Reconstructing grand theory in Islamic human geography – Some preliminary notes

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Abstract

To have or not to have a grand theory is the question asked and deliberated by contemporary geographers although some or many had already dismissed the legitimacy of the question altogether. This paper addresses the problem of grand theory in contemporary (Western) human geography from an Islamic perspective. It is driven by the hypothesis that the de-legitimation or the debunking of an epistemological grand theory in contemporary human geography is neither absolute, not final, nor universal. It is essentially a Western scholarship problem presented as if it is universal. It then proceeds to demonstrate how and why an epistemological grand theory is not a problem in the Islamic approach to knowledge. Recapitulating the gist of an earlier attempt, it provides a brief account of how an Islamic epistemology would grapple with three of the main issues and challenges facing a grand theory in human geography, namely, integrating the theoretical with the empirical, unifying multi-scalar analyses, and transcending the divide between the human and the natural sciences.

Keywords: democratisation of knowledge, epistemology, grand theory, human geography, Islamic scholarship, Western scholarship