

study developed metropolitan nations) in these postcolonial times? Wouldn't we ideally want a closer encounter between economics and political science, given the simultaneously political and economic tumults we have lived through? Aren't all our concerns fundamentally geographical and historical to the extent that hiving these off as separate disciplines is fundamentally disabling? Why aren't there social science departments dealing explicitly with the climate crisis? Or inequality?

These silos were massively challenged by Thomas Piketty's (2014) *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. This showed how economists such as Piketty could move out of their home discipline and encourage a broader debate between economics and the social sciences that had been largely absent in previous decades. And indeed, many social scientists have seen the issue of inequality as one that allows them to make common cause. More than any other social science issue, it has generated the kind of intense cross-disciplinary synergy that cuts into an emerging interdisciplinary space. A cursory tour of leading figures who have energized the debate on inequality would include such economists as Tony Atkinson, Amartya Sen, Joe Stiglitz and Thomas Piketty; such gender scholars as bell hooks and Dorothy Smith; such sociologists as John Goldthorpe, Pierre Bourdieu, and Michele Lamont; such legal and critical race scholars as Kimberlé Crenshaw and Patricia Williams; such epidemiologists as Michael Marmot, Richard Wilkinson, and Kate Pickett; such political scientists as Robert Putnam, Kathleen Thelen, and Paul Pierson; such geographers as Danny Dorling; and such social policy researchers as John Hills. And so on—this list is not intended to be exhaustive, and my apologies to those who are not on it. My point is that in a short period of time, the issue of inequality has come to straddle specific disciplines and has inspired social scientists to work together in an unprecedented way.

We need to contextualize the gravity of this shift in terms of the strange history of the social sciences, which during the twentieth century, came to exert huge and unprecedented authority.⁷ At the end of the nineteenth century, the most powerful forms of knowledge were religion and the humanities on one hand, and the natural and medical sciences on the other. Social science departments hardly existed in any universities, though the seeds of their later development were germinating, notably in the graduate schools of American universities. Many who were later lionized as the founders of social scientific thinking—Adam Smith, John Stuart Mill, Max Weber, Auguste