

GLOBAL DIALOGUE

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NEWSLETTER



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> Editorial

ISA-on-line – The Future of Sociology

Global Dialogue has been running for two years. We've expanded from 8 to 30 pages, from 5 to 13 languages, from a standard template to a special design, from a newsletter to a magazine. It appears electronically – although wherever I go my bags are weighed down with hard copies, printed in the relevant languages. It offers a sociological lens on world events as well as a repository of happenings in the ISA, conferences, sociological debates, special columns, updates on national sociologies and so forth. Most important is the dialogue it creates within and among the teams of translators. For example, in this issue the young and enthusiastic members of the Public Sociology Laboratory in Warsaw report on the conference they organized to launch the Polish version of *Global Dialogue* – a conference extending *Global Dialogue*'s debate on sociology's global and universal character. One of the results, therefore, is a network of interconnected teams of young sociologists – cultivating diverse visions of world sociology.

A similar principle governs the global course: *Public Sociology, Live!* Here an array of brilliant sociologists, deeply embedded in the countries where they live and research, talk to curious Berkeley undergraduates about their experiences of engagement. Using Skype, these over-committed public sociologists don't have to leave their studies. The conversations are recorded and posted on the ISA website where they can be watched by anyone with access to the Internet at <http://www.isa-sociology.org/public-sociology-live/>. In particular, it is watched by groups of students and their teachers in Barcelona, Tehran, Johannesburg, Sao Paulo, Kyiv, and Oslo who then post summaries of their discussions on [facebook](#), which in turn generates further discussion and debate. We, thereby, create hubs, laboratories, and institutes that learn about themselves through connecting to others, nurturing a community of global sociologists, tied together by their diversity.

Social media can intensify and enrich face-to-face interaction, even as it brings that interaction to global audiences. Thus, the video series [Journeys through Sociology](#), described by Laleh Behbehani in this issue, asks the far-flung members of the ISA Executive Committee what brought them to sociology, and what challenges they faced on the way. Most ISA members would never have a chance to hear or see their leaders, but now they are available at a click of a mouse. Here, then, are examples of what, in principle, can be done from anywhere in the world, models that others can copy, modify, and improve. The Internet can spell the degradation of education but it can also enhance education, it can dilute communication but it can also enrich it. So long as we control the Internet, we can decide how to use it.

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



Whither Chinese Sociology? In this interview, leading Chinese intellectual and sociologist Liping Sun describes the place of sociology in Chinese public life and explains why China is heading for stagnation.



On the Celebrification of the Academy. Robert Van Krieken writes about the way celebrity has invaded the academy, creating a Hollywood-like star system in which "winner takes all," and leading to a corrosive branding of scholarly work.



From Sociology Professor to Culinary Guru. Looking for another career? Turkish sociologist Vedat Milor tells us how he became a television personality with a cult following – all based on his gastronomy program shown on prime time TV.

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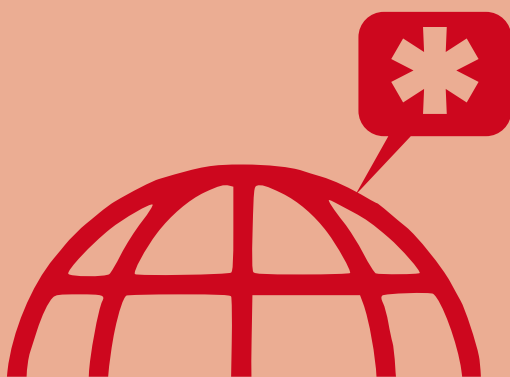
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> Whither Chinese Sociology?

An Interview with Liping Sun

This interview was conducted by Michael Burawoy for Global Dialogue with the mediating work of Professor Yuan Shen, Lina Hu and Xiuying Cheng. Liping Sun is one of the leading public intellectuals in China today. He is a Professor of Sociology at Tsinghua University, Beijing.



Leading Chinese sociologist, Liping Sun, making a fine point about the transition trap.

MB: Recently you have written about the stalemate or stagnation of Chinese development, or what you referred to as the “transition trap.” What do you mean by “transition trap”?

