable of overcoming reification and alienation.(Descombes 1980, 75) It produced authoritarian politics, domination and violence rather than transforming the historical subject into an emancipated humanity. In the context of this crisis of totality, phenomenology and existentialism struggled to preserve the locus of the subject in their humanist reformulations of Marxism. They did so by conceiving history not in linear deterministic and objective terms but rather as the product of future oriented human freedom. Sartre considered totality as 'equivalent to the dead exteriority... the inert'.(Jay 1984, 340,351) Rejecting the determinist implications of objectivism, he worked with the concept of totalization as a horizon that expressed a subject's freedom to construct meaningful narratives through praxis. (Homer 1998, 159) Totality remains an incomplete and 'unrealizable ideal' which, however, if conceived as a dynamic process moved by human work, drives practice through offering hope in a future when 'history will have only one meaning' (Homer 1998, 353).¹⁰ Against the background of an intensifying and globalising capitalism and the loss of a historical guarantee that the emancipated end will come, critique here invests in the hope that if people act as if they can be emancipated they will indeed become free. In other words, totality turns from an objective point of view into a practice of totalizing that seeks to realise the historical dialectical process of emancipation that one enacts. It turns Lukacs' totality from a theory of history and society into a performance through which one hopes to realise the normative aims of communism.

Koddenbrocks's defense of the concept of totality as indispensable for a critique of capitalism is an example of harking back to this lineage. To unveil the emancipatory dynamics of contemporary social struggles in a fragmenting social and micro-oriented social science, capitalism needs to be seen as a concrete totality. (Koddenbrock 2015, 245) This tension between an analytic of the fragment and totalization remains a common thread of critical lineages resulting in importing horizons of totalization into work grounded in fragmented topologies and conceptions of history. We can find similar moves in Gramscian historical materialist critiques of structural realism.(Cox 1986) Alternatively, in work inspired by post-structural critique of systemic state-centrism we also see its lingering presence in views oriented by the possibilities of thinking the world as a single planetary 'socio-political space'

⁹ It is the 'relation to the totality (to the whole of society seen as a process), through which every aspect of the struggle acquires its revolutionary significance.' (Lukacs (1971 [1968]: 22)

¹⁰ The 'utopian impulse' Sartre wanted to retain in his humanist Marxism can be found in different instantiations of the problem of totality, as for instance in Lefebvre's notion of a 'horizon of totality'. (Lefebvre 2001)161-164

with the aim of constituting a world community that encompasses the totality of human relations.(Bartelson 2009b)

The persistence of logics of totalization arises from a concern that mirroring the fragmentation of the international and capitalism, critical knowledge will be reduced to descriptions of fragments without any possibility to connect them to an overarching historical direction for progressive and critical politics. Within Marxist lineages the fear of such fragmentation informs several criticisms of post-structuralism that Koddenbrock, Breadsworth and Bosteels et al, revive and extend to actor-network sociologies, pragmatic sociologies like Boltanski's and sociologies of the everyday, among others. For example, Fredric Jameson claims that post-structuralism as an ideology of postmodernity is incapable of thinking beyond the fragment and developing a 'coherent picture' of a meaningful whole. Similarly, Jay regrets that the most significant commonality of poststructuralist critique is the 'rejection of all forms of holism and totalizing thought'.(Jay 1984, 153) However, when setting up the tension in this way, they are erasing how post-structural thought drew on and reconceptualised conceptions of structure derived from linguistic structuralism.

structuralism and totalities

A structuralism linked to Saussurian linguistics and its embedding in anthropology, history, philosophy, psychology and various other disciplines introduced key elements that shifted the ground of totalities radically. In making meaning dependent on difference between signs it deleted the conscious subject as the centre of meaning making. Instead it proposed a relational view in which sense derives from differentiation. This differentiation is not a contradiction between two substances or states but the mere difference between signs. Under the structuralist critique the dialectics of subject and object could no longer represent, actualize or transform the objective world but rather was dispersed 'in a system of differential relations' without a centre.(Williams 2005b, 56) By erasing both the centrality of the historical subject and the necessity of taking a point of view that understands social processes dialectically within a totalizing whole, this structuralism challenged the classical, phenomenological and existential Marxian lines.

