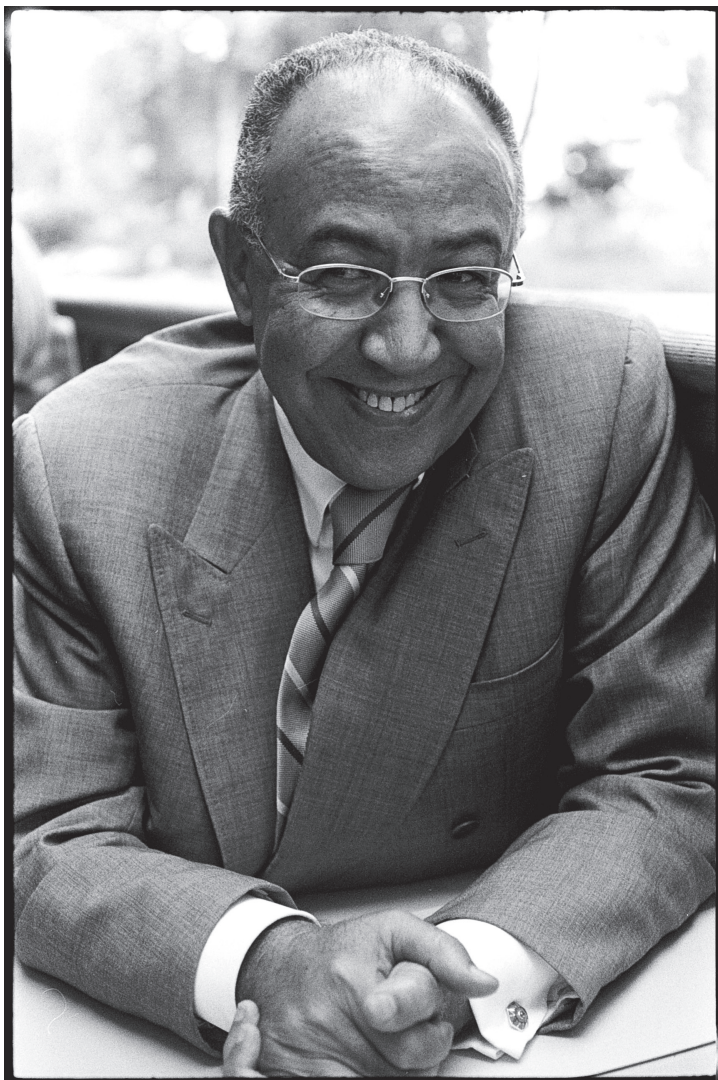


# THEORIES AND SOCIAL MECHANISMS

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Mohamed Cherkaoui, London  
Photograph by Peter Hamilton

# THEORIES AND SOCIAL MECHANISMS

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Essays in Honour of  
Mohamed Cherkaoui

VOLUME I  
THEORIES

Edited by  
Gianluca Manzo



THE BARDWELL PRESS

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# WHY READ CHERKAOUI?

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A Road Map To His Work

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## INTRODUCTION

Through a series of fourteen well-articulated definitions, in his famous essay “Why read the classics?”, the Italian writer and literary critic Italo Calvino (1991 [1999]) identified several distinctive features of a classic, among which are: 1) the fact of being “re-read” more than “read” (*ibid.*: 3); 2) its capacity to set conceptual, value, and aesthetic standards (*ibid.*: 4); 3) its being open to continuous re-interpretation (*ibid.*: 5–6); 4) its capacity to look “original, unexpected, and innovative” when one reads it compared to “hearsay” (*ibid.*: 6); 5) its capacity to raise criticism and opposition (*ibid.*: 7). The essays collected in the present two-volume *Festschrift* in honour of Mohamed Cherkaoui suggest that his books and articles share many of these features.

In his provocative essay, Calvino also defended the argument that it is not the “antiquity, style, or authority” of an author that make it a

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I wish to express my gratitude to Peter Hamilton for revising my English and to Toby Matthews for carefully editing the text.

classic but his or her capacity to be part of a “cultural continuum”. That capacity, he notes, should be measured through the ease with which “its place in the genealogy of classic works” (*ibid.*: 7) can be recognized.

In this respect, too, Cherkaoui’s scientific production can easily be classified. It is clearly part of the middle-range-theory tradition in sociology (see Merton, 1967; 1987). Similarly to James Coleman, Raymond Boudon, Thomas Fararo, John Goldthorpe and Peter Hedström—to mention just a few authors with whom Cherkaoui often dialogues in his writings—, Cherkaoui’s oeuvre is animated by a deep explanatory ambition and combines quantitatively sophisticated empirical research, theoretical analyses, epistemological reflection and the study of classics. A distinctive feature of Cherkaoui’s scientific output is the diversity of substantive topics, methods, and investigations in the history of sociology this work covers. The variety of national intellectual communities and disciplinary backgrounds from which the contributors to the present *liber amicorum* come well reflects this variety.

With the aim of helping readers to navigate Cherkaoui’s works and, at the same time, to perceive the coherence behind the apparent heterogeneity of the thirty-five contributions that follow, in this introductory essay, I survey the main research areas in which Mohamed Cherkaoui was involved during his intellectual career. My aim is not exhaustiveness. Cherkaoui’s bibliography is so vast that it would be impossible to do full justice to it. More modestly, I will seek to identify, and, to some extent, to periodize, Cherkaoui’s major thematic focuses and lines of development. The focus is on what I regard as the major contribution of each (set of) article(s) and book(s), not on the integrality of details and results they contain. Incidentally, I will also try to show how Cherkaoui’s contribution fits, and contributes to, past and more recent debates. It is a road map, or, if you prefer, a set of guidelines, that I would like to draw. The limitations of this operation are discussed in the concluding section. Let me also note that, on purpose, I leave aside contextual and biographical details. The previously unpublished interview Mohamed Cherkaoui graciously gave us (see Cherkaoui, 2015, present volume) thus is a necessary (and extremely pleasant to read) complement to the present introduction.<sup>1</sup>



## QUANTITATIVE METHODS

In the sixties and seventies, the application of statistical methods for the analysis of empirical data in sociology was still in its infancy (for an overview, see Raftery, 2001). Mathematical sociology, too, as a specific field of research, was only emerging (for an overview, see Edling, 2002). Mohamed Cherkaoui belonged to this minority of scholars who believed in the importance of statistics and mathematics to describe and explain social phenomena.

Let me mention first his analysis of the dependence of students' achievement in mathematics on class size and teaching length as a function of several other variables like track, social class or sex (see Lindsey and Cherkaoui, 1975). To describe this association (across six different countries) Cherkaoui estimated a series of linear multiple regressions specifying different types of interaction effects among the controlling variables and assessed when these effects were statistically significant (*ibid.*: appendix). It should be noted that this analysis was performed after correcting for the asymmetric nature of the dependant variable, through a Box-Cox transformation, a topic that Cherkaoui also developed separately (see Cherkaoui, 1976). When one notes that even today marginal effects are often given priority over interaction effects (for this critique against regression-like analysis, see, for instance, Sorensen, 1998), and that variable transformations are still common only among a minority of advanced users (see Gelman and Hill, 2009, chapter 4), the sophistication of Cherkaoui's analysis becomes apparent.

A similar remark holds for Cherkaoui's critical analysis of the literature on how to measure social classes (Cherkaoui and Lindsey, 1977), without a doubt one of the longest-lasting debates in the quantitative sociology of social stratification (for a recent overview, see, for instance, Hauser and Warren, 1997; Chan and Goldthorpe, 2007). In this respect, Cherkaoui provided us with a deep critical analysis of the methodological foundations of the variety of socio-economic indexes and prestige scales available in the seventies, which he attacked for relying on a continuous view of social structure and statistical tools based on the hypothesis of linearity. On this basis, he argued in favour of a theoretical approach that takes into account the existence of discontinuities among

social groups and suggests statistical procedures that would describe the observed complexity of the social achievements of these groups. In particular, on the one hand, he suggested an ingenious form of variance analysis for data violating the assumption of normality and that pays attention to the interaction effects among several independent variables (see Cherkaoui and Lindsey, 1977: 256–261); on the other hand, he proposed a way to analyse case over-representation in contingency tables in line with the nascent statistics for categorical data (*ibid.*: 261–264).

