

GLOBAL DIALOGUE

2.5

The Vocation of Sociology

Zygmunt Bauman

Who is Izabela Barlinska?

Sesame Street

Tamara Kay

Rio+20

Herbert Docena

- > **Feminism and Neoliberalism**
- > **Ukrainian Feminism in Action**
- > **Insecurity in Latin America**
- > **The Black Middle Class in Colombia**
- > **The Real State of Sociology in Russia**
- > **British Sociology in the Age of Austerity**
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NEWSLETTER



VOLUME 2 / ISSUE 5 / AUGUST 2012

GDN

International
Sociological
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> Editorial

Sociology as a Vocation

Max Weber delivered his inspired and inspiring lectures – “Science as a Vocation” and “Politics as a Vocation” – at the invitation of Munich students in 1917 and 1919. He poured his whole life experience, as scientist and politician, into these lectures, developing a sociology of vocations but not directly examining the vocation of sociology. *Global Dialogue* draws on his legacy to inaugurate a new series called “Sociology as a Vocation.”

Fittingly, we begin with Zygmunt Bauman who sits uncomfortably with Weber’s divide between science and politics. Contra Weber, for Bauman science today too easily becomes politics in the form of managerial reason, while politics has been separated from power. For Bauman, then, sociology must transcend the divide between science and politics by opening a two-way dialogue with publics.

Such an open dialogue is endorsed in this issue by fellow Polish sociologist, Izabela Barlinska’s account of civil society in the period of Solidarity, by Tamara Kay’s account of the negotiated adaptation of *Sesame Street* to the politics and culture of different countries, and by Koichi Hasegawa’s urging of Japanese sociology to champion public dialogue about the dangers of nuclear power. For long, feminists have promoted public dialogue to protest the marginalization of women and sexual minorities, and here Tamara Martsenyuk describes the expressive street politics of feminism in Ukraine. Finally, it is this dialogue between science and social movements that Herbert Docena finds missing in the recent UN Conference for Sustainable Development (Rio+20), where, instead, scientists claimed a privileged neutrality to access power – the very technocratic reason Bauman disparages.

We need dialogue especially now, writes Bauman, in liquid times defined by uncertainty and insecurity. Our articles in this issue resonate with his concerns: the deepening sense of insecurity in Latin America (Kessler); the consequences of racism for Afro-Colombians (Viveros Vigoya); UN efforts to deal with violence against migrants (Barbarett); and how the US state is implicated in that violence (Elcioglu). Romanovsky and Toshchenko point to a new Russian sociology that tackles postSoviet economic insecurity. Finally, precarity now engulfs universities – students and faculty alike – in so many places as Corradi describes for Italy. So long as sociology documents these insecurities, so long as insecurities bring about protest, as they certainly do, then hope is not lost.

Full of pessimism about the future – “a polar night of icy darkness” – following Germany’s defeat in World War I, Weber still ends his “Politics as a Vocation” with an optimistic flourish: to achieve the possible it is necessary to reach for the impossible. To advance the impossible as though it were reachable is one of sociology’s noblest tasks, and, ironically, also folds back science into politics and politics into science. Today, therefore, Weber and Bauman join forces.

Global Dialogue appears five times a year in 13 languages. It can be found at the [ISA website](http://isa-berkeley.org). Submissions should be sent to Michael Burawoy: burawoy@berkeley.edu



On the Vocation of Sociology in Liquid Modernity. In this new column on “sociology as a vocation,” Zygmunt Bauman, our iconic interpreter of modernity, reveals what sociology means to him, the directions it should take and those it should avoid.



Who is Izabela Barlinska? In this interview, Izabela Barlinska tells of her early history with the ISA, how she found herself in exile from Poland in the post-Solidarity period, before being captured by the ISA.



Educating Children on the Longest Street in the World. Tamara Kay describes the process of cultural negotiation and transformation that have brought *Sesame Street*, the very popular children’s educational television program, to so many countries.

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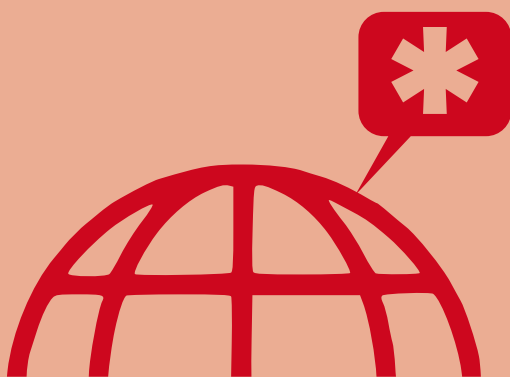
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> On the Vocation of Sociology in Liquid Modernity

by Zygmunt Bauman, Leeds University, UK



Zygmunt Bauman introduced by John Brewer, President of the British Sociological Association, Leeds, April 12, 2012.

Zygmunt Bauman has become the iconic sociologist of modernity. Born in Poznań, Poland, in 1925 he was for many years a committed communist. A prominent sociologist at the University of Warsaw, he was forced to leave Poland in 1968 as a result of anti-Semitic purges. He took up a permanent position in the sociology department at Leeds University in 1971 where he has been ever since. The books that brought him fame in the 1980s and 1990s developed a critique of modernity as a form of obsessive rationality, displayed in extreme form in the Holocaust or Stalinism, and more generally in rationality's inability to deal with outsiders. *Legislators and Interpreters*, one of his key books, deals with the problematic ways intellectuals have been bound up with and how they might extricate themselves from modernist rationality. If his early books were a critique of high modernity, what he now calls the solid modernity of hierarchies and regulation, the last ten years have seen a continuous flow of books on liquid modernity, a world of unprecedented uncertainty and insecurity. **Zygmunt Bauman** becomes more prolific, more prophetic and more influential every day, and fittingly opens our new column on "Sociology as a Vocation."

Almost a hundred years ago, in the heyday of "solid modernity" (bent, as it were, on building a social order free from contingencies and dysfunctions that haunted Western societies since the agony of the "ancient regime" and the very beginning of the compulsive, obsessive and addictive modernization it triggered), sociology broke into the university campuses carrying the promise of servicing managerial reason presumed to be charged with that order-building task. Almost a hundred years later, the academia in which sociology has securely settled, is nudged and pushed, pressed and commanded by the powers that be, to make itself useful to "business interests" that have since moved into the focus of an updated managerial reason. Slogans and arguments might have changed considerably, but the strategies and

purposes of research and teaching which they insinuate have not. As a result, academic sociology feels little if any pressure to follow the tracks of the changing world – the failure of which may cause the sociological profession to lose its connection with, and relevance for, the changed public arena of our times, as Michael Burawoy and other farsighted and conscientious spokespersons for the profession warned us already more than a decade ago.

The ways and means commonly followed in our universities provide a protective shield against calls of this kind: as bold as they are urgent and imperative. Owing to the established procedures of graduation, promotion, staff-rotation, self-replenishment and self-reproduction, that sociology may cling infinitely to its extant form and style,

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oblivious to the “changing world” and to the dwindling and evaporating public demand for the services of form and style it was drilled and groomed to render. And that means also staying oblivious to the rising demands for an altogether different kind of service, which sociology would be able to render on condition of revising its presently prevailing form and style made to the measure of the managerial or technological mentality of the kind now receding fast into the past. In our increasingly deregulated, privatized and individualized world, such services badly needed, but so far all too sparingly supplied, ought to be rendered to what Anthony Giddens dubbed “life politics”: that is, to the life tasks of men and women increasingly charged with the duty “to seek individual solutions to socially produced problems” – as Ulrich Beck unerringly summarized the greatest challenge with which “liquid-modern” times confront contemporary generations.

For more than half a century of its recent history, and because seeking to be of service to managerial reason, sociology struggled to establish itself as a *science/technology of un-freedom*: as a design workshop for the social settings meant to resolve in theory, but most importantly in practice, what Talcott Parsons memorably articulated as “the Hobbesian question”: how to induce/force/cajole/in-doctrinate human beings, blessed/cursed with the ambiguous gift of free will, to be normatively guided and to follow routinely manipulable, yet predictable courses of action designed by the supervisors and surveillors of social order; or how to reconcile free will with the willingness to submit to other people’s will, lifting thereby the tendency to “voluntary servitude,” noted/anticipated by La Boétie at the threshold of the modern era, to the rank of the supreme principle of social organization. In short: how to make people to *will* doing what doing they *must*...

In the present-day society, individualized by the decree of fate, aided and abetted by the second managerial revolution (consisting, by and large, in the managers “subsidiarizing” their managerial tasks to the managed), sociology faces the exciting and exhilarating chance of turning, for a change, into a *science/technology of freedom*: of the ways and means through which individuals-*by-decree* and *de jure* of the liquid-modern times may be lifted to the rank of individuals-*by-choice* and *de facto*. Or to take a leaf from Jeffrey Alexander’s call to arms: sociol-

ogy’s future, at least its immediate future, lies in an effort to reincarnate and to re-establish itself as *cultural politics in the service of human freedom*.

And how to accomplish such passage? What is the strategy to follow? The strategy consists in engaging in an ongoing dialogue with “doxa” or “actor’s knowledge” (which sociology, attuned to the old-style managerial reason, denied cognitive value and set out to “debunk,” “uproot” and “correct”), while observing the principles recently suggested by Richard Sennett in his essay on the present meaning of “humanism”: precepts of informality, openness and cooperation. “Informality” means the rules of dialogue are not pre-designed; they emerge in the course of the dialogue. “Openness” means: no one enters the dialogue certain of his/her truth and tasked with convincing the others (holders, a priori, of wrong ideas). And “cooperation” means: in that dialogue all participants are simultaneously teachers and learners, while there are neither winners nor losers... The price to be collectively paid for neglecting, collectively, that advice, can be the (collective) irrelevance of sociology.

Sociology, as the rest of society whose dynamics it is called to unravel and grasp, currently live – as Keith Tester of Hull University recently suggested – in a period of “inter-regnum” in which old ways of doing things manifest daily their inadequacy, whereas new and more effective ways that hope to replace them have not yet reached a planning stage... This is a time when everything or almost everything can happen – but little if anything can be undertaken with certainty, or even high probability of success. I suspect that predicting the destination toward which we move under such conditions (and even less the destination to which we are bound to arrive as their result) is irresponsible and misleading, since the impossibility of a purposeful action reaching the roots of liquid-modern problems, and the absence of agencies able to undertake it and see it through, are precisely what defines those conditions.

This does not mean however that we should stop trying; but it does mean that while never stopping to try we need to treat every successive attempt as another interim settlement: one more experiment, in need of thorough testing before it is proclaimed a “final destination,” or a “fulfillment” of our vocation. ■

> Who is Izabela Barlinska?