In Western Marxism, Althusser's work is often associated with structuralism. His is an attempt to re-ground Marxism in an objective, scientific theory of the social against the phenomenological solutions mentioned above. However, his relationship to this transformative intellectual movement of the early 1960's would be marked by unresolved tensions during most of his life. Althusser wanted to reinvent Marxism by liberating it from the Hegelianism that dominated historical materialism since Lukacs. His critique of historicism and of subjectivism is crucial to understand how, in his later writings, it is possible to decouple structure from totality. To be sure, Althusser's aim was to distinguish Hegelian and Marxist views of totality as a necessary move to restore historical materialism's ability to theorize transformation. He proposed a radical break with Marxist historicisms (such as Sartre's existentialism) because they were still indebted to a kind of expressivism that sees history as a succession of totalities informed by a teleological affirmation of a (finally) unified social order resulting from the negation of

capitalism. The time of history does not coincide with the substance of phenomena, providing a coeval and homogeneous logic to different social formations as well as linearity and continuity to its movement. Moreover, the Hegelian conception of totality is circular and teleological because it does not distinguish the genesis of dialectical movement from its historical ends.(Williams 2005a, 60) As a result, Marxist Hegelian conceptions of totality tend to 'flatten out' historical processes as expressions of a general contradiction and as such, became incapable of explaining 'change, transition, revolution [...] once it continues to convert difference into identity by negating the negativity of difference'".(Montag 2013, 32,94) Knowledge is historicised then, as subjectivism, as indifferntiable from ideology and consequently incurring in naïve empiricism. Against this conception, Althusser affirms totality as complex, as a set of social processes always overdetermined by processes taking place in multiple social formations, in a continuous play of change.(Althusser 2005, Kaplan and Sprinker 1993) ¹¹ This complex totality is structured differentially and through uneven times which are autonomous in their own temporalities. Not without similarities to post-structural thought, the whole to which they are articulated is decentred and void of any 'continuous presence'. In his later writings, Althusser affirmed a 'philosophy of the conjuncture' according to which "history is a process without a subject or goals and therefore a site of infinity of encounters between heterogeneous forces the outcome of which could never be predicted." (Althusser, Matheron, and Corpet 2006, Montag 2013)

Despite his consistent critique of the residual Hegelianism present in historicist notions of totality, Althusser still encountered difficulties in conceptualizing totality as a whole while at the same time disposing of the latent organicism that held it together. As one of his contemporary critics, Pierre Macheray, pointed out, totality consistently haunts structuralist thought in its attempt to uncover meaning and coherence hidden in structural codes and distributions and in the effort to conceptualize the complexity of structures of capitalism as social wholes independent from normative totalizations. In particular, Macheray argued that the limit of Althusser's structuralism derived from two antagonistic concepts of structure. The first, and most common in his work, conceived structure as a concept that produces meaning 'beneath the disorder of the surface', articulating a principle of genesis and foregrounding the determinations of particular phenomena by a 'global structure of the mode of production'. Here structure acquires consistency, depth and unity from an interior logic. It is in a second and quite different conceptualization that Althusser finds the space to open structure to the complexity always present in social formations and the potential to dissociate structure from totality. He proposed to reconceptualise structure by rejecting depth as a quality of structures. By taking the world in its surface we encounter an 'apparent disorder' which, however 'maintains its irreducible complexity', irregularity and diversity.(Montag 2013, 79,83) The problem shifts from how a structure

¹¹ In 'For Marx' Althusser formulates the concept of overdetermination as key to oppose historicism and determinism in Marxian theories and articulate a complex theory of causation that would, in his later writings, appear in his philosophy of the encounter. He would also distance himself from the formalism and functionalism of structuralism in his reply to the mounting criticism to his anti-humanism within the French party. In his own words, 'we were never structuralists'. See (Althusser 1976, 131)

organizes and holds together social wholes to how structure defines historical conjunctures by distributing heterogeneous and indeterminate elements. In other words, Macheray explores the limits and incoherences of Althusser's structuralism and in practice foregrounds poststructuralism's radical affirmation of the immanent and pure differences that make up the singular determinations of structures.(De Ipola and Arnall 2018, Sauvagnargues 2009, 181)

