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ISA Forum in Buenos Aires

Alberto Bialakowsky
and Alicia Palermo

Polish Migrants

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NEWSLETTER



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> Editorial

Social Justice and Democratization

Buenos Aires is a particularly appropriate stage for the forthcoming ISA Forum with its theme “Social Justice and Democratization.” As Alberto Bialakowsky and Alicia Palermo, President and co-President of the Local Organizing Committee, and Henrique Martins, President of ALAS (Latin American Sociological Association), write in this issue of *Global Dialogue*, not only has Latin America cultivated progressive movements for social justice and democracy but its sociologists have played a heroic part in those movements. In so doing, they generated a dynamic and distinctive regional sociology that will be showcased at the Forum.

“Social Justice and Democratization” is appropriate not just for the place but also for the historic moment. Samia Mehrez opens this issue of *Global Dialogue* with reflections on the anniversary of Egypt’s “January Revolution” – dwelling on its multiple meanings that have circulated within Egypt and abroad. Cairo’s Tahrir has indeed inspired a year-long global wave of social movements upholding social justice and democracy. Seemingly from nowhere, movements fearlessly took on dictatorships in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Yemen, igniting European movements against fiscal austerity, converging with Occupy Wall Street spreading through the US and boomeranging back across the world. Nor should we forget the massive protests in Israel, in Chile, and most recently in Russia. The grievances may be national, but the movement is global.

These are not so much movements of the exploited, though they have joined in, but of the dispossessed – those whose existence is defined by precarity. They are movements of students or ex-students or more broadly of youth, dispossessed of their future, of opportunities to utilize their skills and knowledge. They also include movements of peasants dispossessed of their land or water – in China, India, the Philippines, Brazil, Bolivia and elsewhere. Occupy movements have also come up against urban enclosures, battling the police to hold onto supposedly public spaces.

While Occupy movements pose a symbolic challenge to capitalism, they present a real challenge to sociology. Studies of inequality can no longer confine themselves to the 99% but they must pay close attention to the 1%. We cannot limit ourselves to income but must study wealth, and how the 1% exploit the 99% through, for example, various forms of debt servitude. Political sociology has to move beyond a focus on electoral democracy that has proven incapable of countering social injustice, incapable of regulating finance capital. The Occupy movements have defined themselves by their participatory democracy. Here too Latin America has been the pioneer. Structural adjustment policies that destroyed economies in the 1990s, led to a decade of counter-movements, not least the Argentinean occupations of factories and public spaces. Just another reason why Buenos Aires is the place to be, August 1-4, 2012.

Global Dialogue appears five times a year in thirteen languages. It can be found on [Facebook](#), and at the [ISA website](#). Submissions should be sent to Michael Burawoy: burawoy@berkeley.edu



“Watching” Tahrir. The Egyptian January 25th “Revolution” signaled a new era of social protest. The anniversary is the occasion for Samia Mehrez to think through its multiple meanings, to different publics both in Egypt and beyond.



Challenges of the ISA Forum in Buenos Aires. Local organizers, Alberto Bialakowsky and Alicia Palermo, tell us of their plans for a global conversation about Social Justice and Democratization in Buenos Aires.



Polish Migrants. The break-up of the Soviet Union and its Empire released a flow of migrants across Eastern and Central Europe, reflecting the uneven development of the area. Ewa Palenga-Möllenberg offers a poignant analysis of Polish migrants to Germany.



Local Cosmopolitanism. Continuing the debate about international sociology, Jeffrey Alexander shows how the local and the cosmopolitan are inextricably interwoven.

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> “Watching” Tahrir

by Samia Mehrez, American University in Cairo, Egypt

Samia Mehrez is a distinguished Professor of Arabic Literature in AUC's Department of Arab and Islamic Civilizations and Director of the Center for Translation Studies. I met her recently in Cairo where she showed me chapters from her forthcoming *Translating Egypt's Revolution* – exciting narratives from Tahrir written with her students. I asked her to write this piece for Global Dialogue – MB.



By the time this article is published, one year will have passed since the beginning of the January 25 uprising in Egypt that deposed former President Hosni Mubarak on February 11, 2011. The rebellion promises to remap, in many complex ways, the future of Egypt as well as its position in both the region and the world. Over the past months, the January uprising – with its ongoing proliferation of narratives oscillating between *thawra* (revolution) and *inqilab* (coup) – continues to resist and defy, at least where Egyptians are concerned, unitary naming and framing. One thing remains certain however: January 25, 2011 and the ensuing legendary eighteen days in Tahrir (not

to mention the successive waves of violent confrontations, massive demonstrations, and persistent sit-ins) marked the beginning of a new historic and symbolic life for *Midan al-Tahrir* (Tahrir Square) that has become the icon of Egypt's ongoing uprising and the barometer for a nationwide revolt that continues to transform Egyptians in many significant ways.

For a while, after January 25, people were anxious that *Midan al-Tahrir*, where hundreds were martyred and thousands wounded and detained, would become a spectacle, a mere display of itself. They feared it would become, as my colleague Amr Shalakany put it “a place where you can

A large banner in Tahrir Square, marking the anniversary of the January 25 Revolution, calling for the hanging of Gen. Hussein Tantawi (left), former President Hosni Mubarak (center) and former interior minister Habib al-Adly. Under the nooses is written: “The Rule of the People.” Photo by Mona Abaza.



Samira Ibrahim shows the victory sign during a December rally supporting women's rights in Cairo, after she had successfully sued the military for forced virginity testing of women detainees.

go and 'watch' the revolution, take a look at it, have some of its taste and then go home to another time zone altogether." True, people did come to "watch the revolution" in *Midan al-Tahrir* and many more continue to do so at home in front of the TV and on social media. But through this very process of "watching" many have become implicated as active participants and have transformed that "watching," that "spectacle," into revolutionary action that has produced new subjectivities.

Rather than supplant political activity, "spectacle" in this context became a mode of revolutionary mobilization and radicalization. Indeed, the successive waves and "spectacles" of the Egyptian uprising, both celebratory and violent – all massively documented, disseminated, and circulated – have had a dramatic, and arguably permanent impact. Egyptians have developed a new relationship to space (both public and private, real and virtual). They have acquired a newfound power of ownership of their bodies, and they have been determined to exercise their right to language, whether oral or written.

Over the past 30 years the Mubarak regime – a regime that in large part continues to be reproduced by the ruling military junta in post-January 2011 Egypt – exercised control over public space, public politics and public culture. This was accomplished through the enforcement of emergency laws that continue to legitimate detention and torture, and an erratic but relentless censorship of

freedom of expression. But this has not stopped the ongoing contest over the occupation of public spaces and the mobilization of mass protests.

The multiple "spectacles" of the Egyptian uprising have at once marked a dramatic rupture with the regime's politics of intimidation. They have enabled the beginning of a fearless era for Egyptians who continue to defend their newly won freedom and ownership of space, body, and language through a myriad of creative political and cultural practices whose semiotics, aesthetics, and poetics have inspired parallel uprisings worldwide. These "spectacles" – the last of which was in Tahrir on New Year's Eve, the first ever in the history of the *midan* – have served to radicalize Egyptians and to fuel continued collective mobilization on the ground. This mobilization continues despite the enormous price paid in human lives and despite continuing counter-revolutionary attempts by the ruling military council and its new allies, the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafis, to exhaust the uprising of its energy and re-intimidate Egyptians through a politics of fear and discrimination. Indeed, these revolutionary "spectacles" prompted staged and short-lived "counter-spectacles" throughout the past year by "supporters" of Mubarak and the ruling SCAF (Supreme Council of the Armed Forces) that only confirmed the power of the former and the transparency of the latter.

Initially, the "spectacle" of the Egyptian uprising exploited, radicalized, and revolutionized rituals of the tra-

ditional *mulid* – a popular celebration of the birthday of a venerated spiritual figure whose codes of conduct are familiar to all Egyptians across class divides. *Mulid* have become an integral part of Tahrir demonstrations throughout the past year. This ritualistic, festive, celebratory mode brought forth and sustained the birth of the "Independent Republic of Tahrir," the sheer spectacle of which brought millions of Egyptians to the streets and continues to inspire ongoing demonstrations nationwide. One of the most radical outcomes of "watching" the revolution in Tahrir has been the thorough understanding that Tahrir (which means "liberation") is not just a physical place but a *collective state and consciousness* through which the basic demands of Egypt's uprising – 'ish, *Huriya*, 'adala *igtima'iya* (bread, freedom, social justice) – continue to amass signification and translations. Ensuing and repeated "spectacles" of SCAF violence, as well as less visible violations and intimidation (testimonies on the beating, electrocuting, and maiming of protestors, virginity tests for detained women demonstrators, military trials for civilians, the killing of tens of Coptic demonstrators with armored military vehicles, raiding media and NGO offices, harassing and arresting foreign reporters, rigging election ballots, violating and stripping women's bodies, etc.) all circulated on social media and private satellite channels ever since last February.

The continuing episodes of violence have denuded and discredited the initial romance between the army and the people. But more and more Egyptians know that the revolution continues not just in Egypt and the region, but no less significantly in multiple globalized translations of the "spectacles" of Tahrir, all resounding across different languages: the people demand the downfall of the regime (*al-sha'b yurid isqat al-nidham*). ■

> Challenges of the ISA Forum in Buenos Aires: Fighting an Unequal World with an Equal Sociology

by **Alberto L. Bialakowsky and Alicia I. Palermo**, President and Co-President of the Local Organizing Committee, ISA Forum, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 2012

Preparations for the ISA Forum to be held in Buenos Aires, August 1-4 (2012) are currently underway. This process – which started with the selection of Buenos Aires as the venue – makes this Forum and this Argentinean city the site and culmination of a global, intellectual exchange in sociology and the social sciences. It is, perhaps, the most significant such meeting, having such a global scope, in Latin America in decades. Without doubt, the intellectual potential of Latin America is well known, as is its literature; nevertheless, this potential still has several steps to climb when it comes to recognizing its critical, collective, and transformative role. This Forum can already be characterized as a great opportunity for dialogue and inter-continental bridge building, and to collectively face the scientific and social challenges that inspire us, North–South and South–North alike.