Everyone in the ISA knows the name Izabela Barlinska – and she knows almost everyone! Efficient and creative, loyal and dedicated, soft-spoken but resolute, she has been associated with the ISA for some 35 years. Mistress of many languages, including English, French, Spanish, Russian and her native Polish, she occupies the hot seat in the ISA, directing operations from Madrid. Aided by her devoted assistants, Nacho and Juan, she deals with everything from finance to membership, from taking minutes to advising research committees and national associations, to programming and organizing our multitudinous and ever-more complex meetings. Vice-Presidents and Presidents depend on her knowledge and her wisdom. It's all done with modesty, tact, and a cool sense of irony.

She became ISA's Executive Secretary in 1987, and under her stewardship the ISA has moved from strength

to strength, expanding its membership from 1,200 to over 5,000 members today, embracing some 55 National Associations and 55 Research Committees. She began her trajectory with the ISA as a young student in Warsaw and then moved with the ISA from Canada to the Netherlands, and then to Spain. During this time she wrote her PhD and published it as a book in Spanish under the title *Civil Society in Poland and Solidarity*. Being in the Polish opposition, she says, trained her well to keep silent in the many awkward situations that inevitably arise in her taxing position.

Michael Burawoy interviewed her in Madrid on September 27, 2011. The first part of the interview, which describes her exile from Poland and her early years with the ISA, is published here. The second part will appear in the next issue of *Global Dialogue*, dealing with the consolidation of the ISA in its Madrid offices after she became Executive Secretary.



Izabela Barlinska, flanked by Juan Lejarraaga, in the ISA office at the Complutense University of Madrid.

MB: Izabela, how on earth did you get involved with the ISA and take on this amazing but taxing job?

IB: Well, it was just one of those accidents of life. It began in 1977 with my aunt Magdalena Sokolowska, who was a member of the Executive Committee of the ISA. It was spring, I remember, because I was busy with my exams at the University of Warsaw. She phoned me, could I please come the following two or three days because she was organizing an international conference and she needed help. She needed a “little girl” to help her out, you know? Meet people at the airport, take them to the hotel, see what happens with the lost luggage and that sort of thing.

MB: Why did she call you in particular?

IB: Because I knew Russian and English and I was around. But I had exams the following day so it was rather complicated. But my father told me I had to do it – who are you to say no? If you were 20 years old I guess you still had to listen to your parents. And so the following day I found myself sitting at the airport. Mind you, it was Poland – communist Poland with all its difficulties, where nobody spoke foreign languages. So anyway, here I was, waiting at the airport, doing what was expected of me, while studying for my exams. But apparently some sort of mutual sympathy was born with Kurt Jonassohn and Céline Saint-Pierre who were at that time the Executive Secretaries of the ISA and the Secretariat was then located in Montreal. They said to me – look, next summer we’ll be organizing a World Congress of Sociology in Uppsala, Sweden, and we expect a lot of people from Eastern Europe, especially Russians. And since we already know you and you speak English and Russian may be you would be interested to work with us.

MB: That must have been quite a tempting invitation!

IB: Indeed! Imagine, you get an offer to go to work for one month in Sweden? I didn’t think twice. Yes, I’d be happy to go. And I went. Ulf Himmelstrand, who would be elected President of the ISA at the Congress (1978), picked me up at the ferry. I came the cheapest way you could possibly come from Poland, which was crossing the Baltic Sea on the ferry. I spent then one month in Uppsala, putting together the program. And then during the congress week they put me on the desk, which was called “General Complaints.”

Well, I couldn’t have had a better start in the ISA! I knew nothing of the ISA, but here I was – trying to solve the problem of a grandmother who had lost her granddaughter who probably went for a ride to Stockholm... Well, you can easily imagine what might happen in “general complaints.” But apparently I was successful enough in my new task because a few years later I got a letter from

Kurt Jonassohn and Céline Saint-Pierre saying they had some small student grants to help them prepare the World Congress of Sociology in Mexico in 1982, and would I like to go to Montreal at the end of 1981. Of course, I said – fantastic! Half a year in Canada on a student scholarship – who would refuse that? I actually applied for the passport and, as you know in a communist country to get a passport was not an easy thing. But I got my passport, and I was ready to go.

MB: But this was the time of Solidarity – Poland was in turmoil – right?

IB: Yes, Solidarity was very much part of my life. From school years I was in touch or involved in the political opposition, actually, thanks to a very good history teacher I had at school. She used to invite us to her place to discuss reality and Polish and European history, very different from the official version we were taught at school. And through her and through the colleagues from that seminar I came into contact with people who were in the political opposition then being built in Poland. And once I walked in, I never left.

So when, in 1980, the strikes began, my role was to talk to foreign journalists coming to Poland, and when Martial Law was imposed in Poland – the famous 13th of December of 1981 – I was in trouble. Police entered my home, searching for papers. They took away my typewriter, and tapped my phone, probably because of my very visible connection with foreign TV stations and journalists. My trip to Canada in December of 1981, like everything else, was put on hold. However, some time later the Polish government pretended that life was back to normal and the people had freedom. Playing politics, they started opening the borders.

Everyone had to return their passports when Martial Law was imposed and then suddenly out of the blue there was a phone call in March 1982, “your passport is here, why don’t you collect it?” Now I already had the Canadian visa, I had everything, but I didn’t want to go. I had a long conversation with the leaders in the opposition circles. And they said – you have to go because you will be more useful abroad than here in Poland. So I went, but not very happy, because I thought my place was in Poland. And when I arrived to Canada, everybody thought I was immediately going to ask for political asylum. But that was the last thing I wanted. This was my fight, this was my passport – and here I am. So that was how I started working at the ISA Secretariat in Montreal, where everyone was wonderfully kind and hospitable. There I became good friends with Jacques Dofny and Alain Touraine, who were then Vice-Presidents of the ISA. Actually, I already knew Alain Touraine from the times of Solidarity’s strikes in Poland. This was the beginning of my life with the ISA.

MB: Before you left for Canada, you had another interaction with the ISA, when Ulf Himmelstrand came to visit Poland.

IB: He was sent by the ISA to see what was going on in Poland. It was a very cold winter of 1982. Tanks were everywhere in Warsaw, the military controlled everything. I went to meet Ulf at the airport, we strolled through the streets, met with various sociologists. We thought then that Ulf's report was too correct, something the government would be all too happy to read. It was only later that I understood that he had to be very diplomatic and careful not to endanger his sources of information, Polish sociologists.

MB: In those days how did the ISA Executive Committee deal with the Cold War?

IB: It was careful to balance both sides. And I think they knew that unless they have somebody on the Executive Committee from the Soviet Union there would be trouble. In that sense I think the elections and the composition of the Executive Committee were pretty political.

MB: So, you went to Montreal to prepare for the Mexico World Congress of 1982 and after Mexico you joined the ISA permanently?

IB: Yes. In Mexico, Fernando Henrique Cardoso was elected President and it was already decided that the Secretariat would move to Amsterdam. I went there to work under the new Executive Secretary, the sociologist Felix Geyer. We stayed in Amsterdam for four years. These were the times when the ISA would be hosted and sponsored by specific universities. So we had offices at the University of Amsterdam.

MB: At that time you had other preoccupations than the ISA?

IB: Well, I had to mature into my new situation and, indeed, I started meeting all those famous opposition people who had left Poland, first in North America and then in Amsterdam, which was after all closer to Poland, and I started writing my little stories. It was a sort of double existence, not always easy but interesting. It was the revolution of my generation, so I was actually very fortunate to have a chance to participate in it. And I mean it. Despite all the consequences involved. And look what happened – 30 years have passed and here we are – “free countries.” We abolished the system.

MB: Yes. Solidarity was the beginning of the end. But how did you regard that system? You never sought asylum? Why not?

IB: It never occurred to me to seek asylum since that

could have had repercussions for my family. But I also thought a lot about how to convey my views about Poland to people who didn't really know communism. I wanted to insist on the importance of resistance – that what I did and was doing was correct – but the system was not entirely bankrupt... Okay, something was obviously wrong about the way the regime functioned. But I had a very decent education at school. I never suffered from hunger. Of course I come from a Warsaw middle-class family – both parents had jobs and we had a decent standard of living. I discovered that in many things I was better educated and better prepared than my colleagues from the “free countries.” Schooling, education, and knowledge were very prestigious in Poland. We were locked in but we knew it, and so we were eager to learn not only what we were being taught but also the other history. As I told you, I was lucky I had a magnificent history teacher. She changed my life. And then we were always listening to what was happening in the world. You would be reading books that someone illegally brought from the West. You would spend the whole night reading a book, because the following day you had to give it to somebody else. That was common practice.

MB: These are the stories you would tell people to try to get them to understand what it meant to be in Poland. What did you think about Solidarity itself?

IB: I was excited. Later on I became more critical. But it was a power that could not be stopped. After Martial Law was imposed Solidarity was officially disbanded and went underground, but it still existed. Those were very special years in the country, when people got organized in new ways. Queuing in front of the shop to buy milk was part of civil society. People were getting organized to survive, or to fight against something, or to get around the system which was making their life impossible. There was a very special feeling of unity.

MB: Yes. And the Church, too, had a very important role.

IB: The Church acted as an umbrella for all kinds of opposition. It also helped when Martial Law was imposed and many of our colleagues were put in jail for long periods, and mothers and their children were left alone. Shops were empty. Telephones didn't work. Trams didn't work. We were all paralyzed. There were a lot of challenges at that time.

MB: You dealt with these issues in your dissertation that you then published as a book in Spanish – Civil Society in Poland and Solidarity. Am I right?

IB: Yes, I did write about Solidarity and civil society for my PhD dissertation but, of course, in a less personal way. My PhD was not so much about Solidarity as a social movement because many people wrote about it,

but how life was organized – how people in the country functioned on a day-to-day basis. There were chapters on the opposition, and on how people organized the second economy, bartering sugar for beans and the like. My supervisor here at the University Complutense in Madrid, Victor Pérez-Díaz, insisted that I write a chapter on the history of protests in Poland, so that non-Polish readers would understand the context.

MB: What about the Polish opposition under communism?

IB: The early Polish opposition never questioned communism; they were trying to modify the regime, modify the system – seeking to improve it – they wanted “socialism with a human face,” as they called it.

MB: That's in the beginning, in the 1950s. But do you think the Solidarity movement represented the same thing?

IB: In a sense yes; if you look at the demands of Solidarity at the very beginning, they did include Free Trade Unions, but this was the most political of the demands. All the others were about making communism livable, such as stable prices, better working conditions, and the like. Nobody was really questioning the system. We just wanted to improve conditions of living within it.