What interests us is that the latter opens towards a concept of structure which does not subsume singularity into a larger whole composed of its inner relations. What characterizes Althusser's late reflections on structure is its inherent heterogeneity; in other words, how singularities retain their essence in the complexity of combinations and conjunctures which can never subsume the infinity of its possible relations – structures can never be 'wholes'.¹² Even though Althusser still envisages the possibility of 'determinate essences' that are the product of a certain historical 'conjuncture as structure', he is clearly aware that the structuralism articulated by historical materialism is unable to fulfil its promise to explain – and give direction to - the movement of history through a general theory of the contradictions of capitalism. In response, Althusser in some of his work did formulate a distinct structuralism that aimed at releasing Marxism from horizons of totalization. In the end he did not succeed because he remained caught between conflicting concepts of structure which hindered a more radical break with totality and, perhaps most importantly, because he still thought of structure as an exterior determination that holds the world together and makes diversity intelligible.(Montag 2013, 79)

Althusser's work remains significant in this context, however. It most explicitly demonstrates the complexity and challenges involved in trying to rework critical knowledge through a structuralism that is non-totalising, that detaches the concept of structure from any logic of totalization and from the notion of totality itself. Moreover, it expresses the inherent difficulties to do that kind of work from within Marxian lineages of critique. Since he continued to oscillate between two antagonistic conceptions of structure, the question remains in his work if such a structuralism is indeed possible and if so what would it look like? That is where we return to post-structuralism which we read as lines of thought that develop the second conception of structure without having to negotiate it within the limits posed by Marxian lineages for which horizons of totalization remain a condition for critique.¹³

¹² See also: Derrida 1978: chapter 10

¹³ Althusser's work also remains relevant in IR because post-Althusserian reconfiguring of the Marxian lineage has influenced critical thought in IPS and IR through the popularity of Balibar's, Ranciere's and Badiou's work. One way of reading the latter is that they take up Althusser's oscillation and rework it to make the Marxian lineage speak to the fragmentation of the contemporary. They do this by working through and with post-structural insights. We do not have space to engage more in detail with these literatures here, which seek to integrate the post-structural break with Marxism back into a Marxian lineage of philosophy and social science. In this paper, we are more interested in working through a distinctive post-structural conception of structures which positions criticality differently from Marxian lineages.

reworking criticality through a fracturing conception of the structural

Revisiting these debates within Western Marxism refreshes an awareness that the problem of totalities cannot be simply wished away. It is tied in with a distinctive lineage of critical knowledge that informs significant work in IPS and whose criticality implies conceptualising collective subjects, global normative and historical horizons that make 'fragments' politically meaningful, and the practical relevance of social sciences knowledge for resisting dominations, exclusions, and discriminations. In this context, conceptions of the structural remain a key stake in debates about what it means to be critical when making sense of the contemporary fragmentation of the international. The challenge for a post-globalising IPS is therefore not theorising the situated, the micro, or the singular as such but to rework the structuralist lineages in a way that does not re-insert horizons of totalisation as a necessary condition for critique.

In this final section of the paper we draw on Deleuze's work to show what such a reworking implies and to introduce a non-totalising conception of fragments, structures and the relation between them. Deleuzian work is not the only line of thought for such a fracturing criticality that seeks to rethink structures and their relation to fragments as historical conjunctions and disjunctions defined by an irreducible heterogeneity and multiplicity. However, we find Deleuze's mobilization of the different critical elements of structuralism while turning them into a transversal conception of connections particularly apt for fracturing lingering totalisations. It makes the imposition of homogeneity and fixed order impossible by introducing a conception of the structural that creates sense through a logic of multiplicities and the productiveness of heterogeneities in which life is never simply reproductive but always emergent.¹⁴

fragments as disjunctive force

Given that the paper's starting point is the intensive interest in the micro, local, situated and more generally the fragmentation of the international in IPS and IR, it makes sense to start from the concept of 'the fragment'. Fragments in Deleuzian work are conceptualised as forces that create disjunctions; that generate sense-making by shifting a situation to non-sense. (Zourabichvili 2012) Although fragments do also actualise familiar imaginations and practices, the world is not really sensed as the same as it was and thus any sense given through the fragment is both somewhat