LS: The transition trap refers to the vesting of interests under the reform process that prevents further reform. Those who have benefited from the reforms want to maintain the status quo, they hope to freeze the institutional forms with their transitional characteristics, and they want to establish “mixed institutions” that will maximize their interest. All this leads to the distortion of social-economic development and the accumulation of economic and social problems. Compared to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, the Chinese transition is viewed as a step-by-step model, and herein lies the problem, the early success of this reform process has now set up its own barriers.

MB: What exactly do you mean by this?

LS: The economic success of China was guaranteed by state monopoly of all kinds of resources and its strong administrative capacity. This particular model of economic development was founded on corrupt bureaucrats working through a rent-seeking state. The expansion of this powerful bureaucracy, however, has obstructed further transition towards a real market economy, one operating under “rule of law.”

MB: You are a well-known public intellectual in China. What does this mean to you? In reality how do you disseminate sociology to different audiences? How are you influenced by your public sociology?

LS: The difference between the “traditional” sociology and “public” sociology can be seen as follows. The primary interest of traditional sociology is to produce knowledge

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about social life. Though this knowledge will also influence society, it happens only “indirectly,” as an unintended consequence. In contrast, though public sociology also produces knowledge about society, its primary interest is to influence society. In Robert Merton’s words, the manifest function of traditional sociology is to produce knowledge and the latent function is to influence society. Public sociology is the exact opposite.

The differences between the two types of sociology are expressed in the choice of research topic and the way conclusions are drawn. When we choose a research topic in China, priority is given to what are the most important social problems that require answers. For instance, our research on the change in social structure during the transition process, on social contradictions and conflicts, on the transition trap, and so forth. Our goal is clear: to reach conclusions that will influence the public understanding of the issue, and even influence the government’s policy making.

There are three major channels of influence: publishing academic papers in academic journals so as to influence the direction of the discipline; giving speeches in public media (including social media such as twitter) so as to influence public understanding; writing topic-specific research reports, and influence the government through their publication in the news media and social media. However, generally speaking, we don’t engage ourselves directly in social actions.

MB: How do you see the role or function of sociology in contemporary China?

LS: Because China is a transitional society undergoing dramatic social change, sociology has a greater impact on public life. In this era, sociology can influence public thinking as well as government policy. Thus, the different industrialization models developed by sociologists such as Township and Village Enterprises (TVEs) and the recommendations concerning the integration of rural and urban development became state-sponsored policies at the local level. Theoretical concepts introduced by sociologists, such as “community,” became the catchword of state policy documents and informed practice in public life after the dismantling of the work unit system.

MB: What are the dilemmas of the Chinese public intellectual today? Is there anything you can’t write or talk about? Or do you have special ways of circumventing sensitive issues? How do you survive as a critic of the state?

LS: Under the current situation in China, there are indeed many limitations to face when speaking about public affairs. However, at the same time, it should be noted that the space for public intellectuals is bigger than you might imagine. Many public issues can be addressed directly. Some sensitive topics could also be expressed through “tactful twists.” For example, one can talk about reality by talking about history, or one can talk about China by talking about the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and so on.

Since the appearance of the Internet, blogs, and twitter, the space to directly discuss some sensitive issues has considerably expanded, because the control over these new media is looser. I should also add that sociology’s objectivity and its focus on evidence, in other words its scientific character, also help to expand the space for openly dealing with public issues.

MB: How did you come to sociology? I know you spent a lot of time doing oral history projects with the peasantry. What did you learn from such sociological research?

LS: I used to be a student of media and then I converted to studying sociology when I was a senior in college. This was a time when sociology was being rebuilt in China after being abandoned for almost 30 years. In the 1980s, my major research interest was modernization because, at that time, it was the central topic in Chinese society. My study of rural areas through oral history started in 1996. The goal was to collect information on rural society in order to understand the daily life of peasants and the “communist logic of practice” implied in their daily life. We wanted to analyze the Chinese market reforms as a process of “civilizational transition,” that is a process that organized social life, embedded in everyday practices. That is why I went to the rural areas to interview peasants about their experiences in the revolutionary period.

MB: What changes in sociology have you seen in the past 30 years? What’s your vision of the future of Chinese sociology?

LS: The American academy is concerned with the accumulation of knowledge, the European academy is concerned with values, and the Chinese academy is concerned with reality. That is to say, the Chinese academy has a tradition of caring about reality. However, due to the influence of American sociology, as well as some other factors, there is now a declining interest in reality in Chinese sociology. Sociology seems to have become the study of sociology itself rather than society. Even when the research is about society, it tends to produce a very fragmented knowledge.