MB: But before you went to Madrid, while you were in Amsterdam, 1982-86, you were a contact for the opposition with lots of people passing through, depositing underground publications with you, keeping you up to-date with what was going on?

IB: That's right. I always had an extra bed for such visitors. My family was well connected to journalists and

they often stayed with me. In fact that is how I met Rysiek Kapuściński.

MB: You mean the famous Ryszard Kapuściński? You got to know him? He must have been an amazing man from what he has written – his books on Iran, Ethiopia, and Russia are all brilliant!

IB: It was actually very funny how we met. It was when he came to Amsterdam to promote one of his books. He was bringing something for me from my family. I was living in the attic in one of those typical Amsterdam houses that are very narrow with a lot of staircases. Kapuściński had to walk all those stairs, carrying a lot of books for me – most of them underground publications. He got to my place and he said, “Ah, I have to lie down!” He had a problem with his lower back, and with all those stairs and all those books he was in great pain. So here he was, the famous Kapuściński, whom I had never met before, lying stiff on the floor in my apartment for the next five hours. He couldn't move! So that's how we became friends.

MB: So he actually never left Poland for any length of time, except on his journalistic missions?

IB: Yes, he was always there. And of course we talked and talked. At the time I didn't quite know what to do about my life. And then he said to me, “Look, 98 percent of people in the world are happy because they have a quiet and organized life. But there's two percent who ask the questions you are asking yourself.” He didn't say anything else. And then added, “Those who ask those kinds of questions have the obligation to keep asking them.” ■

TO BE CONTINUED

> Educating Children

on the Longest Street in the World

by **Tamara Kay, Harvard University, USA**

South African children play with Kami, a furry yellow five-year-old HIV-positive girl muppet orphaned by AIDS. ©2007 Sesame Workshop. All Rights Reserved. Photographed by Ryan Heffernan. To see video clips of Sesame Street in different countries go to <http://www.sesameworkshop.org/>



In an urban slum in India children huddle around an old vegetable cart fitted with a television and DVD player transfixed by characters who sing about the letter “ma” in Hindi. In Tanzania children listen to a radio program that teaches them how to treat a mosquito bed net to help prevent malaria. And

in South Africa where one in ten children has lost a parent to HIV/AIDS, a television program helps destigmatize the disease and deal with loss. All of these children have at least two things in common: they will be way behind more advantaged children if and when they attend school, and they are being exposed to a local version of *Sesame*

Street created to help mitigate the disadvantages they face.

The ubiquity and success of *Sesame Street*, particularly given the extraordinary politicization of culture in an era of globalization, present two inter-related enigmas: how does an iconic US cultural product move through

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transnational channels over time, and how does it gain local acceptance and legitimacy as something genuinely and authentically local?

The educational nonprofit Sesame Workshop (SW, formerly The Children's Television Workshop) provides a unique opportunity to answer these questions because it creates local adaptations, or coproductions, of *Sesame Street* all over the world intended to prepare preschool age children for school. In addition, SW develops outreach projects with local partners – governments, civil society organizations, and NGOs – that prioritize the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals, from literacy and health (including malaria prevention in Tanzania, immunization in India, heart health and nutrition in Latin America, destigmatization of HIV/AIDS in South Africa), to social equality (promoting religious and ethnic tolerance in conflict zones such as Israel/Palestine, Kosovo, South Africa, and Northern Ireland), among many others. These outreach projects take the form of mobile dental clinics, model schools, public service announcements, and the distribution of free materials (books, educational games, DVDs, and parents' guides, etc.) that reinforce local partners' curricular goals, particularly in areas where children do not have access to television.

Intensive interviews and ethnography in Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East reveal that *Sesame* projects gain local acceptance despite the potentially controversial issues they raise (gender equality, mutual respect for racial and ethnic "others", etc.) in large part because of how SW structures its relationship and negotiates entry with local partners. SW's coproduction model is unique among organizations engaged in transnational work because it is based on creating a local team of experts that chooses themes and curricula for its coproduction and outreach projects. Although they are subject to certain restrictions and oversight, partners have tremendous freedom to shape their projects. The SW case therefore reveals the often hidden negotiations that facilitate processes of hybridization and ultimately diffusion.

In Kosovo, negotiations over the terms of adoption forced SW to reconsider a

core value – using the alphabet to teach literacy. Albanians and Serbians could not agree on a common alphabet (either Latin or Cyrillic). In addition to the language issue, partners did not want to shoot scenes with children from each group playing together because parents would not allow their children to watch an ethnically-integrated program. Although the problem could have killed the project, SW and their local partners negotiated an innovative solution; they developed a "visual dictionary" that featured children holding objects such as sunglasses and saying their corresponding words in different languages.

The terms of adoption were also important to Palestinians, who in 1994 initially refused to participate in a coproduction with Israelis focused on mutual respect and understanding. They feared a high-quality version of *Sesame Street* would destroy the identity of their new and weak Palestinian television station, and that collaborating with Israelis and Americans would make them a target for conservatives. Key members of the team, however, saw it as an opportunity to build a local media infrastructure and train young Palestinians. They requested that a significant amount of funding be shifted from production to training. Palestinians' decision to adopt the program, therefore, hinged on their ability to negotiate what they considered to be a more valuable product *and* process.

Negotiating the content of a coproduction so that it would resonate with the local population and address local needs was critically important for SW's Bangladeshi and South African partners. The former expressed trepidation about using Muppets in their program given the strong tradition of puppetry in Bangladeshi culture. Although SW does not require partners to use Muppets (i.e. puppets created by the Jim Henson Company), the Bangladeshi team ultimately decided to design their own Muppets (including Bengal tiger and jackal characters) *and* include traditional Bangladeshi wooden rod puppets in *Sisimpur*. Together, SW and the local team negotiated a unique plan to incorporate the latter by transitioning into "Ikri's World" – where traditional Bangladeshi rod puppets live and where their stories are told with song – through the imagination of a Muppet

named Ikri. South Africans made their participation in a second season of *Takalani Sesame* contingent on dealing with their country's HIV/AIDS crisis in the program and outreach projects. Despite initial concerns, SW worked with them to develop an HIV/AIDS curriculum and an HIV-positive Muppet character named Kami.

The evidence suggests that the SW model has a positive effect on project outcomes. The success of the coproductions and outreach projects is staggering. Controlled studies show that children in Bangladesh exposed to *Sisimpur* had literacy scores 67% higher than those who didn't watch it. In Egypt, four-year-old viewers of *Alam Simsim* performed at the same level on math and literacy tests as five-year-olds who watched it a little or not at all. Evidence also suggests that local adaptation increases SW's legitimacy and therefore its reach. SW commissions independent research not only to gauge each coproduction's educational impact, but also to assess whether coproductions are perceived as local (they generally are). Within eighteen months of its premiere in 2000, Egypt's *Alam Simsim* achieved 98% viewership and awareness of the program, and it is now as iconic as the US version. In India, 5,200 government-run day-care centers integrate *Galli Galli Sim Sim* into every aspect of their curriculum. *Sesame Street* is likely the most diffused vehicle for children's education in the world.

A theory of diffusion as negotiation provides a compelling new framework for understanding the factors that constrain *and* spark adopters' resistance to cultural globalization. Moreover it suggests that in an era in which transnational organizations and their cultural products can be so quickly dispatched across the globe, successful development projects and locally acceptable cultural hybrids may depend upon the construction of more equitable transnational ties between transnational organizations. Although diffusion processes can reflect the imposition and dominance of western values, practices and products, the SW case reveals adopters' sources of leverage, influence, and autonomy by illuminating how culture is negotiated on the longest street in the world. ■

> Taking Sides: Science at the Rio+20 UN Conference on Sustainable Development

by Herbert Docena, University of California, Berkeley, USA¹



*One of the sculptures paraded down Rio de Janeiro's downtown as part of the People's Summit's protest against the Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development last June 20, 2012.
Photo by Herbert Docena.*

UN conferences have grown larger and larger through the years, attracting thousands of government officials, activists, business executives, and even celebrities. At the UN Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro this June – said to be the biggest UN conference in history – another group of participants also jostled to make their presence felt: scientists.

And if business executives had their “Business Day” meetings at a hotel, activists had their “People’s Summit” at a park, scientists also organized their own space parallel to the official summit: a “Forum on Science, Technology, and Innovation” at a Catholic university near Ipanema. Unlike the other “side-meetings” for business or for activists, however, it was not immediately clear what sort of conference it was, or what it intended to achieve. But what it did turn out to be may be indicative of how the scientific community is positioning itself vis-à-vis other actors grappling with the environmental crisis.

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> What sort of scholarly conference was this?

While there were numerous presentations showcasing state-of-the-art knowledge in various scientific fields, this was not apparently organized as a scholarly conference. There were not really enough specialists from each field to go over and debate the findings presented. Most of the participants were officials or members of the main organizing body, the International Council for Science (ICSU), as well as science bureaucrats from other “partner” organizers such as international science agencies like UNESCO, scientific NGOs like the International Social Science Council (ISSC, of which I was a delegate), a few other practitioners from the various scientific disciplines, as well as government officials and representatives from business – including a Vice-President from Dow Chemical and the CEO of Blackberry.

If the goal was to foster deeper links across disciplines, very little time was actually devoted to meaningful interaction between participants: For five days straight, the audience had to sit through panel after panel, each with about seven to eight speakers all speaking down to the audience from a high stage for two hours, and with only the last ten to fifteen minutes devoted to a rushed “question-and-answer” session.

There were numerous openings for debate, such as when one geographer expressed relief that she was not an environmental economist tasked to make “heroic” assumptions to measure the cost of a life or the value of a forest, thus touching on one of the enduring controversies within the social sciences, but also hinting at the resentment felt by geographers vis-à-vis their more powerful counterparts in economics. Or when one engineer casually said that the role of social scientists is to determine the “cultural appropriateness” of solutions already decided by them (the engineers), thus touching on one of the sore points of contention regarding the division of labor between “natural scientists” and “social scientists.” Or when, indeed, speaker after speaker repeatedly referred to physicists, chemists, or engineers as “natural scientists” – as

though what social scientists study were somehow not part of nature or unnatural. The notion that society is “the most powerful collection of physical and moral forces that we can observe in nature,” as Durkheim had long ago suggested, seemed to have failed to gain traction beyond sociology.

These moments of tension between and across disciplines – revealing stark differences in worldviews and largely invisible issues of power – pointed to the vast range of issues that could have been clarified through the kind of deeper, thoughtful dialogues that rare (and expensive) trans-disciplinary conferences like this offered.