We would like to underscore three important aspects of the Forum: first, the theme of the meeting, “Social Justice and Democratization”; second, the role of “subjects” in the production of scientific knowledge and

social transformation; and third, the intellectual structure of the Forum itself, which may be overlooked but, in fact, gives meat to such a meeting.

Regarding the first, putting together a theme and a call for papers always entails examining specialties and subfields, but it should also involve asking questions that cross-cut them. The paradigm of *complexity* has facilitated an exploration of diverse points of view, and it has permitted us to overcome such dichotomies as micro and macro, disciplinary and interdisciplinary. In this way it is possible to address multiple levels and from different angles, attempting to enrich each level on its own as well as through exchanges among them. Thus “social justice and democratization” will appear in specific, concrete subfields, while also taking on multiple meanings that transcend subfields.

The history of sociology is replete with evaluations of justice and inequality. Some theoretical positions are more sympathetic to the status quo while others adopt more critical perspectives and promote social change. Placing power at the center

of sociology, however, helps to reduce the distance between these oppositions. To put it differently, all sociology entails some kind of utopia and a praxis of biopolitics that motivate research and permeate – even if tacitly – theoretical foundations, applications, and analysis as well as the transfer of knowledge.

In contemporary global society, the pangs of systemic crisis demand new intellectual efforts to face social injustice, both within societies and between them. The re-emergence of the global debate on human rights brings to the fore the contradiction between significant progress in scientific and productive forces on the one side and their impact on social equity on the other, between our relationship with nature and our understanding of planetary dynamics. Efforts to control these opposing forces and assure their delicate balance produce a discourse that calls into question the superiority of the positivist, Enlightenment approach – an argument made by the Frankfurt School and, more recently, by authors in the Latin American tradition of “critical and de-colonial thinking.” Scientific progress does not

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guarantee social justice or full citizen participation. Metaphorically speaking, society's tectonic plates reveal the persistence of slavery, poverty, ethnic or gender segregation, genocide, and ecological devastation.

Undoubtedly, democratization operates not just at the level of societies, but between societies, between society and nature, and even between disciplines. But ethnocentrism, anthropocentrism, and multiple hegemonies present challenges not only in conducting research on societies but also in the very interior of scientific processes of sociological understanding and discovery. Referring to "radical epistemic critique emerging from the neo-dependency school of Latin America," Sujata Patel (2010) writes: "Theorists such as Aníbal Quijano, Enrique Dussel, and Walter Dignolo have elaborated this position, arguing that universalization inherent in sociological theory is part of the geopolitics of knowledge. The key to this process is an assessment of modernity and its relationship to social theory."

In other words, it is not just a matter of analyzing objective questions in different research subjects, but raising the issue of epistemological asymmetries and hegemonic theorizations. The dialogic approach of the new theoretical currents denies the fixity of asymmetries rooted in paradigms of modernity, and starts out from the idea that these oppositions can be surpassed. This experience has been highlighted by African analysts. "Doing sociology in Nigeria has passed through various challenging periods. Currently, the most pressing challenge for sociologists in Nigeria, and indeed Africa, is to develop a critical capacity not only for explaining and interpret-

“the most significant such meeting in Latin America in decades”

ing African social reality, enhanced by endogenous models that capture the nature of the paradox and tensions in the emergent social structure, but also the character of agency thrown up by such a process. To achieve this, we need a paradigm shift" (Onyeonoru, 2010: 280).

One way or another, we believe, this form of thinking expresses the need for a new, dialogical paradigm with a corresponding scientific exchange in order to establish a new "ecology of knowledge" (De Sousa Santos, 2010). In the context of successive crises, sociologists can provide criticism and proposals for change for which intercontinental understanding is essential. This does not, however, imply dispensing with endogenous thinking, nor that we cease to aspire to debate with a planetary horizon.

Against a backdrop of social inequalities and a world in constant motion, sociologists have much to contribute, both in explaining and understanding this reality and in its transformation. The global crisis is increasingly affecting broad and diverse fractions of society in the widest variety of contexts. We can lend support to the ever more expressive demands and multiple

struggles of groups affected now and in the future, as much in the Global North as in the Global South.

This leads us to ask: Can the ISA Forum 2012 meet these challenges? Without a doubt, as a unique structure, it can meet them. Indeed, the Forum aims to be an instrument of dialogue and a space for thinking together, and thereby deepening these debates. As a social and intellectual force – as a symposium and a meeting place – it has the possibility of advancing global social analysis through creative exchange. In fact, it forms a critical and reflexive community and, therefore, part of the *general intellect*, an intellect that is both collective and public.

We are committed to fighting for an intense and fraternal scene. We hope to stage – in a joint and shared way – a combination of debates and exchanges within and between Research Committees, Working and Thematic Groups, in the Joint Sessions as well as in the Plenaries and Public Forums. ■

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> Polish Migrants: Resourceful Transnationals or Guest Workers?

by Ewa Palenga-Möllenbeck, University of Frankfurt, Germany



Upper Silesia's close association with Germany has a long and well-remembered history. In this post-WWI drawing, Upper Silesia is depicted as torn between Poland (represented by poverty of woman with baby) and Germany (represented by the prosperity of factory and country houses). To this day many inhabitants feel caught between both worlds. Original drawing held in the Imperial War Museum, London, UK.

Since the 1990s, a new approach has been gaining ground in migration studies. While the classical paradigm saw migration as a once-in-a-lifetime event that would ultimately lead to assimilation into the receiving society, or to a permanent return, research into “transnational” migration highlights how migrants can maintain ties in more than one national society. This approach was developed on the basis of the North American experience, but similar phenomena may be found in Europe. One such case is short-term migration from Upper Silesia in what is now Poland, but before World War II used to be a Polish-German borderland that often defied national policies.

Due to the *ius sanguinis* principle underlying German citizenship law, many inhabitants of this region are entitled to German citizenship, regardless of whether they have any social or cultural ties with Germany, and without needing to give up their Polish nationality. Since the 1990s, dual citizens have used this loophole to gain access to the German labor market, which otherwise remained closed to Polish citizens until 2011. While many Silesians settled permanently in Germany, hundreds of thousands of them preferred to keep a permanent residence in Poland and commute to German jobs. In this way they could achieve a standard of living that would be beyond their means if they relied on the Polish labor market.

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The case of Silesian dual citizens shows that having legal privileges does not automatically render them “transnational.” The majority has permanently adapted to a mobile lifestyle, but that does not mean they are transmigrants in the narrow sense as “people with feet in two societies.” Just as often we observe another type of migrant who, although permanently mobile, retains exclusive social ties to their society of origin. This is somewhat surprising. After all, at first sight, such migrants might be expected to become transmigrants due to their cultural heritage (bilingualism, migration as tradition, etc.), their legal privileges (dual citizenship), and, finally, their employment in a migration-related industry (transnationally operating companies, service providers, etc.).

However, reality turns out to be more complex. On the one hand, being dual citizens, those migrants have more employment opportunities than they can choose from – they may work full-time or part-time in Germany as well as obtain a pension, a permanent job, or training in Poland. This gives them a scope of action and career planning approaching that of “assimilated” non-migrants in Germany. On the other hand, it is precisely the high degree of security in Poland that encourages constant migration and discourages their assimilation into the receiving society. Thus, they end

up on one end of a continuum, the other end of which is occupied by illegal migrants who are forced to assimilate to escape arrest and deportation. Their lack of language skills and knowledge of German society makes these “legally German” citizens completely dependent on their respective sending companies. As a manager of a group of migrants put it: “They know they have someone who looks after them [...] They want to work, make money, and that’s it. [...] They feel if they have a red [German] passport, that’s all they need, and they just need to make money and that’s it.”

The dual citizens just described are more similar to the easily exploited 1950s guest workers than to resourceful actors that negotiate the demands of two national societies with equal ease. Still, such resourceful actors do exist among Silesian migrants – they have the necessary language skills and cultural capital, professional qualifications, and social capital that allow them to easily switch national job markets. The reasons that make some migrants resourceful actors in the receiving society while others remain dependent “guest workers” are complex and cannot be discussed in detail here. One factor that could be singled out as favoring the “guest-worker lifestyle” is the existence of a transnational migration industry that offers many employment opportunities and en-

courages mobility, but at the same time takes the migrants’ lives very much out of their own hands, thus limiting both the opportunities and necessity to directly interact with the receiving society.

The rise of such a migration industry goes hand in hand with an important development that can be observed in all industrialized countries: the decline of the “standard employment relationship” and its replacement with atypical, precarious employment. Thus, part-time, short-term jobs dominate among Silesian migrants, who often combine them with other precarious jobs, education or even permanent employment in Poland. As with all large-scale societal developments, it is difficult to identify cause and effect, winners and losers. On the one hand, precarious work in Germany encourages this type of migration or makes it feasible in the first place. In turn, it further contributes to the ongoing precariousness of the migrants’ lives. On the other hand, this process is much more advanced in Poland, where the switch from a planned to a “post-industrial” economy was almost instantaneous, with an impact on the labor market that made short-term migration appear attractive or even inevitable. Thus, we see that in today’s world, migration takes on many surprising and fascinating patterns that defy the old models of assimilation. ■

> Local Cosmopolitanism

by Jeffrey C. Alexander, Yale University, USA, past Chair of the ISA Research Committee on Sociological Theory (RC16) and recipient of the ISA Mattei Dogan Foundation Prize, 2010



Here are two contrasting aesthetic representations of nature, one Chinese and the other American. Neither is based on indigenous experience, however each is stylized by long-standing cosmopolitan as well as local traditions and styles. In other words, art never represents nature objectively, any more than sociology transparently represents society.

This debate between Piotr Sztompka and Michael Burawoy is richly rewarding and long overdue. They are among the world's best sociological theorists, but their dialogue is important, paradoxically, not because it is filled with spanking new ideas. To the contrary, their divergences are tried and true, as old as social thinking itself. It is, of course, precisely because these issues will not go away that the debate between them must be periodically sharpened and renewed.

Sociology aspires to rationality, universalism, and theoretical generality. Yet, while these themes represent spectacular achievements of the natural sciences, they

can never be more than aspirational for the human sciences, as Wilhelm Dilthey explained more than a century ago. Like art, sociology is rooted in and reflects upon local conditions of life experience. This does not, however, mean that sociology is practiced in a purely local, self-referential manner.