I have always believed that it is very important to study social transitions, especially through an examination of their processes and events. This is important even if we are concerned about the development of sociology itself. As for sociology, the founding fathers of our modern discipline were all concerned with explaining capitalist civilization. On the other hand, communism undoubtedly presents another major civilization within human history. It has a set of institutions, values and logics that are very different from Western capitalism, and it has undergone a historical transformation in recent years. I believe that the study of the features, logics and transition processes of this communist civilization should become the new inspiration and motivation for contemporary sociology and, indeed, of social science more generally. ■

> On the Celebrification of the Academy

by Robert van Krieken, University of Sydney, Australia, and ISA Vice-President for Finance and Membership, 2010-2014



| Pierre Bourdieu – a celebrity against celebrification.

In universities today one can clearly see a number of fracture lines that are growing longer and wider, dividing the academic community into roughly three classes:

- an elite of high-profile researchers with little or no teaching or administrative responsibilities;
- a “middle class” of teaching-and-research staff squeezed between constantly increasing demands for *both* more and better research *and* teaching ever-expanding numbers of students. The elite research-only performance output is used as the benchmark, but it’s unattainable, so this class is doomed to failure and frustration, and to the pursuit of the holy grail of a research-only position;
- an expanding proletariat army of casual and part-time teachers and researchers experiencing extreme insecurity and poor working conditions, hoping that they will eventually acquire a full-time and tenured position.

There are a number of ways one can analyze these tendencies, but what I would like to offer here are some reflections on the way in which a particular kind of “celebrity rationality” is also at work. There is a connection

between the social and economic mechanisms underpinning the social figures we normally identify as celebrities – actors, actresses, TV personalities, sports stars – and the transformations affecting universities around the world. My larger project has been to reclaim the analysis of celebrity for core conceptual concerns in sociology like inequality, identity, power and governance, and there are a number of ways in which scientific scholarship is a key example of the processes and dynamics of “celebrity society.”

There are earlier discussions of celebrity in the writings of Robert Michels and others, but C. Wright Mills made an important contribution when he noted the ways in which the dynamics of all sorts of *competition* underpins the production of particular individuals as celebrities – that is, highly visible “performers” who function as a cognitive and practical reference point for the rest of the competitive field. In the *Power Elite* (Oxford, 1957: 74) Mills wrote:

“In America, this system is carried to the point where a man who can knock a small white ball into a series of holes in the ground with more efficiency and skill than anyone else thereby gains social access to the President of the United States. It is carried to the point where a chattering radio and television entertainer becomes the hunting chum of leading industrial executives, cabinet members, and the higher military. It does not seem to matter what the man is the very best at: so long as he has won out in competition over all others: he is celebrated.”

This wasn’t quite right, it’s more the rock star who gets access to the President, but the man with the small white ball still does pretty well. The point is that the broadest possible spread of visibility and recognition becomes a resource or value *in itself*, independently of what generated the recognition in the first place.

Robert Merton characterizes the problem as the “Matthew Effect” in scientific work, referring to the Gospel according to Matthew 25:29: “For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.” He noted that scientists who had received a Nobel Prize would receive far more attention than their colleagues, no matter the relative merits of their research. Wealth of attention to scholarly performance tended to be self-accumulating, as

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long as one stayed in the field. This was elaborated by Herbert Simon in 1971, when he pointed out that when there is a surplus of information and knowledge, the resource that becomes scarce, and thus an important commodity, is *attention*, the capacity to orient cognition in one direction or towards one object rather than another. Attention is the scarce resource or “positional good” in circulation in what Richard Sennett called the “star system” in relation to music, the way in which particular musicians capable of going beyond just being good musicians to include additional attention-capturing characteristic, end up crowding out the rest of the musical field.

The increasing orientation towards global rankings and the constant refinement of methods of performance measurement and assessment generate similar competitive dynamics among individual academics, among universities, and among countries, and where there is competition, there is the production of celebrities – star scholars, researchers, universities. One could say that the measurement of citations is a measure of how influential a piece of research is, but it is also a measure of its author’s scholarly celebrity. We cite Bourdieu or whomsoever not just or even primarily because it makes much difference to the analysis, but to indicate that we know about Bourdieu.

