

The Ecumene: A Research Program for Future Knowledge and Governance

Subjects: **Management**

Contributor: Paulo Castro Seixas , Nadine Lobner

The ecumene defines a beyond-border space of strong cultural encounters, flows, and merging, grounded within the traditions of world-systems, globalization, transnationalism, and cosmopolitanism discourses. Furthermore, the ecumene links directly with international regions as core political platforms in the making. As such, there are several ecumenes on the forefront, as evidenced by the literature, which can be clustered into ideal types. Epistemologically, it is a relevant concept and tool for a science-of-the-future that focuses on conviviality and transformation for the yet-to-come. Analytically, the ecumene has a descriptive, normative, and critical dimension, and can be empirically accessed through operational concepts such as triggers, hubs, and types of beyond-border conviviality. To apply the ecumene as a research program means to detect convivial common-sense spaces within the global context.

ecumene concept

ecumene and future studies

epistemological turn

governance and trends of practices

beyond-border conviviality

Humanity is facing a tipping point in which extreme scenarios are on the horizon. On one side, we see world culture on the rise; on the other, total fragmentation. This work is an attempt to extend science and knowledge, at large, as an active asset to cope with these “extreme scenarios”. For this endeavor, we present the ecumene as a useful knowledge and political tool. Hence, we elaborate on the ecumene and ecumene studies as an innovative avenue of research for anthropology and the broader social sciences. We question: why the ecumene? If conviviality at large is a wicked problem, to tackle this, the ecumene could be the chosen concept. This exploration requires an epistemological reflection emphasizing a crucial turn in the production and horizons of knowledge.

Methodologically, this entry starts with a reflective analysis on the epistemological turn in which humanity is embedded in, supposing that we can already recognize certain possibilities of the new paradigm. We proceed with a historical and explorative literature review of the ecumene as a concept that can make a difference. Furthermore, we propose a specific research program for ecumene studies. Within this avenue, we discuss what the concept is about; what the grounds and empirical evidence through which scientists can expand their research are; the main dimensions that support the operationalization of the ecumene; and the methodologies and demarche processes that allow for the social construction of evidence.

The contribution of this work is to present the ecumene and ecumene studies, supported by an awareness of the future as the main cause of our present in a new design of knowledge. We consider that there is a turn from a probability evidence-based approach to a future test possibilities-based approach through which science may be

understood as a continuous adjustment to turbulent waters. We elaborate on the ecumene as a concept (as a beyond-border space of strong cultural exchange, flow, and encounter) and ecumene studies, through a descriptive, critical, and normative gaze, which are a way to match the current turn for the making (discovering/construction) of new common senses.

The paper is structured into the following sections: First, the epistemological turn will be explored, looking at the possibilities of a new paradigm. Thereafter, a discussion will be provided on the historical path of science to make sense of human togetherness through applying different concepts, such as society, culture, civilization, and politics, through which we further question their limitations. This will be screened through regions and hubs of future beyond-border convivialities and the role of anthropology to implement these new possibilities. Connecting to that, we will present an exploratory literature review of the concept and evident trends of practices addressing ecumene(s) in specific branches. This allows for a deeper debate on the wide-reaching potential of the ecumene in order for it to be applied as a research program in the future. Finally, this will be advanced through the elaboration on common-sense spaces within the world at large, through empirical evidence on one side and ideal types of conviviality on the other. It needs to be noted that this work stands in direct relation to an ongoing PhD project, “Objectifications, Networks and Worldviews of the Ecumene: the building of the EU and ASEAN as international regions in the making” where data are being collected through a multi-sited patchwork ethnography within center–periphery case studies (Lobner 2021–2024, supervised by Paulo Castro Seixas, FCT, 2020.07467.BD).

Retrieved from <https://encyclopedia.pub/entry/history/show/127598>