The term and the explicit reference to the formalism of “log-linear analysis” overtly appeared in Cherkaoui’s (1979a: 98–102, 104) first comprehensive treatment of educational achievement in comparative perspective (see next section), in particular where he studied the cross-country variation of the complex relation between performances in mathematics, types of schools, tracks, and social classes. Even more refined use of log-linear models is found in Cherkaoui’s (1982: 130–132) major contribution to sociology of education (see next section), in particular where he analyses the complex interactions between being a candidate to the *baccalauréat*, and, on the other hand, his or her age and social class. In this application, Cherkaoui also shows how to compute odds ratios from the estimated parameters, thus making the results more interpretable and sociologically meaningful. By stressing the importance of log-linear models for the analysis of categorical data, a research area in social statistics that would later become central for the methodology of contemporary sociology of social stratification (see, for an overview, Goodman, 2007)—Cherkaoui incontestably was ahead of his time.

This is testified by at least two other methodological analyses that appear in Cherkaoui’s (1979a, 1982) book-length studies of educational systems. First, in his regression-based analyses of the extent to which the length of teaching, or the quality of teachers, impacts on educational achievement, or on other dependent variables like “aspirations”, Cherkaoui not only pays systematic attention to the interaction effects among these variables but also attempts to describe the variations in the functional forms relating variables across population sub-groups (see, Cherkaoui, 1979a: chapters 4, 5, and 6, respectively). As suggested by the “contour plots” Cherkaoui drew to express the results of these complex

models (see in particular, figs. 5.1.1–5.2.6, 6.1.2, and 6.2.2), this analysis followed the principles of the emerging “response surface methodology”, which today is a flourishing approach widely applied in chemical and biological research as well as in the industrial sector (see, for an overview, Khuri and Mukhopadhyay, 2010).

Second, to describe the increasing participation in upper secondary school in France between 1950 and 1978, Cherkaoui (1982: chapter 1) took inspiration from time series analysis in economics and assessed the fit of several functions (including Gompertz’s function) to describe the observed trends, a procedure that is nowadays common among practitioners of “growth curve modelling” (see Panik, 2014). Cherkaoui did not stop at description, however. In his analysis of the temporal changes in the age distribution of *baccalauréat* candidates, for instance, Cherkaoui employed what we now call “stochastic processes theory” (see, among others, Gallager, 2013), and tested a variety of probability distributions (included quite refined ones such as Poisson distributions with contagious process) against actual data, the rationale behind this procedure being that the formal properties of the probabilistic model with the best fit may reveal the nature of the underlying social mechanisms at work (see Cherkaoui, 1982: chapter 4).

Thus, Cherkaoui’s early empirical studies in the field of sociology of education relied on some of the most refined quantitative procedures available in the seventies. This should not lead readers to ignore the fact that a systematic interest in a variety of quantitative and formal tools persists throughout Cherkaoui’s subsequent scientific research. These include, for example, the mathematical modelling based on differential equations that Cherkaoui employed to formalize Durkheim’s theory of social change and integration (see, respectively, Cherkaoui, 1981a [2005: 45–49, 163–167; 2008: 46–64]). He has also constantly paid attention to numerical simulation, which he regarded as a powerful support for theoretical elaboration and useful complement to statistical analysis (see Cherkaoui, 2001; 2006a [2007a: 3–4]). Let me finally mention Cherkaoui’s long-standing interest in game theory, which he most recently applied to frame the complex relationship between Morocco and Algeria with respect to the issue of the independence of Western Sahara (see Cherkaoui, 2007b: chapter 1: 10–13 and footnote 3).

## SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION

As we have seen, Cherkaoui's early research in the field of sociology of education remains remarkable, even today, for its methodological refinement. To understand the substantive originality of this work, it is important briefly to summarize the debates to which it aimed to contribute.

One of the deepest social changes affecting western societies in the sixties concerned the increasing investment in secondary education families started to make. The question of whether these behaviours was able to generate better social opportunities for all social groups thus became one of the most urgent empirical questions in sociology. Several studies, based on different theoretical and methodological perspectives, converged to a negative reply denying that the educational system *itself* can play an *autonomous* role in reducing social inequalities. In the US, Coleman *et al.*'s *Equality of Educational Opportunity* (1966) focused on the distribution of resources within and across American schools and found that school variables (like types of educational activities, libraries, social composition, teachers' years of experience, etc.) played a very minor role, compared to pupils' attributes (like family background), in determining educational achievements. Jencks *et al.* (1972) observed that education contributed only modestly (statistically) to explain individuals' opportunities on the job market, thus concluding that job search is driven more by chance than by formal education. In Europe, Bourdieu and Passeron (1970) argued that school can only reproduce social inequality because successfully going through the educational system requires unequally distributed social and cultural skills that the school in fact does not provide. Boudon (1974) stressed that, since the occupational system tends to evolve more slowly than the educational one, more educated individuals will not necessarily experience upward intergenerational social mobility.

Cherkaoui's (1979, 1982) book-length analyses of modern educational systems established a systematic dialogue with this literature with the goal of demonstrating that school organization in fact plays a specific role in generating differential educational outcomes across social groups, and that, to understand how educational systems evolve, we need to acknowledge and theorize their *relative* autonomy.

More particularly, Cherkaoui's (1979a) first systematic contribution to the sociology of education<sup>2</sup> can be read as a re-examination of Coleman's main conclusions concerning the low impact of school characteristics on educational stratification. With the aim of demonstrating that Coleman's results do not necessarily hold everywhere, Cherkaoui used data from the *International Project for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement for pupils* (aged around 13) and compared seven countries (namely, France, Belgium, England, Scotland, Sweden, US, and West Germany). Among school variables, he essentially focused on tracking (general *versus* technical) and type of procedures for pupil selection. Relying on multiple variance analysis as well as techniques for categorical data (see previous section), Cherkaoui established that, while pupils' social class has a strong impact on educational achievement (in mathematics) in all countries, this effect significantly interacts with school characteristics varying across countries. In particular, Cherkaoui found that the stronger the selectivity and more visible track segmentation, the weaker was the effect of social class. This result, Cherkaoui argues, suggests that Coleman's results concerning the low impact of school variables on educational inequalities do not necessarily hold in European educational systems, in particular when strong selection and internal differentiation operates at the earlier educational stages (see, in particular, *ibid.*: chapter 3). As recent literature shows (see, for instance, Hanushek and Woessmann, 2006), forty year later, the issue raised by Cherkaoui continues to stimulate debate, and, despite methodological advances, a definitive answer has still to be found.