> Seeking partners in business and government

As the speeches and interventions of the main organizers and many of the presenters soon made clear, this conference may not have been about helping scientists move beyond a state of mutual misunderstanding. Indeed, it may not even have had science practitioners as its primary audience.

Throughout the week, many (though not all) speakers instead addressed mainly two sets of actors, a few of whom were in the audience: officials from governments (or international organizations) and from business. Speaker after speaker would begin by decrying the supposed gulf between scientists and “stakeholders” – a gulf they see in the latter’s supposed lack of interest in, and lack of support for, the former’s research initiatives. They would then invariably call for bridging this gulf through closer “partnerships” between scientists and “decision-makers.”

To give them greater “ownership” over their research outputs, speakers invited funders, business, and policymakers to “co-design” and “co-produce” their research with them – in other words, to help them identify their research questions and to find concrete applications for their findings. “Other sectors of civil society” were mentioned too, but few of them were actually invited to the conference. In exchange for greater “support,” scientists offered policymakers and business executives the knowledge they need to understand what they called “GEC” –

“Global Environmental Change” – and to “manage” the “social transformations” required to achieve “sustainable development.” On offer were all the new concepts and all the new metrics for measuring various aspects of this new object that scientists themselves are now helping construct: the so-called “green economy.”

To be sure, there were a few critical voices: the ISSC and its delegates, for example, often challenged the technocratic predilections of the “natural scientists” in the room by insisting on the historical or systemic roots of today’s environmental crises. At least one speaker called for a stronger alliance with social movements, such as the activists and indigenous peoples fighting oil companies to “keep oil in the hole” in Ecuador.

For the most part, however, the conference remained mainly a science-state-business dialogue grounded in the old technocratic assumption and managerialist vision: that the problem is that “decision-makers” simply don’t have the knowledge needed for them to make the right decisions, but that if they are given the right knowledge by scientists, then all will be well. Ignorance, not power structures or systemic pressures, is behind environmental degradation. Change will come through good “management” from the top, not through resistance from below.

One initiative that seems to embody this assumption and that got the most mileage in the conference was the ICSU’s “Future Earth” project, an ambitious ten-year research initiative that aims to mobilize thousands of scientists “to deliver the knowledge needed to enable societies to meet their sustainable development goals.” Already backed by some of the world’s wealthiest research funders, the initiative was billed by one speaker as “one of the most unique partnerships ever seen.” In response to the presentation, the CEO from Blackberry spoke approvingly of the need for “actionable research,” then warned scientists against the perils of “ideology.”

Despite a few critical interventions, then, the content and structure of the program, especially the repeated calls for “partnerships” with business



Protesters with the People's Summit take over the Plaza Floriano in Rio de Janeiro's historic downtown, around 40 kilometers away from the official summit venue.
Photo by Herbert Docena.

and government, made it difficult to leave the conference without thinking of it as a glossy, well-orchestrated sales pitch by science bureaucrats and scientists wanting a share of the increasing sums of money that governments and businesses have begun to allot to social- and geo-engineering projects for “adapting” to and “managing” the environmental crises.

> Questions not posed...

This search for lucrative partners does not necessarily mean the bureaucrats and scientists who organized the conference are greedy research mercenaries. It could be that they actually consciously or unconsciously share with their prospective “partners” the same answers to the following fundamental questions which this conference could have debated further but did not:

Should we really think of nature as a provider of “ecosystem services” – and should we really put a price on those “services”?

Elsewhere in Rio, at the official summit, developing-country negotiators, backed by many activists, resisted even using the term “ecosystem services” in the final declaration, as was being pushed strongly by the US and other developed countries, because they fear it could further deepen the “financialization” of nature. But here at this conference, scientists routine-

ly used the term without much pause. When challenged about this, the answer of one geographer (one of the main proponents of “Future Earth”) was basically: read the latest issue of *Nature* journal, it's been resolved by science.

Is it really possible to reconcile endless growth with environmental protection, as proponents of “sustainable development” and today's “green economy” proclaim?

Elsewhere in Rio, at the People's Summit, endless growth is considered antithetical to sustainability. Similarly, the “green economy” is widely derided as “green capitalism,” as an effort to avoid the structural changes required to really conserve nature. But here at this conference, scientists were touting their expertise precisely to help governments and businesses attempt to make what may be impossible possible.

Who, to recall the source of the most enduring rifts in the international environmental negotiations, is really responsible for our environmental crises and how should we relate to them?

Elsewhere in Rio, many pointed to transnational corporations and rich-country governments – what one social scientist here called the “power elites” – as the ones to blame. At the People's Summit, they were routinely

called “criminals” and “murderers.” But here at the science conference, they were “partners” to be wooed and courted as “co-designers” and “co-producers” of our research. “We shouldn't see the ‘power elites’ as the enemy,” one anthropologist argued. “That is not constructive... I don't think we have time for political change. We need to engage with them. There is no other way.”

> The power of neutrality

In seeking to “partner” with governments and businesses, scientists repeatedly invoked one valuable selling point – something everyone else in Rio is implied to lack: their supposed “neutrality,” their detachment, their lack of interest. They brandished, perhaps unconsciously, this supposed impartiality whenever they called for “a new contract between science and society” (as if we stand apart from or above society). Or when they advocated greater links with “stakeholders” or with “decision-makers” (as though we have no stakes and we do not get involved in making decisions by the very ways we frame and present problems and by the very answers we take for granted). Or when they insist that their findings should only be “policy-relevant” and never “policy-prescriptive” (as if by restricting relevant policies to those that assume that there is no other way but “the green economy,” we are not prescribing anything).

And yet, despite this repeated profession of neutrality, it seems the scientists here have already taken sides. ■

¹ Herbert Docena received a student fellowship from International Social Science Council (ISSC) to participate in the Rio+20 UN Conference for which he is very grateful.

> Contested Outcomes: Feminism and Neoliberalism

by Sylvia Walby, Lancaster University, UK, and former President of the ISA Research Committee on Economy and Society (RC02)



Families and children invade the RBS/Nat-West bank in Camden as part of Uncut's "Big Society Bail-Ins" to demonstrate against cuts and the way they will affect women in particular. London, February 26, 2011.

The wider implications of the financial crisis are contested. Is the crisis (2007-12) an opportunity for a radical restructuring of economy and society in either a left (social democratic or socialist) or right (neoliberal or fascist) direction? This paper argues that gender is at the heart of the processes and structures involved, that the neoliberal project and governmental programmes are gendered.

> The Sources of Neoliberalism

While the development of finance capital is a global process, there are still significant differences between national social formations. These

allow us to interrogate the different outcomes of the unfolding crisis, depending on diverse political forces in civil societies, states and other political entities.

The current face of the crisis in a European context (and variably applicable elsewhere) is huge pressure to cut government expenditures. Government budget deficits and accumulated debts are presented as though they are unsustainable. There are varied interpretations of these pressures.

One is that the source of such deficits and debts is over-spending on welfare, so that the remedy is cuts in expenditure. However, this is undermined as an explanation of the source

of the deficits, since these are predominantly due to sudden decreases in tax revenues as a consequence of the recession that was caused by the financial crisis, compounded by the funds to bail out the banks and necessary expenditure to support those made unemployed by recession.

A second interpretation is that the problem lies in the creation of the euro as a common currency for the European Union, so that individual countries cannot adjust their currencies. But this "solution" is merely to suggest competitive devaluations, a kind of protectionism discredited in the 1930s (already deployed by the UK, which remains outside of and hostile to the euro).

A third interpretation is that the financial crisis is the inevitable product of capitalism, as the current regime of accumulation is exhausted; leaving a future of either barbarism or socialism (Harvey) or maybe a transition to the next hegemon (Arrighi). But this interpretation is rather sweeping and tends to underestimate the specifics of the political and civil societal contexts.

The fourth interpretation – the one advanced here – treats neoliberalism not as an inevitable next stage of capitalism, but as a project, entwined with the development of finance capital, and with which a wide range of political forces engage. Within this perspective there is considerable debate as to the nature of these forces and their prospects. As governments fall, the old political parties struggle to address the new circumstances. New projects, from Occupy to Uncut, develop outside the state; new political parties and coalitions are formed to contest the state. Of particular significance in this interpretation is the gendering of the sites of contestation and of the political forces and their emergent agendas.

> Austerity is a Feminist Issue

In recent decades in many European (and other) countries there has been an increase in the gendered aspects of welfare states in the provision of education, health, care and in the regulation of employment and its interface with care-work. These were often the outcome of feminist and laborist projects combined in complex ways in social democratic and socialist programs. The sedimentation of these gendered projects in governmental programmes and social formations occurred simultaneously with the emerging neoliberal project of privatisation and de-regulation. Gender and class dynamics have often diverged, as employed women became slowly more involved in civil society and political institutions, while some social democratic institutions

such as trade unions were pushed back. During the financial crisis the neoliberal project has emerged as a sharply gendered attack on these incrementally achieved gendered social democratic developments.

Taxation is a feminist issue. The technique of gender budgeting applied to changes to national budgets, showed that the attempts to narrow the deficit were not borne equally by all sectors of the population, but disproportionately by women. In the UK, the House of Commons Library reported that in the 2010 Budget, of £8.1bn net personal tax increases/benefit cuts, £5.8bn (72%) was to be paid by women and £2.2bn (28%) by men. While taxes (which are disproportionately paid by men) were scarcely increased, benefits and public services (which are disproportionately used by women) were cut severely. Closing tax havens or introducing a tax on financial transactions (promoted as policies for the EU by France and German leaders, though resisted by London) are gendered policies.

A further UK example concerns the cuts to national budgets to provide local welfare services, such as refuges/shelters, advice and support workers, to prevent violence against women. The development of this sector was a gendered social democratic response to violence, in which priority was given to the development of welfare provisions that helped female victims rather than more punitive responses to perpetrators such as prison. In a small research project, data on the intricacies of funding cuts were uncovered with assistance from NGOs and trade unions that had invested in “freedom of information” procedures. Reductions in national budgets of 1% a year became magnified as they were translated into cuts of 31% by local councils to services to prevent violence against women, partly because these services were less protected by statute than more conventional ones.

> Divergent Responses

The restructuring of economy and society in the UK and in other countries has generated many responses that vary significantly between countries and which have produced divergent effects. One way of thinking about these differences has been to contrast mobilizations generated in civil society from those oriented towards the state. Civil society mobilizations include Occupy, which had a presence in many European as well as North American cities, but there are many others, for example, in the UK there is mobilization around tax evasion and avoidance by corporations, coordinated by Uncut. New political parties have formed in several European countries, including France (Left Party), Germany (Die Linke) and Iceland, as well as new coalitions as governments have fallen. These left mobilizations have typically included a strong feminist component. At least in a European context, it is perhaps a mistake to polarize these developments too strongly between those outside and those inside the state, since these forms of political development engage with each other. Where there has been the strongest development of new articulations of left and feminist forces, for example, in Iceland, there is less concentration of the negative effects of the financial crisis on the few and a move towards a deeper democratization.