¹⁴ In his later work with Guattari the creative productive nature of structure is reconceptualised as 'machine' – difference producing machine. The concept of structure is then opposed to machine as the symbolic order of signification. (Sauvagnargues 2009) 192-193 We have decided to retain the concept of structure because it remains a key signifier around which critical political sociologies are formulated and because it more explicitly signifies the structuralist lineage of Deleuzian thought. It also helps draw attention to Deleuze's earlier work in which according to Lenco (2014) his analytical innovations are more systematically developed.

familiar and unfamiliar. It is not thought suspended but thought having to reconnect. Connolly expresses this as follows:

“To recall an event like a snapshot differs from the experience of being suspended in a moment in which the sensory richness of the event resonates back and forth with the world you now inhabit: it is the divergence between a stereotyped recollection versus layered memory in which disparate sensory elements fold into each other in a new way.” (Connolly 2011, 4)

That what is treated as the micro, the local, or an event is then no longer understood as an expression of or something generated by a generalised or larger form. Neither is it an element in a process of fragmentation. A fragment is instead an encounter taking the form of a sign¹⁵ that displaces thought, that forces thought to think rather than reproduce given forms.

Fragments can be many things. For example, in Jonathan Austin’s work on torture (Austin 2016) interviews with a torturer and a YouTube video of torturing devices among others operate as fragments that set series of actual practices (e.g. series of what torturers do) and virtual sense making (e.g. formalised prohibitions of torture) at play in thought that raises questions about familiar modes of criticising torture. McFarlane’s work on cities looks at how dispersed or discarded materials assembled to create dwellings in peripheral urban sites generate mobile practices and encounters at odds with otherwise progressive policy settings. He also takes fragments to show the diffusion of urban regeneration policies producing differential processes that erase the lines supposed to connect them to global city networks.(McFarlane 2011) In Shapiro’s work on time (Shapiro 2016) fragments are often scenes in a film or a section of a novel. In Amoore and Hall’s study of resistance against migration detention it is the figure and actual practices of clowns. (Amoore and Hall 2013)

Of importance is not so much what specifically is taken as a fragment – whether an act of spectacular violence or a flick of the skirt (Enloe 2016, Lundborg 2012) – but rather how it operates as an inherently disjunctive force in knowledge. In other words, fragments are not ontological exceptions but simply items of thought that operate disjunctions within and through thought. Does that mean then that fragments are simply openings – non-sense – inviting re-theorisations that develop more adequate accounts of what happened (for example, a theory that foregrounds how post-conflict situations are shaped by local appropriations of global policies or through local socialisation into global norms)? Not really. Fragments here are not anomalies or problems that can be dealt with by refining the understanding of global policies of peace keeping or global scripts of violence. Or that require a shift in perspective from the global to the local when trying to understand the implementation of policies of international institutions, for example. At issue is something more challenging: how to make knowledge immanently heterogeneous. The issue is thus not one of re-theorisation but of developing a distinct mode of knowledge.

¹⁵ It is also affect but we have no space to develop this here.

This notion of immanent heterogeneity differs from using multiple theories so that the limits of each point of view become visible through the other. The latter approach creates heterogeneity by drawing on a plurality of knowledges that each are considered to inevitably reify a particular point of view. Such a critical pluralism starts from the assumption that each 'approach' inevitably has a totalizing pull because knowledge necessarily asserts an ontological truth – a universalizing of a particularity. To work against totalizing pulls within each approach and across them – e.g. by seeking to build a synthesis that incorporate several approaches – can then mainly be done by including multiple approaches and foreground the limits and tensions between them.(Levine 2012) In that case, heterogeneity depends on multiplying discrete bodies of knowledge – theories – rather than building heterogeneity within the conception of structure itself. The latter is the challenge that Deleuze's work poses.