Cherkaoui's (1982) second major contribution to the sociology of education developed further the idea of the relative autonomy of school organization in shaping educational inequalities. In particular, Cherkaoui quantitatively described several changes in the French educational system after World War II and, for each of them, formulated micro-based theoretical explanations.<sup>3</sup> Aggregate consequences that can logically be derived from these explanations are systematically confronted with consequences derivable from alternative accounts focusing on macroscopic (economic or institutional) changes that are exogenous to the education system. Cherkaoui demonstrated that the statistical

structure of data describing the relevant changes is incompatible with the latter group of explanations. Ultimately these results are used to defend a theoretical perspective where changes in educational systems partly result from endogenous dynamics driven by actors' reactions to others' expected educational behaviours.<sup>4</sup>

As Cherkaoui (*ibid.*: 103) himself admits, “the most important” illustration of this idea appears in the account he proposes of the dramatic increase in the fraction of French students who, during the 1950s and 1960s, started to choose the upper secondary track focusing on mathematics and physics over that focusing on humanities (literature and classical languages), in particular among those who wanted to pursue an education in humanities in the most elitist French institutions (*ibid.*: chapter 5). To explain this paradox, Cherkaoui postulates that, when choosing a track, students not only roughly estimate its expected benefits on the job market, but also its selectivity and prestige. To assess the latter, Cherkaoui notes, it is likely that students look at the social composition of the track, and one followed by students regarded as low performers would send a negative signal in terms of quality. As, in the sixties, lower socio-economic groups started to invest in upper secondary school, and in particular in the humanities track, it is likely, Cherkaoui suggests, that students with high educational aspirations started to consider this track as less selective and move to tracks that were believed still to be protected against social devaluation. If so, a dynamic reaction chain can be triggered and a progressive shift from the humanities track to the scientific one may appear. Thus, Cherkaoui proposed an endogenous theory of educational changes that was perfectly in line with the developing areas of formal models focusing on “tipping” points (see, Schelling, 1971) and informational “cascades” (see Granovetter, 1973; Granovetter and Song, 1988) in which dynamic choice interdependence, and its macroscopic unintended consequences, was the crucial dimension.

To conclude, let us stress that these analyses placed Cherkaoui among the leading figures of the sociology of education in France. An indication of this standing is that, in 1986, Cherkaoui wrote the first *Que sais-je* devoted to the sociology of education. By 2010, this short book had reached its eighth edition (see Cherkaoui, 1986).<sup>5</sup>

## SOCIAL MOBILITY

Since the first modern large-scale surveys on social mobility (see, for instance, Glass, 1954), educational systems, social inequality in educational outcomes, and occupational mobility are phenomena that sociologists have tended to study in tandem. When looking at the scientific paths taken by students of social stratification, it is frequent indeed to observe a constant back-and-forth between analyses of educational achievement on one hand and research more focused on social mobility on the other (see, for instance, Goldthorpe, 2000).

Cherkaoui is not an exception. His interest in the connection between education and social mobility first appeared at the same time he published his first book on inequalities in educational attainment (see previous section), in particular in a historical piece devoted to a marginal figure of the Durkheimian school, namely Paul Lapie (see Cherkaoui, 1979b [1982]). In this article, Cherkaoui shows that Lapie, to answer the question as to whether formal education was responsible for declining social immobility among agricultural classes' offspring at the end of the nineteenth century in France, constructed and published, in 1904, the first modern inter-generational and career mobility tables in social sciences, very likely without being aware of similar tables published in *Biometrika*, in the same year, by the British statistician Karl Pearson (on this point, see Hérán, 2006).

It was, however, toward the end of the eighties, that Cherkaoui's attention started to be directed to social mobility more specifically. In this regard, it will be helpful to note first his analysis of the consequences of actors' perceived status mobility on their perception of what they regard as the status they should deserve (see Cherkaoui, 1988). Data for this analysis came from a French survey on the perception of social inequalities and justice to which Cherkaoui was a leading contributor (*ibid.*, 229)<sup>6</sup>.

Cherkaoui's analysis ended up with two main sets of results. First, he found that Parisians regarded their social status (self-reported on a 0-lowest–9-highest scale) as more intermediate than it really was and that, based on this perception, they tend to regard their status at best as “fair” but most of time “less than fair” (in any case, never “more than

fair”) (*ibid.*: figures 1 and 2). As subsequent research has shown, similar distortions in status perceptions are regularly observed and explanations are increasingly formulated in terms of actors’ local interactions (see, for instance, Fararo and Kosaka, 2006). Second, when studying the impact of perceived status mobility on the status respondents wished to have (status mobility is measured in terms of one’s perceived status on entry to the job market and ten years later), Cherkaoui found a curvilinear relation. In particular, actors perceiving themselves as downwardly mobile or immobile have, respectively, the strongest and the weakest aspirations for high social status. Between the two extremes, the desire for high social status increases, among those who see themselves as in upward mobility, proportionally to the length of the perceived mobility path (non-linear regression analysis is employed to establish this result).

To appreciate the originality of Cherkaoui’s study, it is important to note that, whilst, nowadays, a large literature on the perception of income inequality exists (see, for instance, Niehues, 2014); and extensive international databases are available to study subjective social mobility and its consequences (see, for instance, Kelley and Kelley, 2009), it is common to use subjective status to predict a variety of social and mental outcomes (see, for instance, Singh-Manoux *et al.*, 2003). Quantitative, survey-based research on the subjective side of social structure was only in its infancy when Cherkaoui collected and analysed data in 1977 on a sample of Parisians (for another interesting example, see Laumann, 1965).

Cherkaoui’s (1995) second main contribution to social mobility research also deals with the consequences of occupational changes but the *explanandum* is not desired status but political behaviour, namely voting. Compared to the previous study, a major difference here is that Cherkaoui’s analysis is theoretical in that, though based on empirical literature, it aims to build a “taxonomy” of the effects that social mobility can produce on individuals’ political preferences. In particular, distinguishing whether the socially mobile actor’s class of origin or destination constitutes the benchmark for his or her final political behaviour, and, on the other hand, whether the actor expresses stronger/weaker political preference (compared to the benchmark), Cherkaoui obtains four elementary types of “political conformism”. Then, adding a third



dimension, i.e. the specific electoral choice (right/left), he moves from these basic types to eight more complex cases (*ibid.*, 177–182).

Again, to appreciate this contribution, it is important to keep in mind that, whilst recent literature focuses more on class differences in political attitudes (see, for an overview, McCall and Manza, 2011), during the 1950s–1980s, the issue of the political consequences of social mobility was widely debated (see, for an overview, Goldthorpe, 1987: chapter. 1; for an empirical analysis in a comparative perspective, see Turner, 1992). Thus, the usefulness of Cherkaoui’s “taxonomy” was to provide a general grid providing order in the heterogeneity of “effects” empirically observed at that time.

This theoretically-oriented analysis is also important for an understanding of the development of Cherkaoui’s subsequent research on social mobility. It contains indeed a first, synthetic but explicit, expression of Cherkaoui’s growing scepticism about the explanatory power of quantitative research in the field of social stratification, which, he claims, over-values data analysis and down plays the formulation of abstract models from which observations can be deduced (*ibid.*: 171–172, 182).

This scepticism is indeed the premise to Cherkaoui’s (2003a) most general contribution to social stratification, in which he proposed “to set some landmarks and to show the way” (*ibid.*: 159) as to the possibility of developing a macro-sociological theory of social stratification. To this end, Cherkaoui built on James Coleman’s (1987: 163–168) critique of survey-based methods that tend structurally to be unable to take account of interdependence among actors, thus making it impossible really to understand the transition from micro-decisions to new social structures. Cherkaoui argues that, to develop a truly macro-sociological theory of how one moves from one occupational structure to another, the requirement of interdependence should be applied to every pair of levels (of analysis) through which one must go—what he calls the “principle of generalized interdependence”. In particular, he stresses the importance of taking into account *at the same time* the interdependence among educational choices, the competition among job seekers, the interactions between organizations and job seekers, as well as the concurrence among organizations themselves to get the best job seekers—and he

acknowledges that social networks are often the mediator of these various forms of interdependence.

Cherkaoui admits that this is a highly demanding requirement, in particular because of the lack of fine-grained data, but he conveys the important message that one should not take data limitations to justify not trying to develop more focused theoretical lenses. It is too early to say if this message was heeded but it seems fair to say that several recent simulation-based studies go in that direction (see DiMaggio and Garip, 2011; Manzo, 2013a; Fountain and Stovel, 2014).