The financial crisis is not over. The attempts to restructure are producing diverse outcomes, not least because of varied political mobilizations. These concern not only capitalism, but also the form of the gender regime. The outcome is still being fought over. ■

> Ukrainian Feminism in Action

by Tamara Martsenyuk, National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, Ukraine



International Women's Day (March 8) brings Ukrainian women not only flowers and extra attention but also reminders about their rights for which they have been fighting for more than a century. Last year a young feminist initiative, "Feminist Offensive," established new ways of celebrating the 8th of March by organizing a feminist art workshop, a feminist international conference and a feminist march.

"Feminist Offensive" (<http://ofenzyva.wordpress.com>) is an independent public initiative that fights to overcome patriarchal forms of power in its various manifestations (sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ageism, racism, and chauvinism) and stands for the economic and reproductive rights for women. It wants to change discriminatory social and legislative practices, to create space for critical gender studies and independent

Ofenzyva ("Feminist Offensive") activists participate in May 1st (2012) demonstrations in Kyiv. The placards say: "Working day of woman: 36 hours: 8 – wage labor, 4 – kitchen, 24 – childcare"; "No to violence, no to sexual harassment"; "Free Nadya Tolokno" (an arrested activist with Pussy Riot, a Russian feminist punk-rock collective). Photo by Ofenzyva.

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political activism, and to develop and share emancipatory feminist knowledge and non-sexist language.

A three-day International Conference “Feminism – Assemblage Point” (March 5-7, 2012), meaning a place of gathering and solidarity, organized by “Feminist Offensive” brought together scholars and activists from Ukraine, Russia, Poland, Serbia, Finland, France, and the USA. In “Feminist Political Performance” panel participants shared their grassroots initiatives against the violation of women’s rights. The feminist action group “La Barbe” (“beard” in English) – by wearing beards and by storming boardrooms, conventions or art exhibits – highlights the absence of women in male-dominated decision-making bodies. “ACT Women” (Serbia) undertakes street performances to draw attention to different forms of gender-based violence (domestic violence, femicide, rape, exhaustion, etc.). The Russian feminist punk band “Pussy Riot” could not participate in the conference because their members had been arrested for a performance on the altar of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow. The conference organizers had also planned to invite the famous grassroots Ukrainian women’s group “FEMEN” (who protest topless) to discuss their experience in this field. Unfortunately, “FEMEN” decided that going abroad (to Turkey) with their naked performance was more important than fighting for women’s rights in Ukraine.

During the conference we discussed the religious and ultra-right attacks on women’s rights in Ukraine, Poland and Russia. Thus, Polish anthropologist, Agata Chelstowska, examined the abortion debate and the way it was manipulated in party politics for negotiating the relation between Poland and the Western world (especially the European Union), regardless of the very real effects that the political climate has on women’s reproductive rights and health. Lesya Pagulich and Galina Yarmanova analyzed discourses of religious fundamentalist groups, which over the last five years have become remarkably active in their campaigns against abortion, in-vitro fertilization, and homosexuality in Ukraine.

The topic of the collaboration of church and state in attacking women’s rights was chosen for the 8th of March 2012 feminist demonstration. 200 participants marched under the slogans “The Church and the State, it’s Time to Live Apart!”, “Childlessness Tax – a Tax on Poverty” (recently a bill was proposed in the Ukrainian Parliament with the idea of taxing people over 30 years and without children). The previous year’s slogans were: “Less Kitchen – More Books!”, “Infrastructure for Parents,” “Family – A Place to be Loved” etc. Ukrainian feminists also demanded release of “Pussy Riot” activists mentioned above who are in custody for their anti-clerical protest.

The feminist march anticipated attacks on women’s reproductive rights, such as the one that took place on March 12, 2012 in the Verkhovna Rada (Ukraine’s Parliament) when deputy Andriy Shkil’ proposed a bill to bring about legislation that would prohibit artificial termination of pregnancy (abortion). Under the existing law, a woman can have an abortion if the pregnancy does not exceed 12 weeks. With the autumn 2012 Parliamentary elections around the corner, politicians try to exploit such “hot” issues as demographic trends and sexual morality.

As a result of attempts by religious and political actors to attack women’s reproductive rights, women’s NGOs wrote a collective letter to the President of Ukraine, the Head of the Ukrainian Parliament and other politicians, calling on them to consider the consequences of the criminalization of abortion. On March 27, 2012 women’s rights activists organized a Press-Conference: “Femicides in Ukraine: What are the Dangers of Criminalizing Abortions?” They urged politicians to vote against the discriminatory bill that violates women’s reproductive rights and puts their health in danger.

In conclusion, during the last two years feminism, as activism and as intellectual discussion, has finally appeared in Ukraine’s public space. And not a moment too soon, as grassroots initiatives present a counterweight to the rising attack on women’s rights. ■

> Rising Levels of Insecurity in Latin America

by Gabriel Kessler, National University of La Plata, Argentina



A protester holds up a sign with the colors of the Argentine flag, saying "Stop Insecurity," during a protest against crime in Buenos Aires in 2009.

Concern about crime has spread throughout Latin America. This is not surprising given that this region, which contains only 14% of the world's population, accounts for about 40% of all homicides with firearms. Fear of crime is very high even in countries with relatively low crime rates, such as Argentina, Costa Rica, Chile and Uruguay. Using a multiple methods approach, I studied the "feeling of insecurity" in Argentina and made comparisons with other countries in the region.¹ The expanding fear of crime

produces particular consequences in peoples' social imaginaries and practices. The widespread agreement that this is a public problem, qualitatively different from the past, raises a series of questions about the causes, the personal risks, and the necessary solutions. The answers make up the pieces of a sociological account of insecurity. This approach to reality tells us which emotions are logical to feel, and it also projects itself into the realm of action and obligatory precautions, which we call insecurity management. The spread of unease also contradicts

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research findings from an earlier period when worries were more limited. On one hand, this modifies the classic link between fear and authoritarianism. On the other hand, the paradoxes of insecurity – that is, the enigma of why the groups that are apparently least victimized are the most fearful – change as well.

Since the first studies in the United States in the 1960s, fear of crime has shown itself to be relatively autonomous from actual crime. It tends to grow along with victimization, but once installed as a social problem, it no longer diminishes even if crime rates go down. The usual definition of fear of crime is an emotional response to fear or anxiety in the face of crime, or of symbols that people associate with crime. We prefer the notion of “a feeling of insecurity,” on the premise that although references to fear still play a central role, this concept includes other relevant emotions, like anger, indignation, or impotence, and it includes political concerns, stories about their causes, and the actions that make up insecurity management.

Now, what is insecurity, according to Argentinean interviewees? Insecurity and breaking the law are not necessarily in direct correspondence. The particular characteristic of insecurity is the randomness of danger. Insecurity appears as a threat – to property and especially to human beings – which could swoop down on anyone. One of its facets is the re-location of danger: the end of the division between clearly defined safe and unsafe zones. Another is the relative disidentification of the figures of fear: the perception of threat is no longer limited to the most stigmatized images, like young people from marginalized groups, but, instead, an extension of distrust towards anyone. This multiplicity of images and dangerous places reinforces the feeling of a random and omnipresent threat.

Studies of the topic have focused on answering a series of questions and paradoxes: Why is insecurity apparently higher among the groups that are least victimized, like women and the elderly? What is the relationship between fear and social class? I considered these paradoxes in the Argentinean case using triangulation between qualitative and quantitative methods. Regarding class, the quantitative differences are not very marked, but in the qualitative data, distance and proximity proved important differentiating axes. The popular classes perceive a physical and social closeness to the threat, while the middle and upper classes experience social and physical distance from crime. Proximity influences the kind of political reading that gets constructed, in general, “from below towards above.” In popular neighborhoods, there are many local debates based on concrete cases, and the discussion revolves around the community itself. In middle- and upper-class areas, distance fosters a view “from above towards below,” an explanation based on social or political processes without individual reference points. Nevertheless, closeness does not in itself imply more empathy nor distance

more punitive positions. Proximity can lead to moral condemnation, because despite the difficult social conditions common to all, “my children don’t steal,” or, on the other hand, family members can be excused on the grounds that “at heart they’re not bad kids.” Distance is typically linked to an appeal to structural causes, but also to the extreme reactionary position that considers this a “contemporary form of guerrilla warfare.” Thus, greater or less punitiveness is not particular to a given social class – one of the themes of debate in the region.

The central paradox revolves around gender. Data has constantly shown greater fear among women, and related debates have also highlighted this difference. Yet, when insecurity expands, the gender differences around the “rules of feelings and expression” become less. For men, it becomes more legitimate to feel and express fear. More generally, in the triangulation between surveys and qualitative interviews, the same subjects that in the surveys said they were not afraid came to the conclusion, during the interviews, that they had a “logical” fear, given the definition of the situation.

When fear was an attribute of a minority, it could be observed in direct relationship with authoritarian attitudes. The current debate in the region is whether the increase in feelings of insecurity is generating more punitiveness. In general, insecurity gets processed differently according to the pre-existing political ideology, although insecurity can also erode democratic convictions. In the stories of insecurity, we can see what we call “punitive landslides” – a shift from more benign positions towards supporting more harsh measures – even if not the most extreme. More than anything, there is an erosion of the so-called explanation for the social crisis. In the past decade, there was consensus that crime was a negative consequence of neoliberal reforms. Today, after several years of growth and decreasing poverty and inequality, crime has hardly diminished. Therefore, for Latin American academia, this poses the challenge of building more refined explanations for increasingly punitive discourses. As in other contexts, such punitive discourses point to explanations that shift from social structure to blaming the subjects.

These are just a few of the questions that the expanding feeling of insecurity poses. The responses that academics are able to achieve, and the form in which we can convey those responses to the rest of society, will depend greatly on the quality of our democracies. ■

¹ Kessler, G. (2009) *El sentimiento de inseguridad – Sociología del temor al delito* [The Feeling of Insecurity: Sociology of the Fear of Crime]. Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI Editores.