Important painting has always been stylized by aesthetic traditions that transcend the styles within which local efforts find their mode of expression. In imperial China, such external styling came from the so-called classical traditions. In the emerging modern Western art of the 19th century, local European painters made continuous reference to what they called the modern tradi-

tion. Those who wished to constitute a national avant-garde made every effort to hyphenate local traditions with the extra-national aesthetic increasingly centered in Paris, and often left their national locales to abide inside the cosmopolis, Paris itself.

It is no different with sociology. As with art, sociologies are “local” because they grow out of efforts to interpret the social experiences of a community in a particular time and place. American, British, French, and German sociologies are no exceptions. Each is different from the other, and each difference reflects the experiences of time and space that determine what is most needed to be sociologically known.

We learn much from reading national sociologies, about what overriding national concerns call out for interpretation, about nationally situated power struggles and nationally contested cultural meanings. We can learn all this, of course, only when these sociological writings are translated into the small number of the world’s relatively common languages, whether via conference presentation or published writing. It is such translation into trans-local languages that allows increasing knowledge about the local and concrete.

No more than art, however, can locally situated sociological efforts easily be conceptualized as products of concrete time and place. Indigenous sociologies are hardly indigenous. They are mediated by extra-local intellectual traditions of nations and by the global intellectual and religious traditions that have continuously reconstituted regional

and national identities over centuries. Yes, there are Chinese and Taiwanese and Indian and Korean and Japanese sociological traditions, and they represent deeply cherished sources of local knowledge and insight. But such efforts are hardly reflections of local conditions! The local sociologists producing such studies are products of globalized training institutions, have weaned themselves on broad regional and international classics, and understand their own local societies in de-centered, cosmopolitan ways.

It is the existence of such “local cosmopolitanism” that makes every practicing sociologist, no matter how local, committed to extra-personal standards of validity, to the criteria of truthfulness that transcend his or her local institutional affiliation and social situation. It is perhaps only a slight exaggeration to suggest that every sociologist in the world has rational aspirations. Nobody allows their colleagues to claim the mantle of truthfulness merely because their work is energetic in its address of local problems, much less because their colleagues are, like them, African, Indian, American, or Chinese in origin. Sociology is reflexive because it is de-centered. Sociology is reflexive or it is nothing at all.

Art is the same. For most of the 19th century, American painting was mostly cut off from European currents; full of pride yet provincial, it is understood today, and sometimes greatly valued, as folkish and “naïve.” As the US developed in the later 19th century, aspiring painters traveled to Europe, mostly Paris, and in the first half of the 20th century America’s newly cosmopolitan locals produced distinctive but deriva-

tive versions of the French school. Only when the US emerged as a pre-eminent power after World War II did American painting come into its own, becoming world-historical in its own right. The “New York School” established a new global aesthetic. Yet, while physically located in the great American metropolis, Abstract Expressionism could hardly be seen as local, as reflecting indigenous American traditions. It marked, instead, an extension of the modern aesthetic that had been forged in Europe, and which had itself, 50 years earlier, been critically formed by incorporating Japanese, African, and pre-Columbian Aboriginal aesthetic themes.

So it will be with sociology. We are fortunate to be alive in the era when the extraordinary modernization of non-Western societies is allowing them to challenge Western hegemony for the first time in some 500 years. Eventually, this process of multiple modernities is bound to challenge, not only Western economic prowess and military might, but its hegemonic sociological theories and methods. When these Chinese or Indian or Korean and South African or Russian thinkers do throw down their theoretical and methodological gauntlets, however, they will do so not as indigenous species. Their works will be products of centuries of intense intellectual globalizing.

It is not from particular sociologies that a new universal will arise. Neither in sociology nor art are there real particulars. Neither are there true universals. There is neither and both at the same time. ■

> Latin America A Community of Destiny?

by Paulo Henrique Martins, Federal University of Pernambuco, Brazil, and President of the Latin American Sociological Association

Globalization is creating new spaces of knowledge production that are changing the traditional intellectual division of labor dominated by Europe as the privileged center for thinking about modernity. For some authors, such as Arjun Appadurai, the “Third World” no longer functions as a data mill for the “North,” and, as a result, the “North” has lost its hegemony as the producer of ideas for the “South.” In this new vision globalization appears as a plurality of fields, constructing sociological knowledge through complex geographic processes that cross national borders without eliminating nations as a locus of knowledge production.

Thinking particularly about Latin America, the globalization of knowledge is contributing to an important change in the epistemological foundations of academic sociology. In the first period, between the 1940s and 1980s, critical thought was largely conditioned by the representation of globalization as economic and political dependency. This is reflected in two principal currents of thought at the time. The first was structuralism, inspired by the Economic Commission for Latin America and



the Caribbean (CEPAL), an institution founded in 1948 to think about regional economic development. Among its major theorists were two economists, the Argentinean Raúl Prebisch and the Brazilian Celso Furtado, who defended the importance of the State as an agent of

development to counteract deteriorating terms of international trade that jeopardized countries producing raw materials. CEPAL brought the center-periphery distinction to the debate about development. A second current, Dependency Theory, articulated by such authors as

Theotonio dos Santos, R. M. Marini, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Enzo Faletto among others, developed the political aspects of CEPAL's analysis of center-periphery relations. They argued that overcoming dependency hinges on particular alliances among national bourgeoisie, international bourgeoisies and various popular classes.

In more recent times, from the 1980s to the present, sociology has incorporated diverse understandings of globalization. On the one hand, there are neoliberals who argue that economic globalization would eliminate differences between "center" and "periphery," leading to the decline of national societies and the strengthening of economic, financial, technological and cultural uniformity. In this discourse of uniformity, influenced by abstract economic theories, sociology neglects the importance of politics and cultural differences, hypervalorizing global consumption. For the neoliberals the discourse about dependency is outdated. On the other hand, there are post-dependency theorists who claim that dependency relations are being re-organized as a form of "coloniality" of power and knowledge, rethinking the contradictions between "rich societies" and "poor societies" in the world system. Theorists of "coloniality" realize the impossibility of adopting Eurocentric theories without considering the social, economic, political, cultural and religious particularities of "Southern" societies. This second "post-colonial" tendency of

“dependency relations are being re-organized as a form of ‘coloniality’”

Latin American thought recognizes the historic clash of colonialism and anti-colonialism but also brings to light new means of control and domination on a global scale.

Post-colonial theory of Latin America does not regard the terms "colonialism" and "anti-colonialism" as mere historical legacies of the "Occident." For them, these expressions are the elements of a cognitive and linguistic strategy, entailed in what Boaventura de Sousa Santos and others call "zone of contact," necessary to understand diverse experiences and ideas within the world system. Colonialism and anti-colonialism function as two surfaces in the mirror of globalization, mediating the translation of information, images, and ideas between "North" and "South." For these authors, globalization involves a complex process of translation operating in global forums and movements, in international publishing, and in international associations like the ISA and ALAS (Latin American Sociological Association). In these contexts, the political, moral, aesthetic, ethical and linguistic elements of social life thrive, incrementally advancing new modalities of exchange between diverse centers of knowledge pro-

duction. The prestige of such Latin American authors as Casanova, Quijano, Lander, as well as such Northern figures as Immanuel Wallerstein demonstrate that new theories of colonialism are gaining ground.

Finally, we must remember that post-colonial societies have not been subject to uniform cultural, historical and political forces within the colonial process of globalization. Indeed, we propose that one of the particularities of academic sociology in Latin America is an expectation shared by many intellectuals that this region can become a possible community of destiny. Through this lens, it must be noted that the expression "Latin America" is symbolically incorrect as it emphasizes a linguistic community formed through colonialism, namely "Latinos," which excludes other communities of historic importance such as indigenous peoples, ex-slaves of African origin, non-Latin European immigrants, and Asians. The understanding of Latin America as a possible community of destiny is a utopia gaining force, stimulating academic exchange and giving unity to a regional sociology. ■

> The Lamentable State of Post-Soviet Sociology

by Victor Vakhshayn, Moscow School of Social and Economic Sciences, Russia



Echoes of the Soviet Era at the Third All-Russia Sociological Congress of 2008.

Over the last few years the intellectual space of Russian sociology has become a battle field. It would seem that two out of three sociological writings today are about sociology itself: sociology of sociology becomes, if not part of mainstream research, then at least a favorite theme for public debate. No longer are the Soviet Union's collapse and "the need to study social transformation" the only legitimate bases for studies in social science. Now that

the post-Soviet childhood of the social sciences is over, an almost obsessive, hyper-reflexivity has replaced decades of unreflective thinking.

> Neo-Soviet Language

It makes sense to look back on the landscape of sociological language prior to the recent wars. The Third All-Russia Sociological Congress of 2008 is a good place to begin. The Congress crystallized neo-Soviet language patterns of stylistic vacuity: "For the needs

of society's steady development it is necessary to provide high-quality applied sociological research," or "[...] sociology today is faced with the task of studying a society's demand for social, physiological, economic, energy, synergy, and other forms of security." Consider, for example, the results of a survey administered to 2500 Congress participants. It turns out that 73% of the respondents (about a quarter of the participants) were proficient in one foreign language with a dictionary; 40% were employed in the government and

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a similar figure in business at some point after the year 2000; 66% read the main journal *Socis*; the most popular textbook was the one edited by V. Dobren'kov and A. Kravchenko; among foreign authors the most frequently mentioned were Zygmunt Bauman and Piotr Sztompka.

Asked for definitions of sociology, the most popular was "sociology is the science of society," and asked what society was, most did not respond, and, among those who did, the winning definition was "society is a *socium*." Such tautologies are the semantics of conservatives for whom sociology is a social technology with value to the state. If theory is needed, it should be Russian theory, which addresses national concerns. At the Congress accusations were leveled against "some liberal sociologists" who "are paid from the West" to instigate "orange revolutions." The Congress demonstrated that a consolidated, neo-Soviet, sociological language was in the process of formation with its distinct codes, mechanisms of reaching understanding, shared axiomatics and the logic of tautology.