To conclude, let us stress that, similarly to research in the sociology of education, these empirical and theoretical studies, focusing more directly on social mobility, gave Cherkaoui a lasting standing among the leading figures of sociology of stratification in France. As a sign of this, we should note the two long chapters that Cherkaoui devoted to stratification and mobility in the authoritative *Traité de sociologie* edited by Boudon (in French) in 1992 (see, respectively, Cherkaoui, 1992a, b). Subsequently, there was the special issue “Mobilité sociale. Histoire, outils d’analyse et connaissance de la société française” that Cherkaoui (in collaboration with L.-A. Vallet) edited in 1995 for the *Revue Française de Sociologie* (see Cherkaoui and Vallet, 1995). Both contributions helped to systematize and institutionalize the field of social stratification in France and provided useful overviews and bibliographic resources for many undergraduate and PhD students.

## CLASSICS

As acknowledged by Merton (1967), compared to economics and, even more, physics or biology, sociology “is reluctant to abandon a firsthand acquaintance with the classical works of sociology and pre-sociology as an integral part of the experience of the sociologist *qua* sociologist” (*ibid.*: 30). Mohamed Cherkaoui is a perfect example of this: a dialogue with many of the founding fathers of social sciences such as Durkheim, Weber, Tocqueville or Hobbes, to name a few, is present throughout his publications. Merton also noted, however, that the intimate connection that sociology has with the classics, takes two typical forms, namely “the anaemic practices of mere commentary or banalization”,

which he regards as “deplorably useless”, and “the active practice of following up and developing the theoretical leads of significant predecessors”, which Merton considers “wonderfully useful” (*ibid.*: 30). Without a doubt, Cherkaoui’s relationships with classical sociologists follow the latter path. It is a good illustration of Calvino’s (1991 [1999: 8]) view according to which “the person who derives maximum benefit from a reading of the classics is the one who skilfully alternates classic readings with calibrated doses of contemporary material”. In a word, Cherkaoui is a “presentist”: he studied the classics with an eye to their utility for solving contemporary problems (on the distinction between “presentism” and “historicism”, which I use here in a neutral way, and academic conflicts related to it, see Borlandi’s [2000] profound analysis).

This approach was visible from Cherkaoui’s early work in the sociology of education field, which, to a large extent, is consubstantial to Cherkaoui’s first dialogue with Durkheim. In particular, this is a deep analysis of Durkheim’s *Moral Education* and *The Evolution of Educational Thought* that led Cherkaoui to build his argument on the “relative autonomy” of educational systems, which, as we have seen, is one of the main ideas driving his own study of the transformations of the French educational system in the period after World War II (see Cherkaoui, 1978 [2008: chapter 6]). Among the internal forces creating this autonomy, Cherkaoui argues, conflicts among social groups animated by varying ideological visions of what should be taught at school are a crucial source, a point raised by Durkheim to explain the long-standing domination of the humanities and classical languages in many educational and historical settings (see Cherkaoui, 1981b). By highlighting the conflictual dimension of Durkheim’s sociology of education—an aspect that also led Cherkaoui to compare Durkheim to the British sociologist Basil Bernstein (see Cherkaoui, 1977)—and Cherkaoui was well aware that he was proposing a controversial reading of the French sociologist.<sup>7</sup>

This ambition, i.e. “suggesting a non-conformist interpretation of Durkheim’s sociological theory” became the central theme of Cherkaoui’s first book-length, comprehensive treatment of this founding figure of French sociology (see Cherkaoui, 1998 [2008: 2]). The bulk of this interpretation mainly concerns two points: first, Durkheim’s

conception of the relationships between the micro- and macro-level of analysis; 2) Durkheim's conception of scientific explanation (*ibid.*: chapters 1 and 3, respectively).

As to the first point, Cherkaoui shows that several ways of relating the macro- and micro-levels are in fact present in Durkheim's analyses of specific social phenomena (for the latest formulation of this argument, see Cherkaoui, 2011a). Among them, the least well recognized by commentators is the upward transition from the micro to the macro, a transition that Durkheim relates to the existence of interdependence structures among individuals. It is, Cherkaoui points out, precisely this aspect that allows Durkheim to consider new macro-structures as "emergent" phenomena, meaning facts containing new properties compared to those of the individuals who helped to generate them.<sup>8</sup>

If this interpretation was intended to contribute "to the disappearance of the myth of Durkheimian holism" (Cherkaoui, 1998 [2008: 18]), as to the second point, i.e. Durkheim's explanatory mode, Cherkaoui also aims to counter frequent textbook readings, in particular those seeing Durkheim as exclusively interested in finding nomic regularities among aggregates (most of the time in terms of variable correlations such as in *Suicide*). Cherkaoui's thesis is that, in fact, "to explain is considerably more for the founder of French sociology. It is to deduce the laws and complex structures from basic propositions that constitute the kernel of the theory" (*ibid.*: 84). According to Durkheim, and contrary to Comte, Cherkaoui notes, these "basic propositions" should formulate hypotheses on the "generative facts", "generative mechanisms", "generative causes", or "modes of production of phenomena": terms, as Cherkaoui stresses, that interchangeably recur in Durkheim's writings. By inspecting Durkheim's masterworks like *The Division of Labour in Society* and *Suicide*, Cherkaoui shows that the proposed "mechanisms" invariably refers to complex dynamic bundles of structural elements, individual motives, and interdependence structures.

Overall, by focusing on the micro-level and interactionist component of Durkheim's analyses, Cherkaoui contributed to the accumulation of evidence in favour of the micro-foundationist and relational interpretations of Durkheim's works (see, in particular, Bearman, 1991; Berk, 2006; Boudon, 1995; Collins, 2004: 32–40). Drawing attention to

the link between interdependence and emergence, Cherkaoui anticipated recent readings that, independently, also regarded Durkheim as one of the first “emergentists” (see Sawyer, 2005: chapter 6). Finally, in highlighting the “mechanismic” components of Durkheim’s explanatory mode, Cherkaoui makes us aware of a precursor of the concept of mechanism-based explanations, around which a large literature has developed over the last two decades (see next section).

A similar focus on the sociological classics also animates Cherkaoui’s (2006a [2007a]) study of Weber’s works. The focus here is the concept of “unanticipated consequences of purposive social action”, to take the title of the often-cited paper Merton published in *American Sociological Review* in 1936. Relying on extensive analyses of Weber’s writings and correspondence, Cherkaoui sets out to demonstrate how systematically Weber employs this concept in order to explain specific aspects of social reality. As noted by Turner (2007: 178), Cherkaoui’s purpose is less historical than substantive, however, in that his ultimate goal is “to expand the concept, systematize it, and thus make it more valuable for sociology”. This is clear from the beginning of Cherkaoui’s book, where he remarks that his desire to go back to Weber’s writings became an urgent one following a period interacting with physicists and economists working in the field of complex systems and raising questions about the emergence of seemingly unpredictable systemic patterns (Cherkaoui, 2006 [2007: 2])<sup>9</sup>.

From this perspective, Cherkaoui first retraces the long history of the concept of unintended consequences before Weber, and, then, after commenting on the variety of expressions Weber employs to label this phenomenon—that include “paradox of consequences” (which appears in Cherkaoui’s book title)—, starts travelling across an impressive number of Weber’s texts and explores how Weber uses, rather than discusses, the concept. The result is the discovery that Weber systematically pointed out five sources of a mismatch between actors’ intentions and systemic consequences. According to Cherkaoui’s reconstruction, these sources are: 1) mistakes or imperfect information creating gaps between the actor’s goal and means (in other words, limitations of instrumental rationality); 2) the interdependence among individual actions, which is defined as actors’ tendency to take into account what they believe other actors’

strategies are; 3) spillover effects, meaning the consequences of actions that unintentionally transfer from one domain to another; 4) conflicts among the internal logic of heterogeneous social domains; 5) conflicts among social domains in which different values dominates. In particular, Cherkaoui suggests that these sources are only elementary types that Weber often uses in complex combinations to explain this or that enigmatic phenomenon.