> The Black Middle Class in Colombia: A Social Oxymoron?

by Mara Viveros Vigoya, National University of Colombia, Bogotá, Colombia

Numerous studies have shown that the Colombian population of African origin has the lowest income level, the poorest quality of life, the highest rate of child labor, the lowest rate of social security affiliation, and the highest demographic vulnerability of any group in Colombia (Urrea et al., 2004). Moreover, the small number of black men and even smaller number of black women in senior positions in civil society, the State, and private companies, as well as the lack of positive images of black men and women in the media, and the symbolic representations of them in public places, merely affirm the persistence of racism in Colombia. In this context, does it make sense to undertake studies of the few black people who have not been exposed to these experiences?

One possible answer is that it can be relevant in a context like Colombia to help make visible the trajectories of social advancement of Afro-Colombians, given that these processes are little studied and generally excluded from official accounts of national history. Thus, they offer alternative possible representations that contrast with the stereotypical

representations of this population.

Through our research we now know some facts we did not know about this population, including how gender, race, and class intersect to construct black middle-class subjects. Here, I present some results of a broader study (Viveros and Gil, 2010).

> Who Manages to Ascend?

In the course of the 20th century, through the accumulation of economic capital in rural areas and mining, and in large measure thanks to increased access to higher education, a “black middle class” was constituted in various regions of the country. This class was able to earn a social, political, and economic space despite the persistence of racial prejudice and discrimination. These processes of upward social mobility of the black population in Colombia have played out in ways specific to the particular regional, economic, social, and political contexts in which they emerged. The analysis I present here refers to people living in the city of Bogotá, the majority of whom come from the Pacific Region, the area that has the largest proportion of Afro-descendant people in the country.

On the basis of an analysis of their social trajectories over the course of three generations – their own, their parents’, and their grandparents’ – we identify two main groups defined by the type of social mobility: those that reproduce the social situation of their parents and grandparents, and those that improve socially upon their forebears. In the second group, we can also distinguish different rates of mobility – some rise more gradually and others more rapidly. The results of our analysis suggest that women’s trajectories tend to be more reproductive than those of men – in other words, women show less upward social mobility than men. Those women that are upwardly mobile are most often daughters of professionals or of people with at least a moderate level of education. In contrast, it is more common for men to be sons or grandsons of people with little or no education. If we take into account that the majority of the grandparents of both men and women never went to school, we can conclude that the principal point of transition in educational trajectories comes between the grandparents’ and the parents’ generations.

> The Place of Gender in the Social Advancement of Afro-Colombians

Social mobility implies – in addition to increased income – the adoption of a “class habitus,” that, even though it seems to refer only to differences in social and cultural capital, is also gendered and racialized. The middle classes are defined not only in opposition to the popular (lower) classes but also in relation to many constitutive elements of hegemonic gender identities. In this sense, for black men and women, upward mobility implies abiding by the dominant gender norms and taking on the values and behaviors that make a woman or a man “respectable” in Colombian society, that is, those usually attributed to white or mestizo men and women. These experiences of self-cultivation continually affect those subjected to them, turning black men and women into disciplined, judicious, and rigorous subjects, in their performances both at work and at home.

In the case of the women interviewed, this has meant being good mothers and exemplary wives, being sober and discreet in their tone of voice, gestures, and social behavior, and adjusting their personal presentation to the image of femininity valued in higher social classes. To preserve their respectability, these women have desexualized themselves starting at an early age or upon marriage, reacting to potential assumptions that they are lewd or of “doubtful morality.”

For men, such adoption of dominant norms has involved being responsible workers and good economic providers, moderating expressions of their taste for licentious behavior, renouncing any behavior that calls their virility into question, and taking on gentlemanly manners in public space, in order to dissociate themselves from vulgarity and debauchery that are imputed to black men of the popular classes.

> Individual Ascent, not Collective

In Colombia the upward mobility of black people has been an individual process, in contrast, for instance, with the group mobility experienced by the black population in the United States (Frazier, 1975). In Colombia, the members of this small middle class have not been able to rely on group support to help perpetuate their success and extend their benefits to the group, beyond their nuclear families and relatives. The paths of upward social mobility analyzed here confirm this situation: black people who have had some success have drawn on rather dispersed personal and family histories that allowed them to make inroads into middle-class social arenas. Nevertheless, they have not made significant advances for the ethnic and racial group as a whole, nor have they been able to change the negative representations of this group. At the same time, the existence of a group of middle-class blacks, as small as it may be, shows that “race” is not al-

**“We now know
how gender,
race and class
intersect”**

ways constituted in the same way and that it is impossible to separate race from the intersections of class, gender, and sexuality that produce and maintain it.

The issue of social mobility takes on particular importance when thinking about solutions to social marginalization and racial discrimination suffered by the Afro-Colombian population. The paths of upward mobility of black populations in Colombia are exceptions to the rule, since no social conditions favor this ascent. An analysis of the process of upward mobility of blacks calls our attention to the existence and persistence of racial prejudice, the complexity of this experience, and the limits of any approach that assumes that the black middle classes, *per se*, will play an avant-garde role in responding to the problem of black peoples’ social marginality in Colombia. ■

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> On the Real State of Sociology in Russia: Opposing Vakhshayn's Polemics

by N.V. Romanovsky and Zh.T. Toshchenko, editors of the Russian journal *Sociological Studies*



Distinguished Russian sociologists Vladimir Yadov (left) and Nikita Pokrovsky (right) at the meeting of the Society of Professional Sociologists in Moscow, June 6, 2008.

Victor Vakhshayn's article in *Global Dialogue* 2.3 prompted us to write this commentary on the state of sociology in Russia. Vakhshayn's assessment of contemporary Russian sociology is arguably shaped by the author's limiting himself to methodological issues. Vakhshayn charges his opponents in general terms principally because he is not engaged in empirical research, has practically no contacts with sociologists in the country's regions and, therefore, does not understand their problems. Without denying Vakhshayn's entitlement to his own view, we absolutely disagree with his assessment of Russian sociology and would like to convey our own understanding of the issues.

As editors of the academic journal *Sociological Studies* (in Russian *Sotsiologicheskiye Issledovaniya* or *SOCIS*, and according to Vakhshayn read by 66% of the participants in the 2008 All-Russian Sociology Congress), we are immersed in flows of research conducted by sociologists from Moscow, St. Petersburg and the majority of the country's other cities. In these places thousands of our colleagues

are doing research, achieving results – true, not without difficulties and failures.

> What really goes on in Russian sociology?

First, one can find diverse and innovative approaches to the exploration of the most significant social shifts in the country. The academic community is familiar with the works of V.A. Yadov that built on empirical studies to develop an original treatment of the changing consciousness and behavior of production workers; with the work of Professor N. E. Pokrovsky, member of the ISA Executive Committee, who studies rural life processes in the northern part of European Russia; with Doctor of Sociological Sciences, V.K. Levashov, who has examined new tendencies in the development of Russian society on the basis of twenty years of monitoring based on the conceptual framework of sustainable development. Finally, we note the study of one of the authors of the present commentary – Toshchenko – entitled *Paradoxical Man* that has been highly commended by P. Sztompka, Z. Bauman, and T.I. Zaslavskaya.

Second, the range of research topics and their geography have widened. Let us offer a few examples. The issue of creativity in Russian society, not previously studied, is the theme of a book by U.G. Volkov, a sociologist from Rostov. The possibility of a neuro-sociology has been argued for by A.V. Shkurko, a scholar from Nizhny Novgorod reflecting on the new horizons in the articulation of natural and social sciences. On the basis of both morphological (income, education, powers) and discursive-symbolic (prestige, significance, status) approaches, Irkutsk's Professor O.A. Karmadonov studied social stratification, thereby disclosing a number of specific processes in contemporary Russian society.

Third, research practices penetrate new depths: the application of well-known concepts (such as *res publica*) to the resolution of issues in Russian cities, such as the rational use of social infrastructure, has been carried out by

a team of young researchers headed by O. Kharkhordin (European University, St. Petersburg).

Fourth, the new realities of post-Soviet Russia have brought about some completely new fields of research such as the social problems created by the market, analyzed by Professor V.V. Radaev (Higher School of Economics) whose publications are well known not only in our country but also abroad.

And finally, practically every university in Russia carries on joint research projects with colleagues from Western Europe, the USA, India, China, Japan and other Asian countries. Here no illustrative examples are needed since this kind of contact is an everyday practice that enriches participants through their joint research efforts.

More generally, the importance and interest of Russian sociology is confirmed by the regular appearance of two English-language periodicals *Sociological Research* and *Society and Education* published by M.E. Sharpe and composed of papers drawn from Russian journals of sociology. Indeed, there are some 30 journals of sociology in Russia – supported by academic and autonomous institutions or universities –, vehicles for researchers to share the results of their investigations. Most of them offer their pages for debate and criticism.

> What are the problems of sociology in Russia?

It would be strange if there were no problems, but not infrequently these problems of sociology stem from its successes. There are over 300 university departments of sociology, and sociologists are trained in some 110 universities, arguably something to be proud of. However, the intensive growth over last 20 years of institutions training future specialists has also led to various shortcomings. The quality of training in a number of universities leaves much to be desired, or at least could be improved, because the teaching staff have been recruited from other sciences – typically they are neophytes just mastering the craft of sociology.

We can say that sociological data are part and parcel of the information society and, as a matter of fact, in Russia there are no newspapers, journals or electronic media that do not use sociological data. This achievement, however, has given rise to manipulations on behalf of corporations or other powerful groups, censoring information in the interests of media owners. There appear persons calling themselves sociologists who are especially active during electoral campaigns at varying levels – from federal to local. These

pseudo-sociologists are employed to direct election campaigns of deputies who pay them on a contractual basis.

In contrast to such “market” orientations are retreats (and here Vakhshayn is right) into a “sociology of sociology.” To be sure, sociology must examine its foundations, the meaning of science, its methodology and its techniques, but if this becomes an end in itself then this will certainly lead to the isolation of sociology from society and, in the final instance, to convert it into a superfluous science, not needed by society. Yet if our opponent means that this is what Russian sociologists are mainly pre-occupied with, then this is simply not true: bibliometric measurements ascertain that over 80% of works by Russian sociologists deal with substantive issues – economics, labor, cities, rural life, youth and education, deviant behavior, religion, government, etc.

> What is wrong with pursuing ideas about processes in society?

Vakhshayn resents what he claims to be the convergence of neo- and anti-Soviet languages in sociology: while some stick to their old habits that may be archaic and primitive, others have betrayed the ideals of liberalism to which they have adhered for almost twenty post-Soviet years. In our opinion, there is nothing surprising here. “Traditionalists” came to the conclusion that realities of the country call for new methods of studying the present, while sociologists of liberal persuasion found their expectations unrealized – Russia took a different path and borrowed recipes for changing economic and social life that they consider unjustified. Thus, groups, opposing each other some ten years ago, now converge in their views and conclusions. It was not because they wanted such convergence, but because the analysis of societal (economic, social, political) reality has led them to similar results. Although differences remain, the sociological community, in our view, has gradually assumed the attitude that the debate, discussion and comparison of ideas based on empirical analysis of reality is the most fruitful and reliable way to proceed, especially if one cares about science rather than group interests.