structure as differentiations and series

To do this work, the disjunctive force of fragments is conceptualized in a reciprocal relation to multiple series of sense making that are kept at play without allowing them to become fixed into a determined script. In other words, the fragment is productive but not in a determined or determining way. Lundborg worked the happening of 9/11 as a Deleuzian fragment in this way. The experiences, images, and the very happening of planes flying into the twin towers, people jumping, towers collapsing have in themselves no meaning; they were expressed by many as simply 'a shock', something real and unreal at the same time. However, they operated as a force through which a multiplicity of sense-makings took place. For example, it included actual series of sense like connecting individuals to a terrorist group, training grounds, everyday financial transactions or series of signs of mourning and writing names of individuals who died.(Turner 2009) At the same time, more formal or virtual series circulated such as a war on terror (setting at play an exceptional time of before and after), differentiation between war and crime, differentiation between mourning and revenge, the particular vulnerability of democracies to terrorism which worked through a series of differentiations between democratic and authoritarian polities, and so on. These structural series insert sense into the fragment – the non-sensical happening – but they are also created by the fragment – the shock of 9/11.

This conception of structures and fragments is rendered immanently multiple and heterogeneous by reading the relations between series and fragments as circulation and differentiation rather than as one determining the other or significance depending on hegemonic fixing of the multiplicity of series in an overarching order of sense making. Fragments connect by circulating between multiple series which between them create sense through their differentiations and the reciprocal work they do upon one another. '9/11' then gains its sense through differential entanglement, rather than aligning, of series of sense-giving that are brought into play.

The conception of structurality is also given an immanent heterogeneity as difference by the continuous unstable but reciprocal relation between two kinds of structures that fragments bring into

play and through which they circulate: virtual and actual. Deleuze speaks of virtuality to articulate that structure are not potentialities that are actualised in empirical instances – as a generic scheme of sense making implies – but that sense making implies reciprocal relations between series of form and series of empirical actuality. 'Empirical' does not refer to 'the real' here, however. The virtual and actual are both symbolic; they are the play of form and empirical in the plane of thought. Sense exists in series of signifiers (e.g. a series of seasons in which winter gains its significance from its difference to spring ...) and series of actualities (e.g. resting and repairing tools differing from gathering seeds and planting, ...). They are related but remain differential. The virtual series of winter, spring, summer, autumn is connected to series of different activities but each exists as distinct from the other. The empirical fragment of a farming event gains its meaning from traversing both series but they do not perfectly align. Planting might start later than normal and in doing so retains the series of actualities but shift the link between spring and planting.

Structure is thus seriality read as double difference: sense within each series is through difference within but is also through differentiation between the virtual and actual series so that the virtual does not generate the actual or the actual mirrors the virtual. The fragment connects the virtual and actual but it effects connecting as heterogeneity – the series remain in a play of differentiations.(Grosz 1999, 26-27) In doing so, structural relations are transversal rather than transcendent – sense is gained from connecting without depth – and opposes any totalising effecting – sense derives from differential connecting rather than a common sense.(Sauvagnargues 2009, 360) It implies a mode of analysis and sense-making that writes the fragment in its circulation between series, virtual and actual. Situations like 9/11 gain sense from being enacted through difference and circulation between such series rather than through accounting for a set of shared rules, an imaginary, or an overarching narrative that work across the circulations. The signification of elements of structural series are here deduced neither from their attributes nor from ordering principles or formal characteristics of a structure. Differential relations are strictly immanent and hence depend upon singular combinations generated in the process of actualization, and not on pre-existing logics of a coherent totality (such as a system). As Sauvagnargues states: "a structure does not exist outside its actualization points... and the empirical elements only acquire their differential existence through the play of the structure they actualize" (183).¹⁶ In taking such a conception of the structural, an analytics of fracturing aims to mobilize a critique of the centralizing logic that subsumes the multiplicity of singular outcomes to homogenizing dynamics of global structures.

¹⁶ Reading structure as double serialities is not only important for dealing with the horizon of totalization that structures invite; it also is important for understanding how a fracturing analytics in IPS is empirical. The actual is not the empirical realization of a structural potentiality but an actualization that itself exists as thought, or on the plane of thought in differential relation to virtual structures or form. This is important because it gives a particular meaning to claims that IPS is a move to the empirical. The latter is in our understanding not to be a turn to the real but rather to the actual which exists within the symbolic or within thought. ((Deleuze and Parnet 2007, Zourabichvili 2012)216) Given that some in IPS make a lot about moving towards the empirical or the concrete, working through what 'empirical' means as 'the actual' is one way of preventing that IPS falls back onto a naïve empiricism and/or an anti-theoretical position.