As noted by Kaelber (2009: 1548, 1549), *Good intentions* “succeeds in presenting Weber’s thought and extending it to a variety of Weberian themes in innovative ways”. For contemporary research, part of this novelty resides in Cherkaoui’s capacity to elaborate on the sources Weber indicated as generative of unintended consequences and cast them, as Turner (2007: 178) noted, in terms of “what, in the currently fashionable parlance, are known as mechanisms” (see next section). Cherkaoui’s study of Weber’s “paradox of consequences” is also important for French sociology. It is indeed well-known that the reception of Weber in France was, at the very least, non-linear (see Borlandi, 1992). Cherkaoui’s book helps to correct this trend.<sup>10</sup>

Finally, readers should be aware that Durkheim and Weber are not the only figures in the classic social sciences to whom Cherkaoui devoted systematic analysis. In this respect, let us first mention his study of Tocqueville whose main goal was to correct the common interpretation that Tocqueville saw the French revolution as a result of relative deprivation mechanisms (see Cherkaoui, 2003c [2005: chapter 1])<sup>11</sup>. Contrary to this view, while Cherkaoui acknowledges that Tocqueville implicitly refers to social comparisons based on reference groups when reflecting on the connection between inequality and feelings of justice in *De la démocratie en Amérique*, he shows that this element is absent from Tocqueville’s explanation of why discontent leading to protests first appeared in those French regions where feudal institutions were declining. In this case, Cherkaoui argues, Tocqueville only refers to intra-individual comparisons among different periods of time (at the actor- and system-level) and incorporates them within a far larger explanatory scheme in which different hypotheses (at several levels of analysis) are made with reference to different social groups (in particular, the better-conditions-better-expectations psychological driver only holds for economic elites). Thus, in line

with other analyses stressing Tocqueville's modernity in terms of explanatory style (see, Edling and Hedström, 2009; Elster, 2009, in particular chs. 7 and 9), Cherkaoui contributed to the recognition of Tocqueville's role within the emergence of modern social science (see also Boudon, 2006). On the other hand, distinguishing between inter-temporal (and intra-individual) and inter-group comparisons, he helps to clarify different comparison structures to which the concept of relative deprivation may refer (on this point, and the related difference between psychologists and sociologists, see Pettigrew, 2015).

To conclude, let us mention Cherkaoui's (2010) revisitation of Hobbes, which is also animated by the conviction that, similarly to Tocqueville, the contribution of the British philosopher is still valuable not only for political scientists and philosophers but also for sociologists. With this aim, Cherkaoui uses a methodological perspective to analyse *Leviathan*, and argues that Hobbes devised a method based on developing fictional scenarios—about actors' fundamental motives, heterogeneity, and interactions—, which, by thought experiments, he deductively studied to derive societal consequences about social order and political systems. Thus, according to Cherkaoui, Hobbes, although he was not using formalization, anticipated the principles of much contemporary research using simulation for the study of models of social mechanisms. For those who might be tempted to consider this interpretation as embarrassingly anachronistic, I would refer them to Deffuant *et al's* (2013) article on *The Leviathan model*, in which opinion dynamics are modelled by posing that actors are driven by a concern for self-esteem and it is shown, by simulation, how a variety of social hierarchies can emerge from this simple hypothesis.<sup>12</sup>

## EPISTEMOLOGY

As previous sections have shown, Cherkaoui's research in sociology of education, social stratification, and history of sociological theory was consubstantial to epistemological reflection. Such foundational issues as explanatory modes, potentialities and limitations of data analysis, variety of action theories, or the relationships between levels of analysis, underpinned Cherkaoui's intellectual work since the 1970s. In a paper

that went unnoticed, he also overtly rejected the idea that epistemological reflection can be separated from practical problems arising during empirical research (see Cherkaoui, 1990).

Devoting a section of this chapter to Cherkaoui's epistemological contribution does not seem completely inappropriate, however. When considered as whole, indeed, his work clearly entered a reflexive stage, in particular around 2000, during which epistemological statements were formulated more explicitly and autonomously than before. In particular, his views on three fundamental topics—namely, explanation, action theory, and the micro–macro problem—deserve special attention.<sup>13</sup>

As to explanation, Cherkaoui makes explicit his rejection of the idea that one can explain through correlating variables (see Cherkaoui, 1997a [2005: 37]; 2000 [2005: 98–103]) and vigorously claims the superiority of explaining by postulating mechanisms. By “mechanisms”, he means “a group of hypotheses that deal with individuals, their interactions and the social context in which they take place”, a bundle of elements that is assumed to be capable of dynamically reproducing the phenomenon under scrutiny. Thus, a mechanism is not an “intermediate variable”. A mechanism offers a response to the “why” of a given observed linkage. That is why it is difficult to study mechanisms by means of multivariate statistics (Cherkaoui, 1997a [2005: 49, 54]).

Given this definition, Cherkaoui provides two important qualifications. First, the requirement of formulating hypotheses at the actor-level should not be interpreted in a strict sense. Sometimes, he notes, it is not possible to formulate fully specified actor-level statements but, even in these cases, thinking in terms of mechanisms relying on macro-level variables is still preferable (see Cherkaoui, 1997a [2005: 50, 53–54]; 2000 [2005: 106]). Second, when actor-level hypotheses can be formulated, postulating rational actors should not be considered as an essential requirement (Cherkaoui, 1997a [2005: 54–55]). Thus, compared to other understandings of mechanism-based explanations, including that of Boudon, which was one of the inspirational sources for Cherkaoui, the latter's perspective is more flexible and open to the practical impossibility of always being able to fulfil certain methodological requirements.



Cherkaoui's meta-reflection on the concept of mechanism also has an historical interest. Indeed, apart from reconstructing the recent genealogy of the concept through the works of Herbert Simon, Raymond Boudon and Thomas Fararo, Cherkaoui's approach also reminds us of the older origin of the mechanistic perspectives of biologists at the end of the nineteenth century. In particular, he stresses the role played by the French physiologist Claude Bernard, one of the founders of modern medicine (see Cherkaoui, 1997a [2005: 40–43]; 2000 [2005: 92–94]). This is a notable detail in that contemporary philosophical discussions of mechanism-based explanations, which in turn inform debates in sociology (for a recent overview, see Manzo, 2014), are based on more case studies taken from biology than physics (see Machamer *et al.*, 2000). It should be noted, however, that Cherkaoui's historically-informed account of mechanism-based thinking does not end up by denying recent progress. He claims, indeed: "In fact the codification of this methodology as well as the degree of formalization achieved nowadays were unknown even a few decades ago" (Cherkaoui, 1997a [2005: 35]). This differentiates Cherkaoui's view from those of other authors, even among the precursors of the mechanistic movement (see Boudon, 2012), who apparently were less willing to acknowledge recent novelty (for a reply to this objection, see Manzo, 2012).

As to action theory, and, more particularly, rational choice theory, Cherkaoui formulates his view in the clearest way while providing a "spirited critique of James Coleman's position" (Kaelber, 2009: 1548), in particular with respect to Coleman's reading of Weber's *Protestant Ethic* and analysis of the emergence of norms (see Cherkaoui, 2003b [2005: chapter 3])<sup>14</sup>. His main point is clearly started from the beginning: "rational choice theorists would be misleading themselves and us if they presented their theory as a theoretical system capable of replacing all sociological tradition when in fact it is only one component of that very tradition" (*ibid.*: 60). In fact, Cherkaoui's target is a specific version of rational-choice theory, namely expected utility theory. His aim is not to deny the relevance of this narrow version—for instance, by discussing elsewhere Coleman's model of panic, Cherkaoui (2000 [2005: 104–106]) recognizes its capacity to provide final explanation. It is rather a problem of scope that Cherkaoui wants to highlight. In particular, he

points out two limitations. First, expected utility theory is “too limited to account for phenomena that partially involves beliefs” (see Cherkaoui, 2003b [2005: 62]). By beliefs, Cherkaoui in fact has in mind normative beliefs, i.e. beliefs actors to subscribe irrespective of the consequences actions based on them may generate (*ibid.*: 70–71). In this respect, he defends the heuristic value of the concept of axiological rationality, following in this Boudon’s theory of cognitive rationality (for an explicit statement on this point, see Cherkaoui, 2000 [2005: 106–110]). Second, Cherkaoui argues that, while expected utility theory can cast the emergence of single norms in terms of intentional, non-intentional, or centralized responses to negative externalities, this strategy does not work for “constellations of norms understood as a coherent set” (Cherkaoui, 2003b [2005: 82]). In addition to these scope-limitations, Cherkaoui raises the problem of the realism of explanations based on expected utility assumptions, a crucial challenge for rational choice theory more generally (for a recent overview, see Manzo, 2013b).