In conclusion, let us offer a few words about Vakhshayn’s mode of polemics which we fundamentally oppose. Vakhshayn treats statements and opinions of individuals, including his own, as the position of the sociological community of Russia. Characteristically, however, his comments identify no names, so that the author tends to be fighting against anonymous opponents. Ironically, this, is a mode of polemics, inherited from an earlier period that he rejects. ■

> British Sociology in an Age of Austerity

by John D. Brewer, University of Aberdeen, UK, and President of the British Sociological Association, 2010-2012

The British Sociological Association (BSA) celebrated its sixtieth anniversary in 2011. At just over 2,500 members it is small in a world context, but in its own terms it is going from strength to strength. This is our largest membership ever and there are several other signs of vigorous health. We now publish four journals, we have the largest number of study groups in our history, our office and administrative staff is at its largest number and the last two annual conferences have been our largest ever. This year we have put on over 50 events. And all this, of course, in a country that has become infamous for the marketization of higher education, the ending of the publicly-funded university and the introduction of student fees, and which is undergoing damaging austerity. This is no coincidence: austerity is big business for British sociology.

The theme of the 2012 conference, held in Leeds, was sociology in an age of austerity. It was our largest conference outside London. Coming as I am to the end of my three-year term as President, I gave my Address on the public value of sociology in a time of austerity. In other plenary addresses, Michael Burawoy and Zygmunt Bauman debated the contribution of sociology in making sense of the social and political consequences of the economic crisis, and Stephen Ackroyd and Rosemary Batt spoke directly to the nature of that crisis, arising, as it does, as a result of the financialization

of the US and UK economies. We had participants from 24 other countries and a huge number of presentations across several themes. We accepted 622 papers and had a reserve list of 62 waiting for dropouts.

“austerity is big business for British sociology”

Austerity has obvious effects on sociology as a university subject in Britain. There are threats that some departments might close or shrink in scale, and fears that student applications will fall as applications to university decrease generally under the impact of fees, or move toward degree choices with clearer career paths. Sociology teaching at Strathclyde University, for example, is closing and many sociology departments are reporting drops in student applications of varying proportions, some dramatic. On the other hand, some departments are thriving and report increases in student applications, again some dramatic. Some departments are advertising for new permanent posts. It might be too early to tell what the impact of austerity will be on sociology provision in Britain, although the BSA is keeping a watchful eye.

The impact of austerity on the discipline of sociology, however, is a quite different issue and here the situation

is clearer. Our 2012 conference highlights two positive effects. Austerity has reinvigorated class analysis in British sociology and the sociology of work and industry, rebalancing it after the “cultural turn,” and renewed people’s engagement with the BSA. Forgive me if I here focus on the latter. As the discipline fragments both as a subject matter and in terms of its administrative location in multi-disciplinary schools, it appears that sociologists are using the BSA as a way of maintaining their identity as professional sociologists. With the loss of the single-subject sociology department, teachers and researchers are spread across unrecognizable administrative units, often in small numbers, and treat the BSA almost as a functional equivalent to the old departmental structure, with our study groups replacing the departmental seminar, and the BSA itself serving as the locus of their professional identity. The BSA President Elect, John Holmwood, has made the theme of his term of office the necessity of sociology – and the BSA serves well as an example. ■

> The Yokohama Congress:

a Bridge to a More Equal World

by Koichi Hasegawa, Tohoku University, Sendai, and Chair of the Local Organizing Committee of the ISA 2014 World Congress of Sociology in Yokohama, Japan



Yokohama Bay Bridge and the Floating Pier as seen from the Congress Venue, Pacifico Yokohama.

Last May, under the strong leadership of Shujiro Yazawa, President of the Japanese Sociological Society, Japanese sociologists created a network, now numbering more than 150 members, for research and information dealing with the tsunami disaster of March 11, 2011. The disastrous earthquakes, tsunami and nuclear power accident have generated so much work for sociologists,

including administering surveys in almost every affected region.

> Challenges for sociologists

What are the role and tasks of sociology facing such a terrible disaster? How should we conduct surveys in this very difficult situation? How can we create a meaningful dialogue with refugees from the disaster, and as sociologists how

can we support them? Even now 360,000 people still cannot return to their homes. Most of them are huddled together in cramped, temporary housing. In the Fukushima area alone 150,000 are still displaced due to government orders or of their own free will.

We are tackling a lot of sociological issues at micro, mezzo and macro levels such as rethinking the relationship between science, technology, and politics, urban planning to rebuild communities, restoring agriculture, farming and fishing, creating jobs, etc. NGOs are dealing with care for elderly people, children, handicapped and foreigners, with families facing geographical separation and with refugees who have lost families, friends, homes and jobs. There are problems of alcohol abuse and domestic violence, making a gender perspective central to grasping the situation. So many sociological dramas, heroines and heroes.

> Women's anti-nuclear Occupy movement in Japan

Many of us are deeply worried about the current situation of the

troubled nuclear reactors at Fukushima. The situation is stable. Outside the 30 kilometer zone and special hot spots, the level of radiation is completely safe, for example, in Tokyo, Yokohama, and my area, Sendai. Everywhere I go I carry a meter to check the level of radiation. After the accident, I published a new book for general readers, *Toward a Post-Nuclear Society*.

Women in Fukushima and beyond are openly criticizing the electric power company and the national government for their role in the disaster. They are demanding protection for their children and families, full compensation for their loss, and the decontamination of affected areas. Mass rallies, public lectures and study meetings are held almost every weekend. Since mid-September, following the Occupy Movement in the US, women from Fukushima have been peacefully occupying the site of the Ministry of Economy and Industry, the ministry blamed for the nuclear accident. The women are refusing to leave while the police and government have not used force against them, for fear of a public uprising if they were to do so.

> Bridging a separated world

After the 3.11 disaster, the City of Yokohama reviewed the history of tsunamis prior to opening the port and revised its protection guidelines based on the record of a small tsunami 300 years ago. The Japanese Local Organizing Committee is collaborating with ISA Executive Committee and the Japanese Sociological Society to produce the best organized Congress. Our target is to attract more than 5,000 delegates as in the Gothenburg Congress of 2010. We are appealing to sociologists to come to Yokohama to experience the revived and strengthened Japanese society.

From the Congress venue, Pacifico Yokohama, you can look over a beautiful bridge, *Yokohama Bay Bridge*, a landmark of the area. As German sociologist Georg Simmel declared, bridges are the visual expression of our will to link. I believe our sociological work is bridging East and West, South and North, Past and Future, female and male, nature and society, in other words, bridging sociological cleavages for a more equal world. Yokohama is waiting for you to cross the bridge! ■

> Italian Universities for Sale

by Laura Corradi, University of Calabria, Italy



“**T**he Italian University is hardly surviving. It is in a condition of disease and growing marginalization, which can find little comparison in our contemporary history. Economic resources for the institutional functioning of one of the oldest academia in the world were drastically reduced well before the present global crisis manifested itself, and even though the Italian university had a quite poor financing to start with, as compared to other industrialized countries. The humanities and a large part of the social sciences have been systematically underprivileged in order to promote other disciplines, which are considered to be more useful for eco-

nomic growth and the market. Such a trend links us to Europe and to other countries. The university courses are required to be *useful* in terms of *market value* – otherwise they cannot be offered because they are economically unsustainable.” The quote is from the opening to a document entitled *L'Università che vogliamo* (The University we want) written by two Italian professors, Piero Bevilacqua and Angelo D'Orsi, and electronically signed by hundreds of Italian professors, researchers and “*precari*” i.e., untenured intellectual workers, mostly in post-doctoral temporary positions.

In 2010 the *precari* in the Italian *università* numbered 126,188, oc-

“*I am the ghost of the precariat*” – a vivid expression of the precariat as the new dangerous class haunting society.

cupying different roles: 41,349 contract professors; 24,934 MD trainees; 23,996 tutors; 17,942 research assistants. Overall in 2010 there are 22,000 less *precari* than in 2008¹, indicating a tendency toward disaffiliation and disengagement from the Italian University, which is perceived as a *cul-de-sac*, with no future other than progressive privatization.

The existence of a visible degree of corruption in the university – which is as undeniable as it is shameful – has been used as an argu-

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ment to attack and dismantle the whole public system of higher education, with a series of unfortunate laws and regulations, the latest being the infamous Gelmini Reform, named after its originator, the Minister of Education, Universities and Research in the Berlusconi government.

Born in the shadow of deadly budgetary cuts and a painful halt to career progression, such a reform gives all power to the Chancellors and Full Professors – by eliminating democratic organs such as the Faculty Council (where, until this year, all tenured professors and researchers had a say in the decision-making processes) and by diminishing the role of the Academic Senate.

Another vital blow to the Italian university system would come from a provision *in itinere*: the abolition of the legal value of the state degrees, which would discourage students from enrolling in the system – students who are already struggling with unprecedented increases in tuition fees. If the law is approved by Parliament, the degrees obtained in serious, selective, competitive state institutions will be no different than those obtained from any private, online, *ad hoc* university.

The early student movements of 1968-1977 saw as their protagonists mostly students, commuting students, worker-students, and focused on their needs, but in a second phase during the 1990s the student movement *La Pantera* (The Panther) started to criticize the privatization of the university, and the education system more generally, for making the production of knowledge subservient to the business world. New social movements sprouted after the so-called Berlinguer Reform, passed in 2000 by a “progressive” government, which increased the financial autonomy of the university by lowering state support to higher education and research institutions, thereby pushing universities into an organic relation with the business world. The “Reform” inaugurated a decade of struggles – starting



with the occupation of Rome University *La Sapienza* in 2001 – showing how neoliberal policies did not change with the color of the Ministry. The privatization of the Public University was carried out with equal urgency by different types of governments, both those politically positioned in the Center-Left and those in the Center-Right. Budgetary cuts caused the degradation of students services, the shrinking of grants, scholarships and other forms of financial support, and skyrocketing tuition fees. Together these caused protests and turmoil among university students and the flowering of collectives. In 2008 a widespread mobilization called *L'Onda* (The Wave) saw associate and full professors as well as researchers refusing to teach. Finally, the movement also addressed the issues of untenured intellectual workers of the University: the *precari* – the poorly paid labor force in terms of teaching jobs, what we call the *lumpen-ricercariat*, that is the lab assistants, lecturers, translators, readers, assistants who constitute today a new social subject and collective form of agency.