The homogenizing hold of the global – i.e. subsuming fragments to homogenizing dynamics of so-called global structures – within knowledge about the fragmentation of the international can, for instance, be seen at work in the global cities literature. Works on the role of cities in international relations have analyzed the formation of networks of global cities as structures of command and control of a decentered and fragmented global economy. (Curtis 2016, Sassen 2001) While the theory of global cities attempts to account for the 'double movement' of dispersion and integration of the world economy in its complexities and diversification, the analysis mostly yields an image of a structure of global governance organized hierarchically by the distinction between global cities and all other urban polities marginalized by a neoliberal globalization process.

This strand of critical global cities literature understands the trajectories of actualization of global cities as expressions of underlying processes of the global diffusion of urban policies and neoliberal economics, structured by networks of governance dominated by powerful urban centers. Such is the case, for example, of analyses of regeneration projects in large cities in the developing world that promote mega events as a strategy to plug them into the global cities networks and a neoliberal world economy. Rio de Janeiro's massive interventions in the wake of the 2014 World Cup and 2016 Olympic Games have been interpreted as an instance of the reproduction of the 'smart city' model perfected by urbanists based on the experiences of Barcelona and London, among others, combining gentrification, environmental friendly and technologically innovative policies as defining elements of an aspiring global city. Such urbanization policies are seen as generated by and expressions of the networked structure of global capital and distinct strategies, forms and practices of city making circulated by public and private agents of a new accumulation regime. Sassen's theory of the global city, for example, thus re-integrates a fragmented and deterritorialized international system into global networks in which cities play a crucial role. Localized processes do reshape urban spaces in particular settings but are inserted in a new whole by emphasizing how new practices of governance emerge through the connections between multiple scales that structure world order and how tensions are created between the macro and micro.

The differential theory of the fragment we introduced invites to dispose of this horizon of verticality in the analysis of the transversal connectivities and effects in global cities. It reads fragments of global city practices as forces that multiply series of connections and trajectories of interventions in urban spaces placing them in an immanently disjunctive relation. Global cities then are not the instantiation of the deep structures of capitalism or global urban politics, or as in Sassen's approach, a virtual model in tension with local (empirical) experiences of urban regeneration. Instead they are singularities that exist in the reciprocal interplay between forms of economics, governance, aesthetics – virtual series – and actualisations of how cities enact themselves. For example, the virtual form of the global city, when actualized in the restructuring of the 'old' and 'divided' in Rio de Janeiro, generates paradoxes in the relation between past and present that is supposed to integrate the city socially and spatially and project it into a sustainable future development. The unearthing of the remains of a slave market, for instance, acquires a new centrality in the temporal flow of sense

making narratives. Here, the fracturing of the 'global city' form in the folds of its actualization generated disjunctions that produced multiple fields of possibilities in the production of meaning of the 'Olympic Rio'. The fragment of the slave market creates difference without being reinscribed into the a structural whole (or totality) to which it can be traced or with which it can be reconciled. Transcendence gives way to surface readings that make sense of the 'Olympic Rio' as a happening that exists in the in-between of virtual and actual series of signification and fragments. Starting from multiple possible outcomes, in different urban settings, of 'repeated instances and circulating phenomena', the concept of 'the global city' as used in the literature referred to above is not just open to contestation then but to erasure altogether.(Robinson 2016)

creativity and emergence

Reading the temporality of life as undefined possibilities that emerge from differential plays shifts the conception of criticality towards foregrounding creativity and emergence rather than a criticality that depends on invoking a potential or desired historical horizon or making visible a deep structure. As argued so far, the critical element of structures as series lies in the affirmation of difference produced by the fragment that ensures the circulation and connection between singularities (signs) within and between different series. There is no opposition or negative relation within or between singular series or signs in the production of sense, as in semiotic or dialectic concepts of structure. Singularities do not engage in contradictions that will eventually change into other singularities imbued of new attributes or identities.¹⁷ Nor will the differential relations produce a transcendental signifier which will function as an interpretative or analytical reference to read transformative dynamics in historical structures – such as the rule of 'sovereignty,' the 'modern international' or 'capitalism'.