> Anti-Soviet Language

Now let's turn to alternative languages of sociology. Here, one cannot ignore the symposium *Russian Pathways*, for eighteen years one of the most conspicuous and regular events in social science. From its published materials (1993-2008) one can see how its "anti-Soviet" language codes and metaphors have become ever more hermetic. Thus, it is interesting to trace the meaning of "transformation" as it grew from a concept into a metaphor which can describe virtually anything. As with neo-Soviet language, it has its own axiomatic claims, accepted-by-all and as-not-requiring-proof. First, it takes a critical stance toward the rigid language of Soviet sociology and its heir – the conservative neo-Soviet doublespeak. Second, it adopts explicitly stated ideals: sociology should serve progress – a civic society, democratization and liberalization. Third, it emphasizes the

importance of empirical work, i.e. sociology with its skilled description of the "true problems of Russian society." The continual harping on "true problems of society" betrays a naïve realism about society as an objective entity with its unique problems and diseases, imposing an agenda on researchers. Similar to Galileo who assumed the Book of Nature is written in the language of mathematics, the naïve realists assumed that the Book of Society is written in the language of sociology, moreover, in the language of *their* sociology.

The semantics of *Russian Pathways* substantially changed over the fifteen years of its publications. Starting with stormy debates about Russia's future in the mid-1990s, *Russian Pathways* had lost its radical drive by the end of the 1990s, taking on a "liberal critique" of the regime. Yet, despite the evolution of its rhetoric, the underlying description has remained unchanged, namely "This is not what it should be," which, in the 1990s, sounded like, "This is not what it should be yet," and in the 2000s sounded like, "This is totally different from what it should be."

> A Post-Soviet Convergence

Just as *tautology* is the main formula for "neo-Soviet" languages, so *paradox* is the main formula for "anti-Soviet" languages, drawing attention to the gap between "what is" and "what should be." My main thesis is that there is no difference between the two languages – both are deeply Soviet.

1. Culture of Suspicion. Both forms of speech share the assumption: "Behind any knowledge stand political interests." Whatever you say it is not what you think and the language you use reflects the political interests you serve. Therefore, any theory is viewed from the standpoint of its "outcome," i.e. what it seeks to achieve.

2. Engagement. Within neo-Soviet language sociology is dependent on the state and research is replaced

by social technology whereas anti-Soviet semantics assume that science serves the interests of progress – note, the interests of progress but not science itself. There is no notion of "knowledge for knowledge's sake," nor of Weber's idea of science rooted in its own values, with knowledge providing its own motivation. In both forms of post-Soviet thinking knowledge has to be geared to solving acute problems.

3. Theoretical nationalism. Embargo the import of any theoretical heritage "from the West" unless it is already rooted in our soil. The word "soil" certainly belongs to the language of the Third Sociological Congress. The language of *Russian Pathways* has another vivid metaphor – "homeland aspens." Thus, aversion to imported theoretical ideas is a common denominator of neo-Soviet and anti-Soviet methods of description.

4. Absence of reflexivity. Just a few years ago both "conservatives" and "liberals" equally rejected methodological reflexivity. They saw in it a "post-modern deviation," i.e. an attempt to deviate from a sacred duty to study "reality as it really is." Today the situation has totally changed with each side wallowing in reflexivity, which is but another over-reaction that stymies the development of Russian sociology.

Certainly these two semantics, tautological and paradoxical, do not cover the entire post-Soviet spectrum. There have been other languages but they emerged outside the theoretical "mainstream" or far beyond the Moscow Beltline (for example, in St. Petersburg). While in the wider world advocates of socio-analysis, frame analysis, phenomenology and ethnomethodology struggle for scientific advantage, in Russian sociology conservatives and liberals face off against each other with the result that sociological talk has come to look like politically determined journalism. ■

> Maori Sociology in New Zealand

by Tracey McIntosh, The University of Auckland, New Zealand

New Zealand is a settler state. It has a colonial past that it must constantly confront. This means that sociology in New Zealand is well placed to critically engage and respond to the reproduction of privilege and disadvantage as they relate to indigenous (Maori) and non-indigenous peoples in New Zealand. As a Maori sociologist with a personal and scholarly interest in Maori-centered research I believe that sociologists have a strong contribution to make in cross-cultural research with a social justice agenda. While there are a relatively small number of senior and emerging Maori sociologists in New Zealand there are a significant number of non-indigenous sociologists whose research is centered on the Maori experience.

The Maori historical experience of colonization and the contemporary reality of marginalization, deprivation and scarcity mean that Maori ethnic identity is a site of struggle and resistance. As *tangata whenua* (people of the land, indigenous people), Maori find their social location in New Zealand society to be highly contested. While over-represented in every negative social indicator, they have often had to contest political and populist rhetoric that exaggerates their modest achievements won as rights-bearing indigenous peoples. Maori political struggle has sought redress for land and resources that have been illegally alienated in the past (and often a very contemporary past). The successful resolution of some of these ongoing struggles has meant that every aspect of their life is politicized and scrutinized.

That there exist major inequalities between Maori and non-Maori is clear. Extensive research on the Maori condition shows that Maori suffer disadvantages from birth. The Maori infant is more likely to die than the non-Maori infant. The Maori child is less likely to participate in early childhood education. Maori are much more likely to be suspended and expelled from school, thereby reducing their educational achievement and increasing the likelihood of juvenile criminality. Maori unemployment rates are significantly higher than that of non-Maori, and Maori income is considerably lower. Maori are more likely to require government assistance and to be dependent on government benefits. Many Maori live in inadequate housing and suffer a poorer mental and physical health status than non-Maori. Maori disadvantage and difference are most clearly marked in the criminal justice system. Maori are over-represented both as victims and offenders, and while making up 15% of the total population of New Zealand they make up more than 50% of the prison population. For too many Maori life is tied to unemployment, illness, psychiatric conditions, poverty and prison. Though the position and legitimacy of Maori culture within New Zealand society have been greatly enhanced since the 1970s, with greater respect afforded to our culture and language, the Maori renaissance has been far less successful in addressing the many other social inequities.

Sociological research can play an important role in addressing these critical issues. The power of research is most clearly demonstrated in projects where members of a team draw on their multiple research traditions and

where findings are widely distributed. This is not to elide questions of power. All research is dominated by the dynamics of power (and powerlessness). Power relations pervade the research process from the initial investment to design, participant engagement, implementation and dissemination. Nonetheless, a focus on social justice outcomes brings to light the challenges and opportunities that researchers and research participants may encounter.

To conclude, I want to reflect specifically on cross-cultural issues in a Maori-centered research environment. In the current environment there is research that is Maori-led from beginning to end, but non-Maori researchers can play a vital role, especially when they are willing to forgo traditional research controls and work within Maori determined contexts. Until recently, Maori communities have not benefited from mainstream research, which usually adopted a “deficit” lens. Today these same communities often recognize the advantages of collaborative multi-cultural research, although there are still others who insist on Maori research with Maori for Maori. Members of oppressed groups have had to study dominant groups informally all their lives in order to learn how to get by and to navigate dominant spaces. Through our collaborations we can teach non-indigenous researchers about ourselves but perhaps, more tellingly, we can teach them about themselves. ■

> A Note on the “New Poverty” in Post-Soviet Armenia

by **Gevorg Poghosyan**, Director of Institute of Philosophy, Sociology and Law of the Armenian National Academy of Sciences, and President of the Armenian Sociological Association

The social transformations at the end of the 20th century, following the breakup of the Soviet Union, inaugurated a new historical era. Post-Soviet countries involved in the process of social modernization have experienced serious developmental difficulties. The “modernization rebound” and deindustrialization represent a common stage of post-Soviet development. The problem lies in the exclusion of ethno-cultural processes from models of modernization.

In the case of Armenia the “modernization rebound” brought deep deindustrialization moving the country toward archaic forms of economic activity, especially in agriculture (Poghosyan 2005). Post-Soviet privatization resulted in property being concentrated in the hands of a small minority of private owners and the result has been extreme poverty and the underdevelopment of a middle class (Poghosyan 2003).

The transformation of the structure of modern Armenian society, which is not yet over, has resulted in striking changes. On the basis of a nationwide sociological survey we elaborated the following model (Poghosyan 2005):

- **The highest stratum:** political and economical elites, large property own-

ers, oligarchs (5-7% of the population);

- **The middle stratum:** small businessmen and entrepreneurs, highly paid professionals, state functionaries and managers (10-12%);

- **The majority stratum:** office workers, service workers, peasants, intellectuals, pensioners, merchants, and people who are temporarily unemployed (65%);

- **The social “bottom”:** homeless, permanently unemployed, prostitutes, social “losers” (15%).

Armenian society has become “multi-leveled,” with escalating differences in the living standards separating different social strata. Marginalization of large sectors of the population has begun, especially as a result of unemployment. What I have characterized as the “New Poverty” is the result of reforms and the destruction of the former economic system, and not a statement about some inherited cultural disorganization of society. Such poverty could not be found in the Soviet period.

Moreover, this “New Poverty” has nothing in common with the massive poverty found in Third World countries, where poverty is characterized by misery, illiteracy, high child mortality rates, and poor public sanitation.

None of these conditions pertain to the phenomenon of post-Soviet “New Poverty,” which afflicts a population with a high level of education, a secure system of health protection, and good conditions of life. The “New Poverty” affects people who were satisfied enough in the past, such as laborers, office workers, the intelligentsia, pensioners, and housekeepers. The same “New Poverty” is now visible in some EU countries and the USA, following the global financial crisis.

Traditional strategies of overcoming poverty based on the experience of Third World countries are, as a rule, not appropriate in these cases. We need new concepts and strategies for overcoming this new poverty that take into account the ethno-cultural peculiarities of each country. In the case of Armenia with its economically active, educated population and its high level of investment potential from the Armenian Diaspora, the solution may lie with the rapid development of small and medium businesses. ■

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> The Vital Life of *Current Sociology*

by Jennifer Platt, University of Sussex, UK, and ISA Vice-President for Publications, 2010-2014, and Eloísa Martín, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and Editor of *Current Sociology*

An early trend report of *Current Sociology*, still widely cited.