Many today foresee a “second 1968,” meaning a successful mass movement. Instead what may happen is that the university protests could hook up more organically with other social movements against the crisis, movements of the unemployed, the workers who have lost their jobs, the

“Our future is now, life does not wait” – one of the main slogans of the university precariat.

indignados, who say no to neoliberalism and its recipes of privatization and forced growth. Such a prospect of connecting different issues, having the same root problem, is corroborated by the involvement of many students, workers, researchers and teachers in a larger movement of a precariat, especially after the national demonstration of March 30 (2012) in Rome and in view of the international mobilization of Frankfurt (May 16-19).

For updates on protests, the following website can be consulted: <http://www.ateneinrivolta.org/> (Universities in Revolt). Here you can access documents, proposals, meeting reports, videos, and information. There is a strong emphasis on gender issues since women are discriminated against within the university in terms of career, under-representation in academic positions and in higher levels of administration. The government’s decision to make the infamous budgetary cut of 20 billion euros for state universities hits mostly women – who are overrepresented among precarious workers. It damages, particularly, the southern colleges, and the marginalized subjects, such as the GLBTT people. ■

¹ Francesca Ruocco, “Il lavoro precario in Università” Pp.56-61 in *Inchiesta* n. 174, ottobre-dicembre 2011. Bari: Edizioni Dedalo.

Crime and Criminal Justice

by **Rosemary Barberet, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, New York, USA**

This past April, I attended the 21st Session of United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) in Vienna as a representative of the International Sociological Association (ISA), which has consultative status as a non-governmental organization. I have been observing these commission sessions now for ten years. I think there is a great need for sociological input at the United Nations (UN) in general. Both sociology and criminology have a great deal to offer the CCPCJ.

The United Nations CCPJ is a subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). ECOSOC established the Commission in 1992. Its mandated priority themes are:

- international action to combat national and transnational crime, including organized crime, economic crime and money laundering, and promoting the role of criminal law in protecting the environment;
- crime prevention in urban areas, juvenile crime and violent crime;
- efficiency, fairness and improvement in the management and administration of criminal justice systems.

The Commission develops, monitors and reviews the implementation of the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Program and facilitates the coordination of its activities. The Commission provides substantive and organizational direction for the United

Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, which is held every five years. The Commission acts as the governing body of the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Fund, the UN fund that provides resources for promoting technical assistance in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice carried out by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). The CCPCJ consists of one representative from 40 member states elected by the Council for three-year terms.

The Commission is assisted by the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Program Network, composed of a number of interregional, regional and national institutes committed to supporting the implementation of the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Program. (For example the National Institute of Justice in the United States contributes to the work of the Program Network.)

Every session features a discussion theme. This year, the theme was "Violence Against Migrants, Migrant Workers and their Families." The theme originates from the "Salvador Declaration," which ensued from the 2010 UN Crime Congress, at the suggestion of Turkey. The theme is very timely this year: widely distributed news accounts have described Central American migrants extorted by the police or kidnapped by drug gangs in Mexico, or dying in the Arizona desert; Marine Le Pen presented an anti-immigrant platform in the last French elections; refugees from "Arab Spring" uprisings flood surrounding countries in the Middle East and North Africa region. The theme is cross-cutting,

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because it relates to the work of the Crime Commission on the smuggling and trafficking of migrants, but also to the human rights work undertaken by other UN bodies. Yet while the Crime Commission links the smuggling of migrants to violence against migrants, interestingly, François Crépeau, the outspoken Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants, reminded the Commission that the smuggling of migrants was sometimes a life-saving activity, not one that necessarily led to violence against migrants. He reminded us that the movie *Casablanca* was about a human smuggling ring, and how it generated a very positive impression of human smuggling. But where is sociological research in all of this?

The role of the ISA at UN events has been to observe, to provide feedback to the ISA President and Executive Committee, and where possible, to provide research input to member state delegations. Despite the fact that the Crime Commission and UNODC maintain that their decisions are evidence-based, over the years, the research backdrop provided by UNODC and the Program Network to the Crime Commission has diminished. For three years now, the ISA has been presenting a literature review at the UN Crime Commission on the main theme of discussion. ISA members should be conscious that the vast majority of their work in academic journals does not reach this audience. Therefore, making our research accessible and readable to this audience is of paramount importance. Our literature review aims to provide an objective summary of the global literature on the main theme, defining it widely, illustrating it with examples from sociological research around the globe and paying particular attention to gaps in knowledge.

What are the challenges of making our research available to this audience? The UN regulates the dissemination of information from NGOs to member states very carefully. NGOs can submit short statements, and disseminate handouts that are preapproved by the Secretariat. They can also approach member states directly to provide information orally. But the UN is not known as a transparent organization in its decision-making. Although resolutions are debated during the week of the Crime Commission in the Committee of the Whole, most negotiations are held in informal sessions, closed to NGOs. Given that delegations change every year, and NGOs do not have access to any kind of mailing list of members of delegations, it is difficult to disseminate information. There is also reticence on the part of many delegations to read NGO publications. Most NGOs with consultative status at the UN are issue-driven and advocacy-based. They are not scientific, professional associations like the ISA. Member states are thus wary of NGOs. Furthermore, without dialogue, the usefulness of the information disseminated depends on the good will of the recipient. And while we disseminated our handout this year in English and French, it would be helpful to translate it into all UN languages.

The Crime Commission is the main UN body that creates international standards and norms for criminal justice institutions, and it enables member states to agree on crime reduction policies. Influencing the work of the Commission with sociological research can go a long way towards influencing its outcomes. ■

> Are you interested in editing ISA's eSymposium?

by Jennifer Platt, University of Sussex, UK, and ISA Vice-President for Publications, 2010-2014

Many ISA members will know that since 2005 Vineeta Sinha has been editing one of our membership benefits, the electronic journal which was initially called the *ISA E-Bulletin*, but recently became the *ISA eSymposium*. This change marked the shift towards digital presence on a website, so that there could be more interaction with readers, as well as the possibility of including "non-written" visual and audio contributions such as the fascinating "Occupy Toronto: a photo essay" by Zaheer Baber in the latest issue.

Now that Vineeta has seen the new system bedded in, the time has come for the possibility of a new editor to succeed her distinguished founding tenure. A wide variety of interesting contributions have appeared in the journal; there are certainly more out there for the future. Perhaps you would like to take over the responsibility for locating and developing them, or know a colleague who would do a good job? Applications for the editorship, to start in July 2013, are invited. Please see the [ISA web site for how to apply](#).

> The Arizona Desert

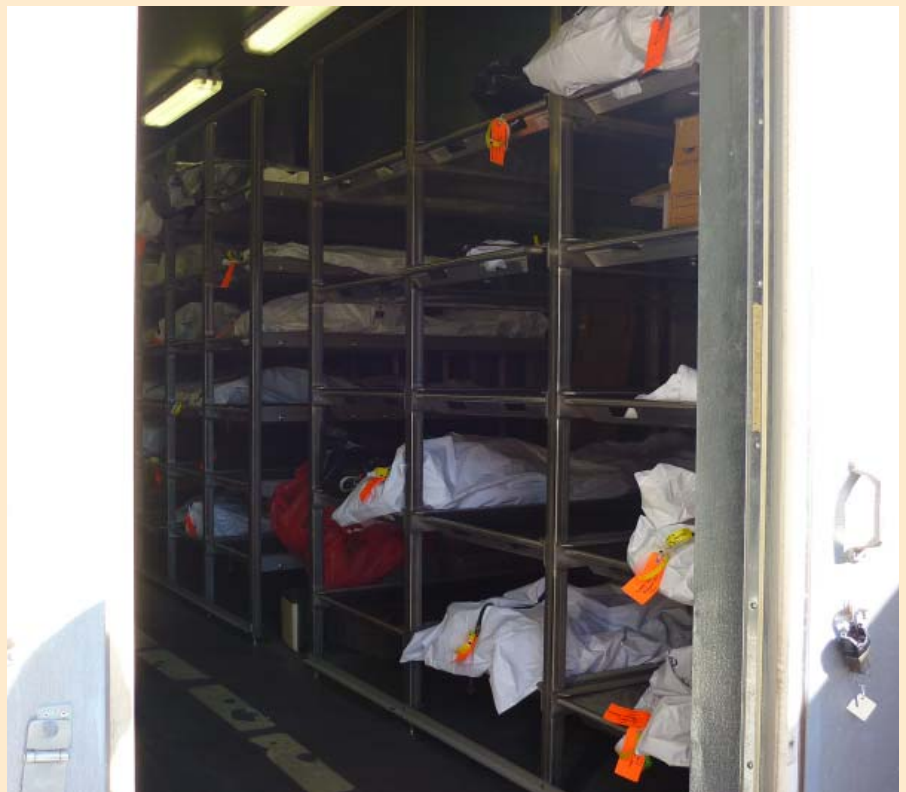
A Death Trap for Migrants

Emine Fidan Elcioglu, University of California, Berkeley, USA

The moment I heard the camera click, I had to dart away, gagging. The stench of human decomposition stayed with me for the rest of the day. The image I had captured was of a refrigerated unit in the Medical Examiner's Office in Tucson, Arizona. White bags held several dozen human remains, belonging to undocumented migrant men, women, and children who had died in Southern Arizona's "killing deserts" while trying to enter the US.

The photograph captures the state's interaction with an "unwanted" population, in life and in death. The systematic militarization of the border since the late 1990s has funneled undocumented migrants away from urban areas into such isolated, inhospitable terrains as the Arizona desert. If crossers manage to survive and reach their destination, they remain "caged" in the US: unable to visit loved ones in their countries of origin, due to the risk of apprehension or death in the desert. At the same time, their presence in the US is considered illegitimate, and daily life is threatened by deportation and family separation.

But if migrants die, the state effectively lets them "stay" in the US. Their bodies are transported by Border Patrol agents in four-wheel-drive vans to the Medical Examiner's



Office. There, personal possessions from the remains are carefully combed for identifying clues, their mummified skin subjected to infrared scanners for tattoos, their dental structures and bones examined for surgical implants and other distinctive aspects. Any information is triangulated with foreign consulates and humanitarian organizations, which may be contacted by families who are missing loved ones. In the meantime, remains are labeled with such anonymous names as "John" or "Jane Doe" – sometimes "John/Jane Doe" when remains are so

pulverized by the desert that gender cannot be determined – and left to sit in coolers. The state pours money into their transportation, their storage, their handling, and eventually, if never identified, their burial by a contracted funeral company in the county-owned section of the local cemetery. What the state has not poured resources into is the prevention of these deaths altogether. ■