Once we relinquish the move to a transcendent signifier or dialectic process that may stabilize the play of differences in structures, any totalizing logic gives way to emergence. Worlds exist as becoming, that is, within and through irreducible differentiating forces. In this mode of knowing what is new is not a distinct order but a mixture of what is familiar and unfamiliar that creates undefined possibilities. For the future to be one of possibility, the present cannot already define what it will be. The present can only be emergent; it is a present on the move but all we know is that it is moving not what it will be.(Grosz 1999) The 'new' is here understood not as exceptional break but as disparate elements folding into each other in distinct but also heterogeneous ways through the play of differential reciprocity between fragment and virtual and actual structures.¹⁸ Methodologically, it

¹⁷ On the relation between dialectics and horizons of totalization: "Hegel "dialecticized relations" which means that terms enter into relation with one another only via the negative, each negating the other; there is consequently no relation between forces except in the mode of contradiction. Such a concept of relation is incompatible with the idea of a radical encounter, for the conception of negation as a motor implies that the other is already comprehended in each term as "all that it is not"—and therefore that the identity of a Whole first be given. In a dialectical relation, difference is only thinkable in accordance with the implicit presupposition of the Whole." (Zourabichvili 2012: 80)

¹⁸ Rabinow coined a similar understanding of the present as 'the contemporary' in his development of an anthropology of the contemporary. (Rabinow 2008)

implies taking a fragment like 9/11 or the unearthing of remains of a slave market in Rio and see how multiple virtual and actual series of sense-making are brought into play by and around it. Rather than looking for how the various series layer onto one another into a stable script or which series gain dominance over others, sense making is kept in motion and disjunctive by retaining the various series in a non-hierarchical and non-reducible multiplicity. 9/11 can then not be read as, for example, simply the next instantiation of a US history of ordering through identifying new enemies and wars. Neither can it be read as a suspension of meaning that nevertheless will be re-inscribed in a new hegemonic script that organises world politics and from which we can then read the meaning of 9/11. As long as it operates as a Deleuzian fragment, the fragment sets and continues over time to set in play evolving heterogeneous sense-making that works through differential – rather than contradictory or oppositional – relations between the different virtual and actual structures of meaning.

Such a Deleuzian understanding of the structural is not unfamiliar to work in IPS. Although mostly not expressed as 'structural', some – but certainly not all – of the uses of the concept and methods of assembling are sociological translations of attempts to rethink structural thought along the lines we have set out so far. As Marcus and Saka explain, 'assemblage' is a conceptual device that seeks to rethink structure along the lines of immanent heterogeneity and becoming:

The time-space in which assemblage is imagined is inherently unstable and infused with movement and change. Assemblage thus seems structural, an object with the materiality and stability of the classic metaphors of structure, but the intent in its aesthetic uses is precisely to undermine such ideas of structure. (Marcus and Saka 2006)

Such a rethinking of the structural through immanent heterogeneity and becoming is not an ontological statement that nothing is stable but a conception of a distinct mode of thought that works with a conception of the structural that paradoxically foregrounds the creativity of life. Although this concept of structure retains that elements of life exist in arranged connecting – in organised relations rather than as entities as such – this connecting is inherently moving, implying unpredictable and unnecessary changes. For example, Jairus Grove's work on Improvised Explosive Devices (Grove 2016) takes some of these devices and events of their use as fragments that circulate through multiple differential series of signs to show how the worlds of war today cannot be so easily fixed through familiar repertoires. The familiar repertoires of understanding remain present but in a disjunctive way mixed up with what seem new actualities. As a result, war comes across as emerging at the disjunctures between series of knowledges and objects of war but without us knowing how exactly it will develop. Critical thought is here diagnostic rather than programmatic or ideology critique. It shows through an assemblage of theory texts, philosophies, policy reports, events, objects that war

It should also be clear that differential series are not theories expressing different points of view but series of virtual and actual signs at play in Rio de Janeiro, for example.

practices are out of joint. Rather than determined by a past, the present is experimental and the future remains unknown.(Rajchman 1999, 45)