Current Sociology is one of the longest-standing sociological journals; this year it celebrates its 60th anniversary. Its development shows quite a lot about the general progress of sociology internationally since the 1950s. ISA was founded at the instance of UNESCO, and so the journal started as a UNESCO production; when Tom Bottomore became ISA's Executive Secretary in 1957 he took over the editorship. (In 1973 Margaret Archer became the first editor who was not also holding another ISA post.) The leading part of its early mission was to promote international communication by providing a general bibliography of recently published sociology; the field was still small enough for that to be practicable. The headings under which items were classified in the bibliography included "Sociology of primitive and under-developed peoples," reflecting both UNESCO's action priorities and the current "comparative" theoretical approach contrasting non-industrialized and industrial societies.

Rapidly, however, the main emphasis shifted to the bibliography of specific areas of work such as the sociology of religion, science,

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politics or education, with a “trend report” for each, many written by the best-known authors of the time. These were a valuable and well-known resource. Probably the best known was S. M. Miller’s 1960 *Comparative Social Mobility*, which compared the results of the social mobility studies so far made and drew general conclusions. Google Scholar shows 253 citations to it, some of them quite recent.

In 1963 issues with groups of related papers from Research Committees were introduced, the first being on the sociology of the family; in the 1990s these became defined as a separate category, *Current Sociology Monographs*. From an early stage some of the issues were limited to one geographical area, though the titles do not always make it clear whether the area defines the topic, or just the country where the sociological work mentioned was carried out; over time issues reviewing a whole national sociology also appeared: *Scandinavian Sociology* (1977), *Anglo-Canadian Sociology* (1986), and so on. Finally, in 1997 it was decided that the trend report model no longer fitted contemporary needs, with so many other information sources readily available. Under Susan McDaniel’s editorship, the journal was relaunched on the more conventional model of a peer-re-

viewed journal, with a focus on new developments and controversies in sociological inquiry – but still reviewing international developments, whether in substantive areas, concepts, or theories and methods, and addressing the widest group of international colleagues.

Dennis Smith continued Susan’s pioneering efforts, and was Editor from 2002 to 2010. It is undeniable that he stamped a personal mark on the journal during these eight years, providing a fresh outlook on the new academic demands. Under his editorship the journal was accepted for ISI listing, and has already achieved a very respectable ranking. In addition, thanks to his capacity to read the implicit sociological agendas formulated in the work submitted, Dennis’s editorship helped to create a space in which those works and agendas could be subject to critical debate. This was done, in part, by organizing dialogues, allowing authors and critics to engage with one another on many different topics.

Current Sociology has always received submissions in the ISA’s official languages of English, French, and Spanish, but now, thanks to an initiative by the Publications Committee, it accepts submissions in practically every language, in order to facilitate publication for scholars

who find it difficult to write in English. For researchers working outside the English-speaking world – especially those who live in peripheral countries – this provides a unique opportunity to share their findings with an international audience. In 2010, Eloísa Martín took over the editorship. It was the first time that the journal would be administered by a non-Anglophone scholar from a non-central academic institution. This reflects changes in ISA membership, which extends to countries all around the world, and also creates challenges for the journal’s future.

Nowadays, the world’s universities seem to share the same concern and complaint: publish or perish. Funding, project approval and prestige all depend on the quantity of a researcher’s publications, in the first place, and also on the ranking of the journals where such research is published. Within, and despite, this context *Current Sociology* would like to focus on the tradition of dialogue, where reflections can be made available for colleagues to debate, critique and improve, and where the careful reading of works by other colleagues constitutes a place for exchange. In such dialogues, we could find new heuristic tools to contemplate our local realities, while considering sociology a necessarily global project. ■

> The Global Classroom

by Larissa Titarenko, Belarus State University, Minsk, Belarus, and Craig B. Little, State University of New York at Cortland, USA



Professors Larissa Titarenko and Craig Little, architects of innovative international teaching collaboration.

The new knowledge society is based largely on Internet Communication Technologies (ICTs). New ICTs are everywhere making our lives more complicated, but they also bring us boundless opportunities. In education ICTs allow us to distribute electronic books and other texts throughout the world and to teach students on line. In the public sphere the ICTs allow people to transmit information via forums and social network regardless of the geographical distance.

Students in a virtual classroom are divided by physical space, but they are symbolically connected by being involved in the same practical activities, learning the same material and discussing it in an open manner. Unlike the traditional class, a virtual class allows the students to log in and out any time, 24/7, still maintaining a feeling that they are united in a common, shared enterprise through cyberspace.

> Collaborating On Line

In education Internet tools are usually used for traditional aims – to teach students where to find useful information, how to use it properly, how to research efficiently, etc. In the case of distance education, especially in the social sciences, electronic online tools facilitate students' active involvement in their studies even while not necessarily being physically

close to a single college or to each other. Distance learning is a way to teach students from different cities, villages, regions and even countries all together as if they were enrolled in one physically unique class. Therefore, a virtual classroom is invisible, but very real. In it, participants encourage one another by maintaining intellectual contact, debating issues, exchanging opinions, completing joint tasks and the like.

In both cases – traditional classrooms and new ones created by ICTs – students and teachers can participate in knowledge construction. In the new ICT-facilitated classroom, students feel attached to the learning process, they can contribute their own ideas and, therefore, their knowledge becomes personal or, rather, interpersonal (inter-subjective): they produce it not only from the books they read, but from communication with each other through online interaction. As they do not see the instructor nearby, they feel more independent in their outlooks and often express themselves more freely.

Thus, one advantage of the new ICTs, as applied to higher education, is the possibility to create collaborative, online, international learning environments of globally networked students and professors. In a virtual class students from different colleges and countries can study a subject together while communicating with each other through Internet technologies. In a distance class the students are encouraged to participate in a dialogue as long as they wish to. They also complete assignments (usually for the purpose of checking their knowledge of the assigned texts) and submit them through the selected learning management system (LMS). The workload in an international distance class, both for students and professors, is rather heavy, but student motivation is increased through the exercise of freedom to work at their own pace, personal responsibility for their learning outcomes, and the excitement of learning about and from student colleagues in other countries. For professors, helping their students to learn with and from their peers abroad is a most satisfying reward. Online dialogue is one of many typical assignments, but perhaps the most interesting one to students as citizens of an evolving knowledge-based global society.

Our personal experience teaching international distance classes covers the last ten years during which time we have organized such classes six times. The feedback from

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the students has consistently been more positive than from a traditional class in the same subject (social control) that was regularly taught at SUNY (State University of New York) Cortland. The two instructors of this virtual class – Professor Craig Little, USA, and Professor Larissa Titarenko, Belarus – met for the first time in Bulgaria at the international conference of the Alliance of Universities for Democracy (AUDEM) in 2001. We were both impressed by the new Internet technology presented at this conference. We immediately decided to collaborate in organizing an international distance class to broaden our students' horizons in sociology, in intercultural communication and in the methods of comparative analysis. Each time the course has been taught, from 18 to 25 students have been enrolled, most of them majoring in sociology. This class was taught several times with the participation of three universities, including Moscow State University (with Dr. Mira Bergelson) and frequently with students from Griffith University (Brisbane, Australia) where Professor Craig Little had taught some years earlier.¹

> Learning to be Global Citizens

So, when talking about an international virtual classroom we mean a unique class consisting of students from two or more different countries: in our case, the US, Belarus, Australia, and Russia. Approximately two thirds of the class were students from countries where English is the mother tongue. For a smaller group of students from Belarus participation was a triple challenge: taking a course taught in English, being exposed to a new branch of sociology (social control) that is not taught at Belarus State University, and learning in a virtual international classroom that emphasizes a learner-centered teaching style. In many cases, the Belarusian students had never been abroad so that they acquired unique knowledge of the youth culture of countries they might never visit themselves. However, as most American and Australian students also had never been to Belarus or any other post-Communist country (and a majority of them had not been to Europe either), there was a double interest for them as well.

In our virtual, online classes, students learned from three specialized textbooks, from online mini-lectures written by the professors, and from additional assignments based on electronic articles. A Student-Led Discussion involved students asking each other questions, discussing common topics raised by the readings and also current events in the world, all of which helped them understand foreign cultures, historical backgrounds, and the variety of approaches to social control around the world.

We taught this virtual course several times with repeated success. In the end all the students confirmed they learned a lot from the books and, especially from their online, personal contacts. In their teaching evaluations they reported that they received unique, first-hand information about each country, they could ask questions freely, and they did not experience common problems such as time pressure at the end of a class, intimidation by instructor's physical presence, or lack of time for communication.²

> Motivating Students

Our underlying pedagogical philosophy stems from Dewey's learner-centered approach. The students were encouraged to discuss on line many practical situations such as local law enforcement, criminal cases, approaches to punishment, violations of rights, etc. They usually discussed a situation "as it is" and tried to understand what solutions there might be, why a particular solution was applied in a particular country and the like. The idea was not to select any "best" decision, but let the students actively participate in the process of discussion, let them be creative in their arguments and in comparing different approaches. For example, when learning different systems of social control in such countries as Russia, the US, Sweden or Australia, they could compare the effectiveness of different systems on the basis of crime statistics, the cost to society of alternative approaches to punishment, rates of recidivism, etc. We also compared systems of social control in three historical periods: pre-modern, modern, and post-modern. All the students had to read three textbooks and then report their progress on line, doing short, but regular, exercises, writing essays, participating in group activities and the online student-led discussions. Our learning platform was originally provided by the SUNY Learning Network and is now simply a standard Blackboard Learning Management System, provided through SUNY Cortland.

It has been a unique experience for all the students, but probably the most important result was for the students from Belarus. Under deteriorating conditions of economic and political crisis and limited access to literature in English, the distance-learning class provides excellent chances for young people to learn in the same way as their Western classmates. We believe our use of ICTs has at least partly overcome the center-periphery dichotomy as all students approached their tasks and discussions with a genuine orientation of equality, something that we explicitly encouraged. From the perspective of the East-West dichotomy, we also believe we managed to help our students get beyond borders and stereotypes. We used Western textbooks, but additional sources included much Belarusian and other international information. The students were allowed to provide arguments from any theories and defend any position as long as their posts were respectful. From this aspect, this collaborative, international, distance-learning experience was also a lesson in democracy and human rights.