The current system of academic celebrity operates at three levels: individual (usually researchers, rarely teachers), institutional (universities) and national or regional (countries or clusters of countries). It may be stretching the metaphor a little too far, but in many respects they all want – or are being forced to want – to be the Kim Kardashian of their discipline or the global university system. Just as Kardashian’s visibility affects her capacity to earn through sponsorship and sale of her image and brand, rankings matter to universities because it affects their student enrolments, their social status, and the generosity of patrons, donors, and governments. This is also why universities spend so much time and money on developing their “brand.”

What lessons can be learnt from the sociological analysis of celebrity for ways to respond to these transformations of the university? There is not the space to go into this in any detail here, but I can suggest a few possibilities to begin with. First, recognizing that what we are looking at is a machine for the production and distribution of *attention*, and that it is attention that is very often the resource at issue, not the scholarly value of what’s being produced, makes it possible to adopt a much more sceptical perception of the status games being played in universities. Understanding that what is presented as a meritocracy is in particular respects really a “celebritocracy” helps us see that many of the crisis tendencies are in fact about the “struggle for attention.”

Second, if celebrity is the game we’re in, then we can observe what is happening in the broader field of celebrity and adopt similar strategies in our academic activity. We all know that Andy Warhol said that “in the future, everyone will be famous for 15 minutes,” but later he said he was bored with that line, and wanted to change it to “in 15 minutes, everyone will be famous.” We can see this mechanism at work in the massive proliferation of different types of highly visible and widely recognizable individuals (*aka* celebrities) in more and more fields of activity.

Rather than accepting the hierarchy of scholarly status currently being machined into place, which resembles the old Hollywood star system, it is possible to generate our own systems of recognition and acknowledgement “from below,” different kinds of “arthouse” scholarship, to stick with that analogy, including a diversity of research networks which may or may not achieve stardom, but which we enjoy and which we think do good and useful work. It is possible to reject the “winner takes all” logic that seems to be running through universities these days, to orient ourselves to each other, rather than allowing ourselves to be seduced by the “centripetal gaze” focused on academic stardom. ■

> Becoming a Celebrity: From Sociology Professor to Culinary Guru

by Vedat Milor, Istanbul, Turkey



Vedat Milor, Culinary Guru – not too happy with his food.

One may think that the fellow on the television screen in front of me is attending a spiritual meeting, and he is in deep prayer. He is holding his head with his two hands, and his half shut eyes are focused on a single point. Suddenly his cell phone falls from his pocket into the sea. There is some commotion. The camera now shows a slender man missing two of his front

teeth wearing a chef's apron. He is shouting at the waiters to recover the cell phone. Strangely, our fellow has no awareness of the unfortunate incident. Instead he turns to the slender chef and asks: "Why did you use cider vinegar in this dish instead of sherry vinegar?"

I cannot help but laugh. I am watching myself with a mixture of disbelief and amusement. This is not a "reality show," though. This is the only

gastro TV program that I am aware of which is broadcast in prime time and on the weekends by a major TV channel in Turkey, NTV. I am the star of the show; I visit restaurants, taste a multitude of dishes, pass strong judgments on the quality of ingredients and taste combinations, voice criticisms and demand explanations from the chefs. If the restaurant has a wine list I also ask them to pour a glass with each course and I voice my opinion on the quality of

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the wine and the relative success of the pairing.

I travel with two camera people and one producer from the channel. We visit restaurants mostly in Turkey, but we have been in Rome, Catalonia, Georgia, Syria and Lebanon. At the end of each restaurant visit I give a two to three minute general evaluation and then rank the restaurant by giving stars. Stars range from one to five. The restaurants I rank four and five stars usually hit the jackpot and end up turning away many clients even if they may have been near empty prior to my visit.

Am I a chef? No. I can hardly break an egg. Am I a celebrity? Yes. People recognize me in the streets and ask for a photo all the time. They write about me on many Internet forums. They speculate endlessly on my motives, on my character, and they are very curious about my private life. I keep receiving letters from college students asking “how can we become like you” and from parents of middle-schoolers requesting me to write something for their children as I am their “idol” and they want to become “Vedat Milor” when they grow up!