Finally let us consider the micro–macro problem. Here again Cherkaoui’s view is nuanced and balanced. Cherkaoui starts with a definition of the macro-level as an emergent phenomenon resulting from the interdependence of lower-level units (see Cherkaoui, 2003a [2005: 154, 155]). He clarifies however that “recognizing the existence of levels of reality should not lead us to think there are ontologically distinct entities that correspond to different types of objects” (Cherkaoui, 1997b [2005: 116]). To Cherkaoui, the real problem is to “discover paths connecting” levels. In this respect, through a systematic analysis of a wide range of sociological perspectives, which are organized by Cherkaoui into a three-dimensional typology focusing on the type of patterns the theory seeks to explain, the kind of micro-level assumptions used, and the unit of observation/analysis employed to test the theory—, Cherkaoui reaches the following conclusion: “there can be no single solution to the problem of the links between micro- and macrosociology, any more than there can be a single mode for explaining all phenomena” (*ibid.*: 141).

Thus, as noted by Edling (2008: 141), Cherkaoui “challenge(s) the idea that all macro phenomena can be reduced to micro interaction”, and, as Turner (2005: ix) puts it, “For Cherkaoui, we do not have to

choose between either the agency of social actors and the causal efficacy of social structures” (on this point, see also Little 2013). In fact, thinking dynamically seems the only real requirement Cherkaoui recurrently formulates about the micro–macro problem (see, for instance, Cherkaoui, 2003a [2005: 74–75]; Cherkaoui, 2003b [2005: 29–30]).

To conclude, it is worth highlighting that Cherkaoui’s reflexive stage focusing on foundational issues such as the concept of mechanism, action theory, and the micro–macro debate, did not go unnoticed. Commenting on *Invisible Codes*, Swedberg (2007: 184) claimed: “Together with *Dissecting the Social: On the Principles of Analytical Sociology* (2005) by Peter Hedström, it constitutes the most important contribution to the theoretical discussion of social mechanisms during the last few years”. In a similar vein, Edling (2008: 135) noted: “Cherkaoui adds value to contemporary discussions on the role of rational choice theory and social mechanisms, as these discussions come to light in for instance Goldthorpe’s *On Sociology* (2007) and Hedström’s *Dissecting the Social* (2005), and I believe that both *Invisible Codes* and *Good Intentions* should be read within this framework”.

## MOROCCAN SOCIETY

Contrary to what one may have expected, more or less at the same time as *Invisible Codes* was published, in 2005, Cherkaoui, rather than moving towards even more abstract thinking, initiated a new wave of empirical research in a new domain, namely Moroccan society and geopolitics. Thus, he addressed, in turn, such complex topics as fundamentalist Islamism (Cherkaoui, 2006b [2007a: chapter 8]), the historical relationships between Morocco and Western Sahara (Cherkaoui, 2007b), institutional trust in Morocco (Cherkaoui, 2009), and the Moroccan university system (Cherkaoui, 2011b)<sup>15</sup>.

Before retracing some of the main ideas and findings of these studies, let us note that Cherkaoui himself admits that, for a long time, “the Maghreb [does] did not fall within the scope of my research topics” (Cherkaoui, 2007b: ix). The reason, he continues, is that “Cultural area sociological studies have never enjoyed a special status within the stratified world of scientific research and, except in a few instances,

it is something more often associated with demanding journalism than fundamental research seeking a solution to sociological puzzles by combining theories and empirical data rather than the pure narration of accumulated facts". It is precisely with this spirit that Cherkaoui undertook the analysis of the Maghreb: all the historical, theoretical, and methodological *savoir-faire* he accumulated over the years, is now applied to this new topic.<sup>16</sup>

Cherkaoui's (2006b [2007a: chapter 8]) analysis of Islamic fundamentalism is a first expression of this ambition. The explanation he outlined indeed originally combines the historical sociology of religion of Mauss, Durkheim, and Weber with Durkheim's concept of "anomie" and "altruistic suicide" as well as more recent rational-choice inspired analyses (where James Coleman is again, both a source of inspiration and a critical target). The diffusion of fundamentalist movements in Morocco and elsewhere is thus conceived at the intersection of complex phenomena referring to several levels of analysis, which, Cherkaoui notes, "are inextricably entangled with each other" (*ibid.*: 173).

In particular, at the "morphological" level, Cherkaoui stresses the existence of secular tensions within Muslim societies, between different interpretations of Islam that are directed to different social groups with different needs and social interests. Recent evolution towards forms of orthodox and puritan Islam must be understood as the encounter between these long-term conflicts and new structural transformations of Muslim societies, in which a growing fraction of the population is becoming urbanized and seeks new sources of values, identity, and social belonging (the "axiological" level). At the "organizational" level, as Islam lacks a legitimate institution that monopolizes the interpretation of religious texts, these structural transformations create the condition for a proliferation of doctrinal centres all competing to provide moral support for those who have difficulties in coping with a quickly changing society. The more the discourse of these doctrinal centres attributes problems to external sources, Cherkaoui notes, the more it is acceptable to all those who feel threatened by the current system, the easier it is for doctrinal groups to affiliate and completely (and impressively quickly) re-socialize their members. It is only within these complex social dynamics, Cherkaoui concludes, that extreme individual

behaviours, like suicide bombers, can be understood. Paradoxically, it is the quest for social integration that, through the re-creation of small groups with strong internal cohesion, can lead an individual into self-harming behaviour. “Suicide is carried out as if it were a duty”, Cherkaoui claims (*ibid.*: 190).

Thus, Cherkaoui defies recurrent interpretations in terms of cost-benefit calculus of the most shocking expressions of fundamentalist movements (see, for instance, Wintrobe, 2006), and invites us to think of this phenomena within a wider theoretical context taking into account the long-term features of Muslim societies and their internal development, aspects that seem to escape many Western observers.

Similarly stimulating analyses characterize Cherkaoui’s (2007b) subsequent study of the relationships between Morocco and Western Sahara. This is a complex geopolitical issue, involving, through a secular process, Western (France and Spain) and Arabic (Algeria) countries. As Cherkaoui admits from the beginning, the analysis is complicated by the fact that the issue is “loaded with so much emotion that I might be accused of bias” (*ibid.*: ix). To deal with this difficulty, Cherkaoui combines ideas and methods from three different, although complementary, disciplines, namely history, international relations, and sociology. As Cherkaoui admits (*ibid.*: x), the sociological investigation is the most original part of the book.

In this part of the study (forming the second half of the book), Cherkaoui’s goal is to demonstrate that, despite historical and political struggles, and external political interventions (analysed in the first part of the book), there are deep structural reasons to argue that Morocco and Western Sahara are in fact strongly integrated. By integration, Cherkaoui means “the volume, extension, intensity and density of the reciprocal social relationships that the Saharawis entertain with other Moroccans” (*ibid.*: 73). To accumulate evidence in favour of his argument, Cherkaoui first exploits a variety of national-level and local administrative data-sources covering the last four decades and establishes the existence of sizeable improvements in education (*ibid.*: chapters 5 and 6), leaving conditions, measured in terms of poverty rates (*ibid.*: chapter 7), and basic infrastructures (*ibid.*: chapter 9) among inhabitants of Western Sahara. Cherkaoui stresses that these changes

are similar to, if not better than, those observed within other Moroccan regions, and largely due to the massive investments by the Moroccan authorities in the Sahara provinces.