In summary, our experience with collaborative, online international learning confirmed the great potential of ICTs for effective use in higher education, especially for students from remote and politically isolated places and countries. It was a way to deepen students' knowledge, experience, and world outlook, and, therefore, to increase their personal human capital. ■

¹ For a longer description of the course, see Craig B. Little, Larissa Titarenko and Mira Bergelson (2005), "Creating a Successful International Distance Learning Classroom." *Teaching Sociology* 33(4): 355-370.

² For resources helpful to plan and teach an international distance-learning class, see the Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) website at: <http://coilcenter.purchase.edu>. For further technical questions please contact Craig Little at Craig.Little@cortland.edu

> Bias Against National Associations: The Need to Change ISA Election Rules

by **Roberto Cipriani**, University Roma Tre, Italy, and President of the Council of National Associations of the European Sociological Association

A great step forward was made by the ISA at the World Congress in Brisbane in 2002, when it was decided for the first time to elect a Vice-President for National Associations. But the procedural norms were drawn up somewhat hastily. The intention was, of course, to make immediate provision for the position. Instead of postponing the vote until the following congress (Durban), the Indian Sujata Patel was elected as first Vice-President for National Associations (succeeded in 2006, at Durban, by the US-based Englishman Michael Burawoy, and in 2010, at Gothenburg, by the South African Tina Uys). The three sociologists elected to date have all been worthy of their position and have done an excellent job.

Their elections have been the result of a broad-based electorate, the Assembly of Councils, which combines the *Council of National Associations* (CNA), made up of one representative from each National Association, and the *Research Council* (RC) made up of one representative from each Research Committee. At this point there is the same number (55) of National Associations and Research Committees. As the latter attend the World Congresses (where voting takes place) in larger numbers than the former, there is a fundamental imbalance. Thus, if we look at figures for the last five elections we see the electorate was split as follows: 2010 Gothenburg (43CNA + 47RC); 2006 Durban (35CNA + 45RC); 2002 Brisbane (30CNA + 44RC); 1998 Montreal (38CNA + 41RC); 1994 Bielefeld (43CNA + 46RC). Thus, Research Committees can have a decisive voice in electing the Vice-President for National Associations whereas National Associations don't have the same influence over the election of the Vice-President for Research.

Furthermore, it must be kept in mind that during the four years that elapse between Congresses, the Presidents of the National Associations often change more than once, whereas the term of office of a President of a Research Committee offers greater stability and continuity because it usually lasts four years. This permits the Research Committee Presidents to be better acquainted with each other and, thus, strengthen their reciprocal links, favoring collaboration. At the same time, the National Associations undergo frequent changes, so much so that more often than not, those present at the midterm meeting (which should help build closer relations) are not the same as those who meet to vote during the Congress.

For these reasons the candidate for Vice-President for National Associations, even when supported by the National Associations themselves, can be out-voted by the candidate of the Research Committees, so that, when all is said and done, they actually end up electing not only the Vice-President for Research but also the Vice-President for National Associations.

Therefore, it would be more correct and democratic to allow the National Associations to be the exclusive electorate for their Vice-President, and the Research Committees the exclusive electorate for their Vice-President. The unitary nature of the International Sociological Association is amply provided for when all the representatives vote for its President and remaining three Vice-Presidents (Finance, Publications, and Program). Accordingly, it would be particularly useful to change the procedures for electing the Vice-Presidents for National Associations and Research. ■

> Introducing the Japanese Editorial Team

Here we present the editorial team from Japan, enthusiastic collaborators in the translation and production of *Global Dialogue*.

We, the Japanese Regional Editors are very pleased and excited to introduce ourselves to the readers of *Global Dialogue* (GD) worldwide. We would like to express our gratitude to Professor Burawoy and all the GD contributors for sharing their diverse experiences on numerous and urgent issues in the world. We look forward to welcoming you all at the ISA World Congress of Sociology in Yokohama in 2014 and also sharing our experiences in reviving Japan!



Mari SHIBA (Editorial Chief) received a Master's Degree in Education from Boston University and later taught children with diverse backgrounds in Boston. She is currently a doctoral student in Sociology at Nagoya University and a member of RC31 (Sociology of Migration). Her research focuses on international adoptions in the US and Sweden.



Yutaka IWADATE is a doctoral student in the Faculty of Social Sciences at Hitotsubashi University, Tokyo. He has been conducting fieldwork on social spaces that are constructed in the everyday practices of young workers who struggle under (post-)neoliberal urban situations.



Kazuhisa NISHIHARA (Editorial Supervisor) is a professor of Sociology at Nagoya University and the President of the Society of Sociological Theory in Japan. His research field is sociological theory, especially the phenomenological sociology of globalization and transnationalism. He is currently focusing on migration in East Asia, in particular foreign agricultural workers in Japan.



Michiko SAMBE received her first degree at Kyoto University of Foreign Studies and is currently a PhD candidate of Ochanomizu University where she got her Master's Degree in Social Science. Her research focuses on relationships between sexual minorities and their heterosexual parents in Japan.



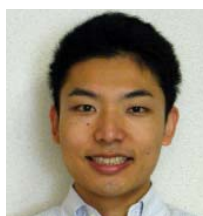
Yu FUKUDA is a PhD student at the Graduate School of Sociology, Kwansei Gakuin University. His specialty is sociology of religion and studies of collective memory. He has been conducting fieldwork into rituals that take place after disasters, such as memorial ceremonies for atomic bomb and earthquake victims.



Takako SATO got a BA in International Peace Studies and in Spanish at the University of Wisconsin-Superior, and is currently a PhD student in Sociology at the University of Hokkaido. She has been researching US immigration policy and social networks related to undocumented immigrants.



Kosuke HIMENO is a doctoral student of Tokyo University, studying rural sociology, and conducting fieldwork to preserve depopulated rural villages and their cultures in Nagano Prefecture. He feels very honored to be a member of the Japanese translation team of *Global Dialogue*!



Yoshiya SHIOTANI, PhD, studies social stratification and inequality at Tohoku University. Recently, he conducted a social survey on victims of the Great East Japan Earthquake. He is analyzing the relationship between victims' receipt or provision of social support and their mental health.



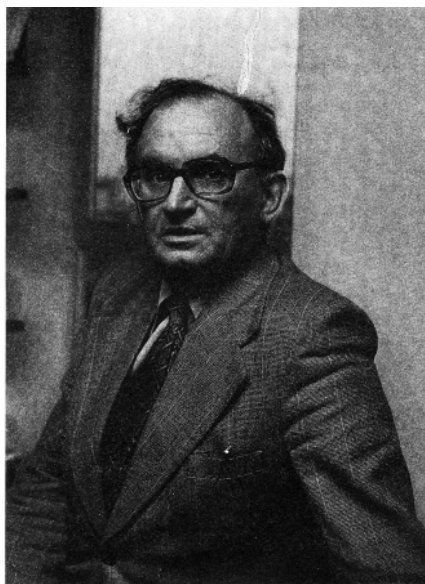
Kazuhiro IKEDA has completed a doctoral course in Sociology at Tokyo University in 2005, and now is a postdoctoral researcher at Sophia University, Tokyo. He is a member of an international research project called "Comparing Climate Change Policy Network" (COMPON), and is a member of RC24 "Environment and Society."



Tomohiro TAKAMI is a PhD student at the Department of Sociology, Tokyo University, and also a Research Fellow of the Japanese Society for the Promotion of Science. His main research interest is in workers' autonomy, and particularly the issue of long working hours in Japan.

> John Rex dies at 86

by Sally Tomlinson, University of Oxford, UK, and Robert Moore, University of Liverpool, UK



John Rex – Pioneer of Social Theory and Race Relations.

John Rex, who died on December 18 (2011), will be remembered as a man of great passion and energy, and an outstanding intellectual who raised the study of sociology to new scholarly heights. He was born in Port Elizabeth, South Africa and joined the Royal Navy aged 18 during World War II. Returning to South Africa and keenly aware of the injustice of apartheid, he first studied theology, before changing to sociology and philosophy. He briefly taught at a school in the former Rhodesia before being expelled as an “undesirable” – code for supporting the anti-apartheid movement. He completed a PhD at Leeds University, teaching there until 1962, then moving to Birmingham University for two years before becoming the founding Professor of two successful sociology departments at Durham University in 1964 and then at Warwick University in 1970. He was the Founder and Director of the Social Science Research

Council’s Research Unit in Race Relations at Aston University from 1979 to 1984, after which he returned to Warwick. Apart from visiting professorships in Toronto, Cape Town and New York, he remained at Warwick as Professor, and then Emeritus, until his final illness.

John’s passion for sociological theory, led to his classic book *Key Problems in Sociological Theory* (1964), which freed sociology from heavy reliance on Parsonsian functionalism, and gave many students a lifelong interest in the classic texts of sociology. The writings of Marx, Durkheim, Simmel, and especially Max Weber were central to John’s thinking. He revived interest in conflict theory, believing that conflicts of values and interests are the norm, writing a book on *Social Conflict* in 1981. He understood how power and coercive forces work in society, but, even though he once stood as a potential Labour Member of Parliament he took the view that it was the job of social scientists to analyze and explain rather than take active political stances.