Thought works here through capture rather than closure (Zourabichvili 2012, 92); not the horizon of totalization but the becoming of life; worlds that do not make sense but of which we sense that they are no longer already known worlds and life. It is a mode of criticality that works against dogmatic thought; in particular dogmatic thought in which the future is rendered into already known outcomes or trajectories. It is also a mode of criticality that foreground a creativity of life that depends on letting the differences do their work without seeking to control them by centring meaning around transcendental signifiers, measuring them against an expected or desired world order, or reading them as expressions of a deep structure. This mode of criticality makes it impossible for knowledge to claim authority to steer us and others towards a 'better' future. It therefore invites revisiting the relation between practice and theory. Knowledge is practical as diagnostic interference that sets out interplays of differences from which possibilities emerge; its practicality does not ultimately rest on its capacity to judge the contemporary from the position of a normative horizon.¹⁹

This concept of creativity of life should not be conflated with romantic conceptions, however. Unlike in romanticism, the subject is not the centre or origin of creativity but entangled in the forces of the fragments and the series and their differential play. The creativity of life takes place in differential connecting which necessarily implies it is not free floating or ex nihilo either. It works only through differentially bringing structural series into play. The conception of the structural developed here thus remains firmly linked to a structuralist lineage, but, one that reads structures as disjunctive rather than conjunctive modes of connecting and that includes movement as becoming rather than dialectics or programmatic projection. In doing so, it develops a distinct conception of structurality that is immanently heterogeneous and multiple and thus invites developing conceptions of criticality that are in no way conditioned by horizons of totalization.

CONCLUSION

This paper expresses a concern with the presence of totalities and horizons of totalization as a condition for critique of the fragmentation of the international. In the context of post-globalising international relations it leads to pulling an intensified interest in situated and transversal practices back into questions of global or planetary order and world histories. We read the intensified interest

¹⁹ For us, judgement is linked to positioning in terms of conceptions of good and bad, right and wrong; interference is about bringing points of view into play that allow to create differences.

We derive this difference from the distinction between judgement and evaluation in Deleuzian work: "Judgment testifies to the link between the postulate of transcendence and the primacy accorded to the negative; from this point of view, critique must come first, for it is what ensures progress within thought. The point of departure of evaluation lies, on the contrary, in the feeling-out of differences between modes of evaluation (point of view, or problems), so that critique arises first of all from out of a positive act." (Zourabichvili 2012: 77)

For a conception of non-judgemental critique in IPS that draws on Michel Serres: (Austin 2019)

in the micro in IPS as a political sociological expression of deconstructive and post-structural modes of critique that foreground the heterogeneity, multiplicity and fluidity of the social against knowledge that makes totalities and horizons of totalization a condition of critique. However, favoring the situated, micro, local or event as such is not sufficient to reposition criticality against the impact of demands for world histories, global wholes, transhistorical processes, and transcendental signifiers to hold the fragments of the international together. We argue that it requires developing concepts of structurality that make structure irreducibly and immanently heterogeneous and fluid and that guard against using deep structural references as the condition for making sense of the fragments of life. We started developing a non-totalising conception of structure and fragments by drawing on Deleuzian thought. Our aim is not to reduce innovative work on criticality in IPS to Deleuzian or more broadly post-structural work but rather to explicitly open – or, reopen – a debate about the reasons for and the problems with the lingering presence of totalities and horizons of totalization in IPS. This problematization draws debates on what criticality means for IPS explicitly back to its Marxian lineages and post-structural critics of Marxian thought that reformulated structuralism so as to decouple structure from totality and horizons of totalization.

It engages the question of critical knowledge in contexts of fragmentation of the international from a distinctive set of angles. It takes lingering horizons of totalization as the key problem through which to enter the question of criticality, rather than for example the demand for reflexivity (Alejandro 2019) or the problem of reification.(Levine 2012) It also does not take some notion of the tragic in modernity as an organizing device in critical knowledge. Instead, it conceptualises the present as possibilities and becoming and analytically favours the creativity of life. The tragic works criticality through a paradoxical concept of knowledge that combines human finitude with human desires for wholeness; a mode of knowing that works from a desire for wholeness or completion and a recognition that the realization of this desire is impossible.(Ibid) Fracturing critique, on the other hand, seeks to problematize the present conditions of post-globalization and a fragmenting international by developing concepts of structure that understand relations in terms of immanent multiplicity and heterogeneity. In doing so it aims to write desires for wholeness and totalization out of its analysis of global and international politics.

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