But who am I? How did the whole thing happen? When I look 30 years back, I see an eager first year graduate student entering the abode of the Berkeley Sociology department following his undergraduate degree in economics from Bosphorus University, Turkey. He was fascinated by Sraffa, neo-Keynesianism, Althusser and French structural Marxists. But in Berkeley he “discovered” the ethnographic method and became interested in “in-depth case studies” to understand the dynamics of social change. His PhD advisor, Michael Burawoy, convinced him that a comparative methodology makes it easier to develop a theo-

retical framework for understanding and posing questions about the “autonomy” of the state in a dependent capitalist economy such as Turkey. Hence, after some methodological-analytic deliberation, he chose to compare Turkish and French post-WWII economic planning to highlight structural differences in state autonomy and class relations in “core” and “peripheral” countries.

At this point I am tempted to plead “innocent” and say that the discovery of and fascination with French wine were an “unintended consequence” of my choice of France as the ideal-typical model of a dirigiste economy. But, no. It was not. I was already bitten by the bug of great Burgundy wine after paying \$10 for a 1982 Henri Mayer Bourgogne at the Kermit Lynch Wine Merchant in Berkeley. I could not afford to buy a radio for my room at the International House, but I was drinking good wine. Drinking good Bourgogne for me was a profound and haunting experience. A good red Bourgogne has a multifaceted aroma, a fickle nature that titillates and challenges the taste buds, and an elegant feminine texture with a surprisingly robust and spicy finish. It is so complex and sensual that it embodies all that I hold dear in bourgeois-democratic and refined Western civilization pitted against the stultifying cultural puritanism of the Reagan years in America and General Kenan Evren’s military rule in Turkey.

“But why are you comparing France with Turkey?” asked the lady who came to campus to interview me for the Fulbright dissertation fellowship. I still remember the shocked expression on her face when she heard my answer: “wine and food!” She must have agreed with me as I was awarded the fellowship. I have also been true to my statement. Malcolm Gladwell in

his popular book *Outliers: The Story of Success* formulates a somehow arbitrary but plausible 10,000-hour rule. Many people are born with innate talents, but to bring them to fruition you must be a workaholic and have spent 10,000 hours in your calling before you excel. Well. What about the 10,000 bottles of wine rule? I sure came close to that between 1985 and 1990 as I joined many clubs and tasting groups while in graduate school.

The years that followed passed with lightning speed. I joined the World Bank as a political economist, but when my dissertation won the “best dissertation prize” of the American Sociological Association in 1990 I was lured back to academic life. I taught at Brown University and Georgia Tech, got a Law Degree from Stanford and was elected to the Order of the Coif. I even spent one academic year at the Institute for Advanced Study and was privileged to be close to one of the greatest minds of the 20th century, Albert Hirschman. I also spent time in Silicon Valley, in start-ups.

Yet, especially after the experience in Silicon Valley, I never felt again moved by academics. My participation in a project at Georgia Tech Public Policy Department on “how to increase efficiency in the use of external consultants by the Georgia Department of Transportation” was the straw that broke the camel’s back. I was not interested in becoming a technocrat. I did not share similar interests with my colleagues. I had to search for alternatives.

A friend from my World Bank years in Washington, DC had become the general editor of the reputable daily newspaper, *Milliyet*, in Turkey. He was looking for somebody with a good knowledge of wine and food and a reputation for integrity. He

asked me if I would write a bi-weekly column in his paper. Since then I have been on a roller coaster.

Is there a theoretical explanation for my popularity? I think there is. The dynamics that brought fame and popularity to me are similar to the dynamics that brought the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) to power in 2002. The ruling secular alliance of the military-bureaucratic elite and the monopolistic fragment of the big bourgeoisie had lost its grip on politics and economics. Aided and abetted by rampant corruption in politics and a severe economic crisis, AKP's version of Islamic populism promised fairness and transparency. The party benefited from splits in the power bloc and found supporters among monopolistic fragments of capital. It also mobilized marginalized segments of the Anatolian bourgeoisie, urban traders, building contractors, educated members of the conservative youth, and the swelling masses of urban poor.

I am astonished to see how popular is my program in Anatolia and

among the urban poor. Sure, educated people who can afford eating out are among my followers, but how does one explain the popularity among marginal urban masses and especially the youth? I was certainly aided and abetted by my "outsider" status. I was not part of old boy networks in the food and drink industry, and I shy away from close alliances with big restaurateurs and the food industry.