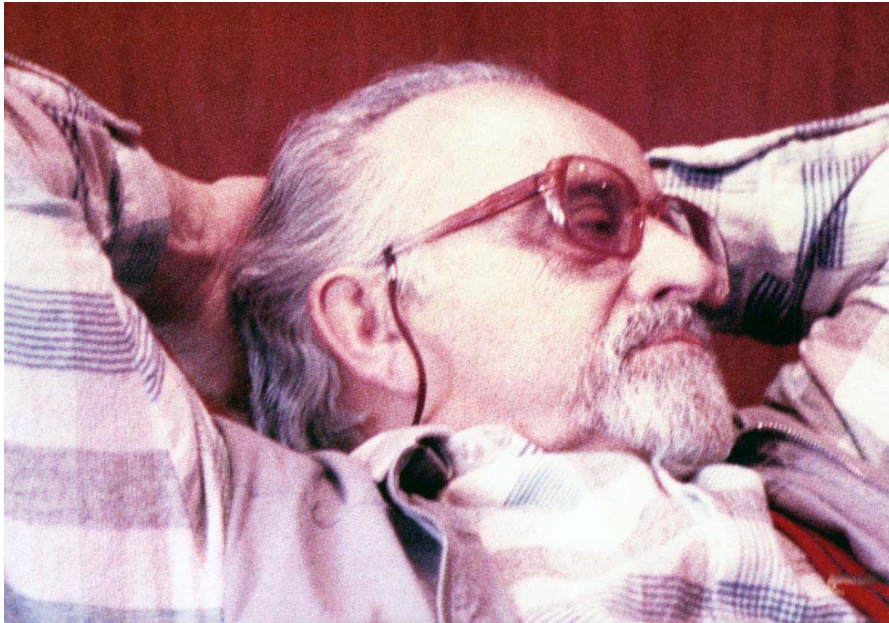
His concern for science did not preclude his deep anger at the discrimination and racism directed at former colonial immigrants who entered Britain from the 1950s. He was a member of the UNESCO International Experts Committee on Racism and Racial Prejudice, which in their statement in 1967 clearly asserted that “problems arising from so-called ‘race’ relations are social in origin rather than biological” – a novel idea at the time! He was President of the International Sociological Association’s Committee on Racial and Ethnic Relations for eight years. In 1964 he began, with Robert Moore, the work in Sparkbrook,

Birmingham, which led to his best known book, *Race, Community and Conflict* (Rex and Moore, 1967), and then he returned to do research in Handsworth, Birmingham, in 1974, which produced *Colonial Immigrants in a British City: a Class Analysis* (Rex and Tomlinson, 1979).

John held strong views and could be uncompromising in argument. He annoyed some of his colleagues who disagreed with him, and indeed often enjoyed provoking those whose views he regarded as superficial. But his views were always respected and as a man he inspired genuine affection. Since his death, there have been numerous tributes to him from former students and colleagues with the message that “he changed my life,” his work having an enormous influence on thousands of people around the world. His last writing was a chapter for a book published in 2010 on Wilhelm Baldamus, Professor of Sociology at Birmingham in the 1970s. He wrote that “Baldamus was a unique individual [...] he did not go along with the changing trends of sociological thought and practice [...] he was a man who had the courage of his convictions and stood by them when dealing with friends and colleagues.” He could have been writing about himself here. He received a lifetime achievement award from the British Sociological Association in 2010 and he will be much missed by family, friends and colleagues. ■

> Kurt Jonassohn, 1920-2011

by Céline Saint-Pierre, University of Quebec in Montreal, ISA Executive Secretary, 1974-1979, and ISA Executive Committee Member, 1986-1990



Kurt Jonassohn – Stalwart contributor to the ISA.

In 1974, Kurt Jonassohn and I were elected Executive Secretaries of the ISA. Tom Bottomore was President at the time and the Secretariat was moving from Milan to the University of Quebec in Montreal (UQAM) where I was Professor. Kurt was a sociology professor at the University of Concordia. We worked together for approximately five years (1974-1979). He then shared his position as Executive Secretary with Marcel Rafie, also sociology professor at UQAM until the Secretariat moved to Amsterdam in 1983.

Although he was well positioned in the English-speaking academic community in Montreal and throughout Canada, Kurt was also fluent in French. Our daily activities at the Secretariat almost always took place in French and he insisted that it be that way. His great sensitivity to French-speaking culture in Quebec, which I greatly admired, contributed to increasing the role of the French lan-

guage in the functioning of the ISA at a time when most communication and activities took place in English.

Neither of us was very interested in financial and budgetary matters, yet, with great generosity, Kurt accepted to take on the responsibilities of the Treasurer. This was not an easy task given the poor financial health of the ISA at the time. We were aided by the growth of individual and collective membership, yet dues remained low and the 1974 Congress at Toronto drew a deficit. Kurt tackled this precarious situation together with other members of the Executive Committee. By the end of our first term (1974-1978), we presented a financial report with a series of recommendations for gaining more money from dues and from our publications. Despite the financial highs and lows of the ISA, Kurt was always straightforward, honest, and demonstrated a great sense of responsibility.

Kurt Jonassohn also made a significant contribution to our knowledge of the history of the ISA through the publication of a series of chronicles in the ISA Bulletin during the 1980s. The references he gathered and the transcriptions of the interviews he carried out with former ISA leaders served as the starting point for *A Brief History of the ISA: 1948-1997* published by Jennifer Platt in 1998.

After his term as Executive Secretary, Kurt continued to collaborate with the ISA for several years. During this time, he continued teaching and developing his research on genocide studies. He was indeed a leading figure in this field, and his work culminated with the founding of the *Montreal Institute for Genocide Studies* in 1986 together with his colleague Frank Chalk. Born in Cologne, Germany on August 31, 1920, he died in Montreal on December 1, 2011. ■

> Heritage and Rupture in Colombian Sociology

by Patricia S. Jaramillo Guerra with Fernando Cubides, National University of Colombia at Bogota



Sociology is a serious business! Young Colombian sociologists attending the National Conference held at Cali, November 2-4, 2011.

On 1974, On November 2-4 (2011) Colombian sociologists gathered in the city of Cali, for their 10th National Sociology Conference. The theme was heritage and rupture in contemporary Colombian sociology. The organizers were the sociology departments of Universidad del Valle, Universidad ICESI, and Universidad del Pacífico. In addition, there was a warm-up pre-conference meeting devoted to Weberian thought.

The success of this conference was very important to the consolidation of our discipline, especially as the last national conference was back in 2006. Although the Colombian sociological tradition goes back to the 1950s, it has suffered interruptions, due to the violent context within which it has had to operate, and stigmatization due to its alleged links to guerrilla movements. Many departments were closed down for as long as fifteen years only to reopen in the last five to ten years.

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In terms of its substance, Colombia's sociology is shaped by a society full of contradictions: violence coexists with long-standing democracy; levels of inequality are among the highest in Latin America, yet, at the same time, the legal system recognizes social and cultural rights rarely found in Latin America. Colombia provides sociology with an exceptional laboratory but the situation also demands that sociology show great social responsibility.

The pre-conference meeting on Weber was organized by the sociology department of the National University of Colombia and supported by the universities organizing the Conference. It was designed to discuss recent developments in the interpretation of Max Weber's thought – an open seminar facilitated by the participation of renown international academics: Wolfgang Schluchter from Germany, Francisco Gil Villegas from Mexico, Esteban Vernik from Argentina, and Javier Rodríguez Martínez and José Almaraz Pestana from Spain. The participants underscored the importance of re-reading Weber's work as important not just for specialists but also for the general public. As both local sociologists and international guests noted, such high-level discussion devoted to the work of a classical author was rare and it reflected well on the state of theoretical thinking in Colombia.

As for the main conference, there was also a plethora of international speakers: ISA President Michael Burawoy from the University of California, Berkeley; Latin American Sociological Association (ALAS) President Henrique Martins from the Federal University of Pernambuco (Brazil); Alejandro Portes from Princeton University (USA) where he directs the Center for Migration and Development; Emilio Tenti from the University of Buenos Aires; Manuel Antonio Garretón from the Catholic University of Santiago (Chile) and Milton Vidal from the University Academy of Christian

Humanism (Chile). These international figures gave life to contemporary debates around the student movement, global sociology, immigration, public sociology, and postcolonialism.

The organizing efforts could not have had better results: 24 working sessions, 600 attendants, 200 papers, eleven international guests, and participation from fifteen sociology programs from the Colombian Network of Sociology Schools and Departments (RECFADES). The success of the conference was plain to see and it was echoed in the closing session with such comments as: "Sociology is in good health" and "Our discipline is as valid and pertinent as any other field of scientific knowledge."

The atmosphere in the working sessions also confirmed the vitality of Colombian sociology, indicated by the rising number of schools and incoming students, bucking global trends in the opposite direction. It was also noted that many sociologists migrate and fertilize other fields of knowledge after receiving their undergraduate degrees. The discipline itself is diversifying with new notions of subjectivity, unconventional approaches to gender, novel approaches to religion and much more. Subjects that were once discredited are now quite fashionable, in particular, consumption viewed through the lens of fashion, taste, and artistic expression. Then, of course, there were the traditional topics of Colombian sociology – violence, peasant movements, rural communities, and labor organization – where interest continues to be as lively as ever.

The delegates were unanimous in their fulsome praise not only for the organizers' dedication and skills, making it an intellectually exciting conference, but also for their abundant generosity, unceasing hospitality and exceptional warmth in the city of salsa. ■

> Turkic Sociology in a Eurasian Space

by Elena Zdravomyslova, European University, St. Petersburg, Russia, and Member of the
ISA Executive Committee, 2010-2014



*Fourth World Congress of Turkic Sociologists
meeting in Ufa, capital of the Republic of
Bashkortostan.*

Leading scholars in the social sciences and humanities from Russia, European countries, Turkey, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan came to Ufa to participate in the fourth World Congress of Turkic Sociologists, 4-6 September, 2011. The theme was: “Eurasian space: Civilizational Potential of Turkic-speaking Countries and Russian Regions in the 21st Century.” The first World Congress took place in Turkey in 2005, followed by Congresses in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

Ufa is a beautiful and hospitable city in the south Urals, with a population of more than a million. It is the capital of the Republic of Bashkortostan – one of the autonomous regions of the Russian Federation. It is a multi-ethnic region with Bashkir as the second largest ethnic group after Russians. The Bashkir language belongs to the Turkic linguistic group. According to the Bashkir Constitution two languages have official status – Russian and Bashkir. However, Bashkir language is not widely spoken in the urban areas, and is considered to

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be under threat of extinction despite recent political efforts to expand its public presence.

Professional sociological communication is carried out in Russian. The Bashkir Sociological Association – a collective member of the Russian Society of Sociologists – was hosting the Congress of more than 200 participants from different regions and countries. The government of Bashkortostan supported the Congress, providing financial as well as organizational assistance for the event. A representative of the President of Bashkortostan gave a welcoming speech. Other greetings – important symbolic events – followed from the head of the Bashkir Academy of Sciences, from the Elder and Deputy-President of the Association of Turkic Sociologists, representatives of the Russian Society of Sociologists, a Deputy from Azerbaijan, and myself representing the ISA. Russian and Turkish were the working languages of the meeting. Synchronic translation was available.