But, as Cherkaoui claims repeatedly, in his view, the best indicator of social integration between Sahrawis and other Moroccan will be found elsewhere, namely in marriages (*ibid.*: chapter 8). That is why Cherkaoui had approximately 30.000 marriage contracts collected and manually coded in order to assess “whether people born in the Sahara are becoming increasingly heterogamous or whether they remain strictly homogamous and indeed endogamous as in the past (*ibid.*: 139). Analysis of this data indeed shows that living, among Sahrawis in Sahara, the proportion of those who marry a woman/man residing in “other Saharan regions of southern Morocco” or “all other regions of Morocco” markedly decreased between 1947 and 2007 by 45.3% for men and 39% for women (*ibid.*: 142–143), a decreasing trend observed across all occupational groups (*ibid.*: 149).

Thus, in addition to supporting his chief argument, Cherkaoui, through an original and demanding data collection procedure, indirectly contributes to the international literature by complementing, with more fine-grained and recent information, the rare quantitative studies of homogamy in comparative perspective that contain data on Morocco (see Smits *et al.*, 1998, 2003)<sup>17</sup>.

Creativity and originality in data collection procedures also characterizes Cherkaoui’s (2011) other major contribution to the analysis of Moroccan society, dealing more particularly with the Moroccan university and the social sciences. The first part of this study addresses issues in the sociology of education and science such as the training paths of professors, their career mobility, their prestige, as well as their capacity to form a scientific community. Interview-based and quantitative analysis of survey data that Cherkaoui collected led to the major conclusions that, in the social sciences within Moroccan universities, institutional rules favour hierarchy and status over merit, budgets are sub-optimal, professors’ social prestige is very low, and peer-oriented practices are almost inexistent and scarcely valued by professors themselves. Moroccan professors in the social sciences, Cherkaoui concludes, do not form a scientific community *sensu stricto* (*ibid.*: 115).

The second part of Cherkaoui's analysis concerns more specifically the scientific output of Moroccan social science. In this respect, since available citation databases do not reference Moroccan social science journals, and, the percentage of Moroccan social scientists publishing in referenced journals is close to zero, quantifiable information had to be created. Thus, by using and connecting several Moroccan sources, Cherkaoui was able to generate an original database containing approximately 57000 references, covering virtually all the scientific output (articles, books, and other documents) between 1960 and 2006. A very distinctive feature of this database is that it also provides information on the output of non-academics, thus allowing bibliographic comparisons of professors and non-professors in social sciences (*ibid.*: 121–122, 131–135). This aspect led to one of the most original results of Cherkaoui's study. In particular, Cherkaoui discovered that, in Moroccan social science at least, both the form (in terms of asymmetry) of the distribution of publications per author (*ibid.*: chapter 3) and its temporal evolution (*ibid.*: chapter 5) are remarkably similar among academics and authors from outside university.<sup>18</sup> According to Cherkaoui, this is the result of the fact that both academics and non-academics are in fact players in the same intellectual market, namely one where political demands, mass media pressure or general public interest weigh more than their peers' evaluation (*ibid.*: 159, 191, 215–216). Cherkaoui submits that this may be a general phenomenon that should be observed elsewhere provided the following structural condition exists: academic gratification is so weak that academics prefer to seek social recognition in non-academic domains<sup>19</sup>.

## CONCLUSION

A systematic analysis of Cherkaoui's work suggests that his scientific trajectory evolved through five main stages. First, in the 1970s and 1980s, his research was based on refined quantitative methods and deals with educational inequalities in comparative perspective as well as with the specificities of the French educational system and its historical transformation. Second, from the end of the 1980s and until the mid-1990s, Cherkaoui's work extended to social mobility, in particular its subjective

aspect and individual-level consequences. Third, between around the mid-1990s and mid-2000s, Cherkaoui's focus was on the classics, especially Durkheim and Weber. Fourth, during the 2000s, Cherkaoui's epistemological thinking became more autonomous as compared to previous stages. Fifth, starting in the second half of the 2000s, Cherkaoui initiated a new phase of empirical research dealing with several aspects of Moroccan society.

Obviously, this periodization has limitations. It is based on publication dates, which do not necessarily reflect the evolution of Cherkaoui's research interests. Moreover, publication dates themselves suggest overlaps. As I have stressed several times, it is clear, for instance, that the classics, namely Durkheim, occupied Cherkaoui's mind since his early research in sociology of education. Thus, as the title of the present introductory essay suggests, the periodization proposed should be understood as akin to a road map providing readers with some guidelines pointing out major thematic focuses and lines of development in Cherkaoui's works. Let me also acknowledge that the focuses and evolutions I highlighted may be criticized for not doing full justice to all the empirical results and theoretical/ methodological nuances that characterize his scientific work. This certainly results from the specific viewpoint from which I reviewed Cherkaoui's writings, a specificity that is related to my own sociological agenda as well as to my own relationship with Mohamed Cherkaoui. I cannot exclude that the systematic discussions that we have had over the years on this or that aspect of his sociology led me to accentuate one or other dimension of his publications.

But, as Italo Calvino (1991 [1999: 5]) noted in his essay on "why read the classics" that I mentioned in the introduction, "no book which discusses another book can ever say more than the original book under discussion". From this point of view, fortunately, I am not alone. Contributors to this *Festschrift* will balance, correct, and complement the possible limitations of the road map I proposed in this introduction. They and I, in the spirit of Calvino's remark, should ultimately be regarded as a humble invitation to read and delve into the details of Cherkaoui's writings more than all we did in the present *liber amicorum*.

To conclude, I would like to devote a few words to its genesis and structure. As to the first aspect, let me recall two facts. First, as



provocatively noted by Tulving (2007: 39), a “festschrift frequently enough also serves as a convenient place in which those who are invited to contribute find a permanent resting place for their otherwise unpublishable or at least difficult to publish papers.” As a consequence of this, others noted, “All too often, the festschrift consists of a disparate and uneven collection of papers on a range of subjects that often only vaguely intersect with the interests of the individual whose work is being honored by the volume.” (Nunan, quoted in Tulving, 2007: 40). I am not sure I succeeded in avoiding the first shortcoming—even though I rejected some of the paper proposals I initially received and have not published some of the papers that finally reached me. I did my best, however, to escape the second drawback. To this aim, contributors were originally invited (in June 2012) explicitly to write a piece in relation to at least one aspect of Cherkaoui’s work. Despite the general, and, after all, weak, nature of my requirement, the emergent result was a pleasant surprise.

The contributions finally published do indeed cover all major thematic areas, methods, and stages of development through which Cherkaoui’s work has evolved over the years. From educational inequalities to social mobility and its consequences; from the classics and sociological theory to epistemology, up to more recent topics such as Morocco, social movements, and international relations, all of Cherkaoui’s writings were used more or less directly by contributors to think, more or less critical, about their heuristic utility. For this effort, and for patiently accepting my requests for changes and corrections, I would warmly thank all of them.

As to the structure of the book, I attempted to organize the thirty-five contributions by combining two criteria. The first concerns the theory/empirical divide so that the first part of the book (titled “Theories”) contains all contributions in which a theoretical orientation was dominant whereas the second part (titled “Social mechanisms”) contains contributions in which the empirical orientation is given priority, at least in the sense that a specific class of empirical phenomena constitutes the target of the analysis. Within each part, contributions are organized in sub-sections in such a way that the sections’ order reflect the temporal development of Cherkaoui’s research interests (within each

sub-section, contributions are listed in alphabetic order—when more than one author is present, the family name of the first author has precedence). This organizing principle also has its limitations, but it is the least arbitrary choice I could make.