But I believe there is one more important factor explaining my popularity especially among the youth. The puritanical-repressive element always present in Islamic culture has been highlighted since AKP's rise to power. When this repressive bias against sensual pleasures is coupled with the now rampant political repression of opponents, young people in particular turn inwards and take refuge in their rich imaginations. Intolerance of collective forms of protest and severe censorship of mass media generate fear, but also stimulate imagination. Young people perceive politics to be "dirty" and economic life to be "filthy." They are well aware of the

sacrifices in their integrity needed to "succeed" in life. A seemingly care-free person about their father's age, who seems to be having a glorious love affair with food and wine, is a fascinating alter ego. Against the background of a bleak existence and stunted aspirations, a lifelong adventure in pursuit of "taste" is the most satisfying thing life has to offer.

Maybe I am their "Jayer Bourgogne," enabling them to redouble their psychic energies and let loose their repressed sensualities in a hostile socio-cultural and economic environment. This "twisted idealism" of the marginal youth cross-cutting economic classes is the flip side of the "celebrity culture" and the status of the celebrity as an "idol." One cannot help but echo Marx: "the death of the celebrity culture should be the emancipation of the celebrities." ■

> The Violence of Emeralds

by Johanna Parra, Universidad Icesi, Cali, Colombia



No country has more emeralds than Colombia. Warring families have made mining a violent business pursued under the most dangerous conditions. Here a man counts his blessings. Photo by Jan Sochor.

Factional violence taking place in Colombia has become an object of sociological analysis, particularly through the specialty known as Violentology. This Colombian branch of sociology was initially dedicated to the study of the Colombian historical period called La Violencia (1945-1965), grounded in the seminal book *La Violencia en Colombia. Estudio de un Proceso Social* (1962) by Bishop Germán Guzmán Campos, Orlando Fals Borda and Eduardo Umaña. This work, built on the concept of “structural poverty,” consists of a sociological explanation of the turmoil that caused civil violence. One particular event – the assassination of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, Caud-

illo of the Liberal Party on April 9th, 1948 – turned the constant violence that was present in the social and political imaginary into something all too real. But the underlying cause of the dissolution of the “social body” lay in the absence of a symbolic nation-state unity.

Several political, military, and religious powers instigated the masses to take up arms and face their partisan opponents in a battle unto death. The Liberal and the Conservative parties are the traditional historical Colombian political formations, inherited from the Independence Forces (1810-1830) that gave birth to the nation. Violence has been embedded in the everyday life of the nation-state, from Independ-

ence through to the present day. Between 1863 and 1886 alone, there occurred nine great civil wars, which laid the basis of factional fights and the roots of violence in the 20th century, transmitted from one generation to the next up to the present, as Daniel Pécaut has clearly explained in *Order and Violence*.

Violentology has extended its studies to all violence across time and territory, making itself central to the social sciences in Colombia and for understanding Colombian history and society. In fact, much remains to be done: we need to produce historiographic and ethnographic works that will make it possible to understand the violence embedded in everyday life. My work is intended as a contribution to this task.

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Not only the military confrontations generated by *La Violencia* have turned the country into blood and fire, but the extreme barbarity of the atrocities has normalized violence as part of everyday life. At the end of *La Violencia*, during the Cold War of the 1960s and 1970s, different groups took up arms to found Marxist guerilla movements. One of these, FARC (Colombian Revolutionary Army), coming from the armed factions of the Liberal Party, is still active today. On the other side, the paramilitary forces stem from both the reactivation of the Conservative Party militias and the privatization of the security and armed forces established by drug traffickers. The endless armed conflicts and the very nature of military action and confrontation, deploying systematic terror and atrocity, have created huge numbers of displaced persons. Violence is so entrenched in daily life that it invades intimate relations and causes irreconcilable divisions among and even within families, creating painful silences that are transmitted from one generation to another.