The plenary papers were devoted to Eurasia – its space, its civilization, its common history, its shared problems and its future. According to the Elder of the Association of Turkic Sociologists, Professor Erkal Mustafa, the main goal of the Congress was to provide a sociological conceptualization of the multi-polar global world which would promote sustainable development and the integration of different cultural, socio-economic and political arrangements. The plenary speakers were inspired by the idea of the hybrid identity at the center of Eurasian civilization (developed by the Russian ethnologist of the primordial camp L. Gumilev, among others). They focused on the Turkish paradigm of social and historical development, the importance of strengthening transnational identity, and investigating the global integration of the Turkic world.

Papers were presented on the theory and practices of contemporary Eurasianism, and the relation of social sciences to the actual problems of the Turkic world and of Russia. The four sections of the Congress were: “Eurasianism: problems and prospects of scientific research and assessments,” “Socio-dynamics of contemporary Eurasian space: problems and solutions,” “Cultural dimensions of Eurasian space,” and “Sociological schools of the Turkic world and Russia.” A major step forward was made in deciding to launch *The Eurasian Sociological Journal*.

There was a lot of action in the corridors – establishing and renovating cross-regional and transnational contacts, making agreements on the exchange of students and professors between universities, discussing opportunities for joint research and translation projects that would connect sociologists from different countries. One of the intended consequences of the meeting was the growth of the symbolic importance of the Bashkir Sociological Association, which will be hosting the all-Russian Congress of sociologists in October 2012.

In their General Meeting members drafted and passed various resolutions: to facilitate cooperation between sociologists of the Turkic-speaking countries, and to facilitate the cooperation between Russian and Turkic sociologists. Representatives of Turkish and Ufa universities agreed to organize exchanges of professors and students, and at the banquet the exchange of gifts among sociologists of Turkic countries symbolized their professional and cultural bonding.

The Congress established a Memorial Plaque to Nariman Aitov (1925-1999), the founder of the Bashkir sociological school. Aitov belongs to the first generation of Soviet sociologists. In 1964 he established the sociological laboratory in Ufa. He contributed to regional planning, social engineering, carried out research on social mobility and the social consequences of the scientific technical revolution. He was the author of more than 300 publications. In 2000 the Academy of Sciences of Bashkortostan established the Aitov Reward for the best sociological publication.

In summary, the meeting was evidence of ongoing cultural and scholarly integration among Turkic-speaking countries, involving transnational cooperation and the recognition of sociological diversity. Not surprisingly, sociologists from Turkey play an important role in this process. The Central Asian states that became independent after the fall of the Soviet Union as well as North Caucasus and Eastern parts of Russia all have sizable Turkic-speaking populations. But integration is not only based on linguistic commonalities, but on shared ideas of civilizational – Eurasian – unity. Thus, historical roots, paths of modernization, collective memory, and cultural traditions were all discussed as intellectual resources for social integration. As one organizer declared: “Although Turkic-speaking countries have been separated from each other for a thousand years, today we can speak of cultural and scholarly cooperation among these countries.” ■

> The Indian Sociological Society's Diamond Jubilee

by T. K. Oommen, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India, Chair of the ISS Organizing Committee, and former ISA President, 1990-1994



The Diamond Jubilee Conference was held during December 11-13 (2011), at the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi. The Conference was hosted by the Centre for the Study of Social Systems (CSSS) JNU, a prominent department of sociology in India. Professor Anand Kumar, the dynamic organizing secretary of the Conference, is on the faculty of CSSS.

The ISS conference now held annually has a three-tier structure: plenary sessions (inaugural, valedictory and two memorial lectures);

symposia that may often take place as parallel sessions; two dozen research committees (RCs) which meet separately. Both pre-conference and post-conference sessions are organized in cities other than the ones in which the main conference takes place. In the last few years the young sociologists' conference is also organized just before the main conference. As part of the Diamond Jubilee celebrations two special pre-conference meetings were held in Bombay and Lucknow, the two main centers where teaching and research in sociology started in India.

Professor T. K. Oommen honored as past President of Indian Sociological Society by Vice-President of India, Shri M. Hamid Ansari. Vice-Chancellor Sudhir Kumar Sopory stands between them, and the present ISS President, Jacob John Kattakayam, looks on from the right.

The Diamond Jubilee was inaugurated by a scholar-statesman, the Vice-President of India, His Excellency Hamid Ansari, who recognized the relevance of sociology in addressing the crises the contemporary world is facing and, in this context, underlined the signal importance of public sociology. J. J. Kattakayam, the present President of ISS, got the main deliberations off to a flying start by addressing the conference theme, "Sociology and Social Transformation in India."

The inaugural session also witnessed the annual custom of honoring outstanding Indian sociologists. Three of them –S. K. Srivastava (Benares Hindu University), P. K. B Nayar (Kerala University) and J. P. S. Uberoi (Delhi University) were given Lifetime Achievement Awards. Following the Indian tradition of respecting the old, all the past living Presidents of ISS were also honored on the occasion of the jubilee.

The themes of the five symposia were: Sociology and the Crisis of Social Transformation – An International perspective; Crisis of Governance; Crisis of Extremisms; Crisis of Development and Issues of Marginalization; Society and Sociology in Delhi. The first symposium was global in its tenor, the last was local in its flavor, and the remaining three were India-centric. Thus, the global-national-local continuum was covered. I do not intend to comment on these symposia but it is appropriate

to make passing reference to the first symposium as I'm writing for global readers. There were four speakers drawn from USA, Sweden, Germany, and Japan. The President of ISA, Michael Burawoy (USA) delivered the keynote address and I chaired the symposium. Professor Burawoy underlined the importance of social movements to understand the ongoing crisis of transformation, declaring them to be both a symptom and a solution. I focused on the inextricable intertwining between the discipline of sociology and the phenomenon of social crisis and transformation. The other three speakers spoke with reference to their respective countries.

Reflecting the plural character of the evolving Indian sociology, the subjects of the two memorial lectures were "Social Mobility and Social Structure –Towards a Conceptual and Methodological Reorientation" (the M. N. Srinivas memorial lecture), delivered by Professor P. N. Mukherjee, and "From Ideal-type to Metaphor – Reconsidering the Concept of Revolution" (the Radhakamal Mukerjee memorial lecture), delivered by Professor D. N. Dhanagare, both past Presidents of ISS. Professor Dipankar Gupta, a relatively younger sociologist, gave the Valedictory Address: "Delivering Governance – Citizenship, Growth and Development."

The Book of Abstracts contained 775 abstracts of papers read at the 22 Research Committees (RCs). The

largest number of papers were submitted to two RCs – Rural, Peasant and Tribal Communities, and Social Change and Development, while the lowest number were submitted to the RCs on Education and Society and Theory, and Concept and Methodology, perhaps indicating the current trend of research interests in Indian sociology.

On the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee a special issue of the *Sociological Bulletin*, the official journal of ISS, published two long research papers, one on the history of ISS by Professor A. M. Shah and the other, focusing on an analysis of 50 years of the *Sociological Bulletin*, written by its present Managing Editor, Professor N. Jayaram. In addition Sage Publishers brought out seven volumes of research papers published in the *Sociological Bulletin*, six of which are on different themes –Indian Sociology, Changing Caste, Agrarian Change, Those on the Margins, Education, Social Movements – and the seventh one consists of selected presidential addresses.

On the whole the ISS Diamond Jubilee Conference was a memorable event in which some 1500 delegates participated. This short account of the conference may provide an occasion for other national associations to situate theirs in a comparative perspective. More importantly, the event was a reminder to Indian sociologists that they have to travel many more miles. ■

> Social Stratification in the BRIC Countries

by Tom Dwyer, University of Campinas, Brazil, and Member of the ISA Executive Committee, 2010-2014



Sociologists from Brazil, Russia, India and China assemble in Beijing to discuss social stratification within their countries.

The four BRIC countries, Brazil, Russia, India, and China, are being rapidly drawn together by the tectonic shifts in the global order. To better understand these processes and their implications for internal stratification sociologists from the four countries assembled in October 2011 at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) in Beijing to discuss Pielin Li's (2011) edited collection *Jin Zhuan Guo Jia She Hui Fen Ceng: Bian Qian Yu Bi Jiao* (*Social Stratification in the BRIC countries*). The edited volume seeks to help sociologists better understand what unites and what separates these four countries.

The original formulation of the BRICs refers to countries with very large land areas (over 3 million square kilometers), huge populations (over 150 million people) and developing economies with (relatively) high growth rates. The papers allowed us to understand that these three factors have empirically verifiable consequences for political and economic life, as well as for the production of knowledge. Important regional inequalities exist in all four nations. Thus, in comparison with developed countries, relatively large rural populations are to be found, rural-urban inequalities are greater than those found within urban areas, public servants or politicians have disproportionate shares of national wealth and form part of the fast growing "middle classes." When we examine specific sections of the book some common dynamics appear: for example, increasing percentages of the population have improved access to education over time but, in spite of this, important structural inequalities persist and contribute to inequality. Also, since economic development in none of these

countries followed the track proposed by modernization theory, this implies that there are important lessons to be drawn for theories of economic and social development.

The identification of so many common points led to constant reflections, over the course of the seminar, as to the distance between our own systems of social stratification and those upon which the dominant (European and North American) traditions of social stratification research and theorising are built. We questioned relevance of the traditional notion of stratification, given the high social mobility, and the end of the idea of a "profession for life" (very pronounced in China and Russia, given their transitions to market economies). We noted how the absence of a notion of agency in stratification research made it difficult to account for identity formation and social change. In order to render comparisons among the BRICs more meaningful, we saw a need to develop a deeper understanding of national statistics and how the same concept can have a different meaning in different countries.

While we recognized big differences separating the BRICs, these differences, and their consequences for different patterns of social and political action, will become ever clearer as these countries come to know each other better. Understanding differences, and the development of the capacity to live together in spite of them, will be key to building a common future, and also for the management of the inevitable conflicts. It is here, perhaps more than anywhere else, that sociological (and anthropological) research will have a role to play. ■