My hope is that the present introduction combined with the contributors' essays help readers to better see that when Cherkaoui's work is considered as a whole, it conveys important messages for contemporary sociology. First, Cherkaoui proposes a clear vision of social phenomena as arising from complex systems of interdependence in which the behaviour of low-level entities constantly trigger, often unintentionally, high-level patterns that subsequently feedback into later behaviour. Second, he invites us to go behind empirical description, namely trying to open up "black boxes" that connect several levels of analysis. Third, Cherkaoui enjoins us to employ data analysis and multivariate statistics in a critical way by keeping constantly in mind data limitations and the distinction between description and explanation. Fourth, he exhorts us to maintain a fruitful dialogue with classics, not only from sociology, not merely to recount what they contain, or discover what they were really trying to say, but as a source of intellectual stimulation and emulation. Finally, Cherkaoui is an example of how fruitful a systematic back-and-forth between empirical, historical, and epistemological research can be.

Some observers, in commenting on *Invisible Codes*, claimed that Cherkaoui's work was a sign of the distinctiveness of French sociology compared, for instance, to British sociology, which, in their view, spends most of its energy on language, culture, and post-modernism, often using unclear prose and superficial methods (see Turner, 2005; Webster, 2006). In my humble opinion, this judgment results from a position bias, i.e. the tendency to know more about "in-groups" than "out-groups". Unfortunately, Cherkaoui's sociology is not representative of French sociology. The theoretical and methodological messages his *oeuvre* conveys suggest however the way to make it better.

## NOTES

1. As a methodological note, in order better to see the chronological evolution of Cherkaoui's research interests, I will systematically refer to the dates of the original publications in French. However, in order to allow English-speaking readers to check my claims, I will equally systematically give (in brackets) the date of the first English translation, when available. In these cases, references to pages will refer to the English translation.
2. This book originated from Cherkaoui's PhD dissertation (supervised by Raymond Boudon and defended in 1975 at the university of Paris-Sorbonne). Interestingly, the copy of the book stored in the library of the University of Paris-Sorbonne (Serpente) contains a dedication to Jean Stoetzel. It is worth noting that, historically, Jean Stoetzel played a crucial role in introducing quantitative methods in France. He founded, in 1934, one of the major opinion polling institutes in France (i.e. the Institut Français d'Opinion Publique, IFOP), as well as, in 1959, the leading French sociological journal (i.e. the *Revue Française de Sociologie*). Significantly, Jean Stoetzel was Raymond Boudon's PhD supervisor (see Girard, 1987).
3. These changes are: (1) the increasing rates of participation at the upper secondary and tertiary levels; (2) the decreasing trend in the age of *baccalauréat* candidates; (3) the increase in the proportion of female students; (4) the loss of attraction of the humanities track at the upper secondary level.
4. For the reactions that the empirical critique Cherkaoui addressed on this basis in particular to Crozier and Bourdieu's explanations of educational expansion (*ibid.*: chapter 2), see Dubar (1984), to whom Cherkaoui (1984) replied.
5. *Que sais-je?* is a prestigious series issued by the Presses Universitaires de France that publishes book-length syntheses of a given research field.
6. The survey was based on a non-probabilistic stratified sampling of 1000 men and women from Paris and its suburbs. It was realized in 1977 and benefited from a research grant the GEMASS (the CNRS research unit to which Cherkaoui belonged and that was headed at that time by Raymond Boudon, who founded it in 1971) received, in 1974, from the Commissariat Général au Plan d'Équipement et de la Productivité. Cherkaoui authored, in 1977, the second part of the document reporting on the survey to the Commissariat. A quick look at the questionnaire, annexed to this document, suffices to show that this was an innovative survey, certainly among the first to be entirely devoted to the subjective aspects of inequality structures.
7. He noted: "To summarize my critics: I am supposed to have devised a marxist, tendentious, and paradoxical interpretation of the text, because I placed the category of conflict at the centre of the Durkheimian theory of educational systems" (see Cherkaoui, 1981b: 127).
8. Note that the idea that Durkheim can be read as an "emergentist" already appears in Cherkaoui (1982: 101–102), he refers to an "effet rétro-coercitif" ("constraining feedback", my translation) to indicate social dynamics in which actions at time t

- crystallize into aggregates that become constraints for later actions. Cherkaoui claims that Durkheim's definition of institution relies on this circularity.
9. It is important however to keep in mind that Cherkaoui's passion for high-level unintentional consequences is already visible in his early work in the sociology of education. In particular, Cherkaoui (1982: 101–103) contains a long list of references in which the concept is present. The second chapter of *Good intentions* is in fact a detailed development of this list. Thus, although it is true that Cherkaoui's publications on Weber appeared later than those on Durkheim—*Good Intentions* is indeed preceded only by two articles on the German sociologist Cherkaoui published in the early 2000s (see, Cherkaoui, 2003b [2005: chapter 3]; 2004), the perspective from which Cherkaoui navigates through Weber is based on ideas that had driven Cherkaoui's scientific output since the 1970s.
  10. *Good Intentions* also raised some objections, in particular by Kaelber (2009: 1549) and McGovern (2010: 1206), who complained about Cherkaoui's tendency to downplay critical secondary literature on Weber and more recent developments on unintentional consequences.
  11. Among these inaccurate accounts, Cherkaoui (*ibid.*: 22) mentions the one Coleman delivered in *Foundations of Social Theory*. Interestingly, Coleman was also chosen as a critical target by Cherkaoui with respect to Coleman's reading of Weber's explanation of the emergence of capitalism (see Cherkaoui, 2003b [2005: chapter 3]).
  12. Let me remind the reader that Cherkaoui's interest in sociological theory and the history of social thought also appeared in his collaboration in some sizeable national and international editorial projects, in the form of dictionaries (see Boudon *et al.*, 2005) or (monumental) commented collections of texts (see Alexander, Boudon, and Cherkaoui, 1997a, b; Boudon and Cherkaoui, 2000a, b).
  13. As an indication of this reflexive, epistemological turn, consider what Cherkaoui (2005: 1) writes in the introduction to *Invisible Codes*: "The current work is the result, a very restricted one, of my thinking over the last thirty years. My interest in the problem of generative mechanisms is something I owe to the teaching of Raymond Boudon (...). A large part of my empirical work on stratification and social mobility was worked out in this tradition (Cherkaoui 1979, 1982, 1988, 1992, 1995). The more theoretical and historical aspects of this work offered here to the reader share a similar ambition."
  14. To explain Cherkaoui's focus on Coleman, it should be recalled that his contribution was part of a special issue that the *Revue Française de Sociologie* (2003, 44, 2) decided to devote to James Coleman's *Foundations* in order to make French sociology aware of his important work. Following the order of this issue's table of contents, Philippe Steiner, Peter Abell, Olivier Favereau, Jon Elster, Emmanuel Lazega, Alban Bouvier, Siegwart Lindenberg, Steve Lukes, and Raymond Boudon also contributed to this volume. To a large extent, rational choice theory is discussed in every contribution.
  15. Other works are in progress. Cherkaoui briefly describes them in the interview closing this *Festschrift* (see Cherkaoui, 2015, present volume).

16. In passing, it should be noted that a short article related to Morocco, namely dealing with marriage homogeneity in Casablanca, had in fact already been published by Cherkaoui in the 1990s (see Cherkaoui, 1994).
17. The political implications of this analysis (coupled with statements on Algeria Cherkaoui made in the first part of the book) quickly led to Cherkaoui's study being translated in French, Spanish and Arabic, and generated a considerable mass-media coverage in several countries. In this regard, among the most significant interventions, consider the "opinions" Cherkaoui published in *The Washington Times* (see Cherkaoui, 2007a, b).
18. In passing, note that Cherkaoui's interest in asymmetric distributions, their description and generative models goes back to his early research on educational inequalities (see, for instance, Cherkaoui's [1982: 154–156] and his remarks on the age distribution of French *baccalauréat* candidates).
19. Cherkaoui's severe critical analysis of the Moroccan university had such a profound impact on the Moroccan political milieu that the King himself took inspiration from Cherkaoui's conclusions to launch a new reform initiative on the Moroccan educational system (see Cherkaoui, 2013).

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