Let me turn to my research in the Emeralds region, located in an isolated territory in the Eastern Andes,

where around 80,000 inhabitants live some 40 km from Chiquinquirá, the provincial capital in the Department of Boyacá. In just ten years, this region has experienced the passage from a peasant economy to a mining economy. It has produced excessive wealth for a few inhabitants who ventured into the mines in search of valuable emeralds. The transformation of the regional economy has fractured the peasant family groupings, bringing about new kinship alliances. These new associations among the most active families in the emerald business have required the collaboration of entrepreneurs and security guards, within the very same family business. It has consolidated the mafia families within a peasant tradition in which values of family, honor, blood, and loyalty, are fundamental for managing the economy, much as Anton Blok has described in *The Mafia of a Sicilian Village, A Study of Violent Peasant Entrepreneurs (1860-1960)*.

Because the Colombian state failed to administer and guard the mines against violent inhabitants searching for emeralds, in the 1970s the mines were captured by the bosses and godfathers or *Dons*,

as they are called in the local language. In the period between 1960 and 1991, there were two “Emerald Wars” in which the bosses fought for the control of the mineral exploitation. As a result, at least 5,000 people were left dead in the region. In 1991, the wars ended with a peace treaty agreed to by the *Dons* who had survived. The conflicts between emerald traders have not disappeared, however, and we have to add to this the appearance of drug trafficking and the paramilitary. The new elements appearing in the region have put these controlling families in contact with illegal economies and private armies, which has intensified the endogamous culture of violence.

Similar features can be found in other regions of Colombia. Violence has entered into the most private realms, into domestic relations and child rearing, all of which is the result of an economic boom and the absence of state regulation. While it is morally and politically discouraging, it also gives new urgency to the need for social science fieldwork to understand and publicize the patterns of conflict, underlining the necessity for state intervention. ■

> Land Restitution in Colombia

by Nadia Margarita Rodríguez, University of Rosario, Bogotá, Colombia



More than 4 million Colombian peasants, such as this old man, have been forced to abandon their lands in the last fifteen years. Photo by Julián Vasques.

Controversy over land restitution in Colombia began with the passing of Law 1448, also known as Law of Victims, on June 10, 2011. It was a historical milestone given the tremendous political, economic, social and legal challenges posed by land restitution and given the state's explicit acknowledgement of armed conflict. In particular, chapter three establishes land restitution for peasants who were dispossessed of their land in the last two decades as part of the ongoing armed conflict that has af-

fected Colombia for the last 50 years. The chapter is controversial because the government strongly supports it, which could be read as an attempt to make up for 50 years of neglecting this matter. Despite all efforts, there have been numerous obstacles to implementing the law.

The matter of land restitution in Colombia must be understood in light of the high concentration of land ownership, one of the main problems faced by rural development. Several analysts argue that this is not only the basis for deep economic, politi-

cal and social inequalities; it is also one of the main sources of the bloody conflict in Colombia (Fajardo 2002, Machado 2009, PNUD 2011). Land concentration leads to a bimodal agrarian structure with the majority of productive land belonging to a small minority of economic and political elites.¹ This has been the dominant structure since colonial times and it has only worsened over time. After failed attempts of agrarian reform over the last century, especially in 1936 and 1961 (Molina, 2000: 36), armed groups emerged in the 1960s demanding land redistribution. Thus, large parts of rural Colombia are in a state of semi-permanent crisis in which legal and illegal actors wage a war for control over the territory, which has led to the systematic, violent and massive displacement of 4 million peasants. Thus, the challenge faced by institutions in charge of land restitution is of titanic proportions.

The situation is complex, both because of the legal limitations and because of the social context in which land restitution is to take place. The Center for Social Development Studies of the University of Rosario takes an interdisciplinary approach (combining law and social sciences) to understand the challenges of implementing the law. One part of this project undertakes research for the Unit of Legal Restitution² – research which revolves around five complex issues:

- First, armed conflict continues in the zones intended for land restitu-

tion, which makes it difficult for the state to guarantee that peasants will not be dispossessed of their lands again. The challenge for the Colombian state is to secure peasants' safety by ending armed conflict.

- Second, according to the law, restitution is defined as giving out titles or compensations, which does not make up for any damage caused to land or individuals and does not restore the *status quo ante*. Consequently, this policy cannot be limited to giving back rights over land, but must make it possible for victims to live with dignity on these lands. Moreover, dispossession has involved numerous human rights abuses, leaving victims with deep trauma and, thus, making it more difficult for them to return to the land. In short, victims need support beyond the legal sphere.

- Third, peasants dispossessed of their land and currently living in urban areas are unlikely to want to return to the rural areas, given the extreme inequality in development, education and health. Land dispossession torn the social fabric apart and it will be difficult for these communities to reconstitute themselves.

- Fourth, economic, technical and productive supports will be necessary if the land owners are to live off their lands, instead of being pushed to rent or sell them to those currently there, mostly agro-industrial companies.

- Fifth, there are legal and institutional challenges to be faced, such as the

training of public servants to carry out the restitution, the training of agrarian judges (non-existent in Colombia). The state will have to prove that usurpation actually took place. This raises the important questions: How will the state obtain the land that it intends to reconstitute given that most of it is currently in other hands and that the law exonerates buyers?

Finally, there is a broader structural political problem: the conflict between national and regional elites for control over the territory, involving the clash of economic interests in the exploitation of its natural resources above and below the soil. Emblematic cases of land restitution, such as Curbaradó, Jiguamindó or Hacienda Las Pavas, show that even if legal challenges are resolved, the power configurations at the local level could prevent land restitution from being carried out. ■

¹ The Gini index of land measures the degree of concentration of rural property. The closer the number is to one, the higher the concentration. At 0.87, the Colombian index is among the highest in the world.

² This is the Institution created by the law to carry out land restitution. It existed previously as the Program for the Protection of Land and Dispossessed People (PPTP), yet it had different dynamics, goals and had none of the political or legal support that the Unit has today.

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> The Student Movement in Chile

by Milton L. Vidal, Academic University of Christian Humanism, Santiago, Chile



The Chilean Student Movement against Neoliberalism: "Our Future is not for Sale."

Chile is a small country in the far south. According to the dominant view of world cartography, you can find us at the tip of South America. It is a place that draws international news headlines from time to time. In 2011, a movement led by college and high school students became increasingly prominent in an international scene already full of social protest.

We are part of the most unequal region of the world. A third of the population lives in poverty, suffering from old and new forms of violence, abuse, corruption, and squandering of scarce resources. In this context, men and women organize themselves in different ways to fight for their dreams, to demand respect for their fundamental rights, to demand that their governments fulfill their promises and make decisions that favor the common good. This is also true in Chile, of course. There are many sources of dissatisfaction that would have prompted Latin Americans to take to the streets of which many are

more obvious than the social rights of high school and college students. One shouldn't forget that this southern country was the starting point and inspiration for the main neoliberal policies enforced by Latin American governments since the mid-1970s, particularly in relation to college education.

Why, then, did these protests start in Chile? Why are they perceived as legitimate by so many in our country? Simply put, the neoliberal promise had burst. Indeed, the promise of making college education available for all took the worst possible turn: an increase in enrollment

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was possible only to the degree to which students and their families went into debt. University fees in Chile are among the highest in the world and most of them are paid by credit. In sociological terms, in a country where the distribution of income is brutally unequal¹, it is especially important that we conceive of higher education as a public good and as a decisive factor in social mobility.

The return on these families' private investment in higher education is among the highest in Latin America and university fees are still on the rise. The limits on this increase will be set by family purchasing power. In sum, the relatively rich pay for the best basic education (elementary and high school) and benefit from the best universities (admitted on the basis of exam scores and/or purchasing power), while those with fewer resources and a mediocre basic education have to make substantial sacrifices to attend dubious institutions at a high cost. Thus, protest for a better education is a statement against social inequality.

Surprising many, the social movement in defense of public education led by students took off and gathered strength week by week. The content of the demands, the social force that was mobilized and legitimized, the international solidarity that developed are not confined to Chile. On the contrary, movements in defense of public education have also been successful in Uruguay, Bolivia, Brazil, Puerto Rico, Ecuador and Colombia. Nevertheless, it is useful for an international discussion and reflection to point to some of the characteristics of the Chilean case.

First, universities are still a barometer of social life. To insist on this historical constant may be naive, but it is often forgotten. Politicians who should be carrying out deep reforms of universities delay them because they think of higher education as a marginal issue, while economic leadership thinks that the deficit in higher education can be resolved by injecting resources from the public sector, the bank, families or all of the above. Big mistake! Universities

have always been much more than a policy sector. All major social change is somehow connected to universities. Whether we think of the Jewish exile from the Persian empire of Nebuchadnezzar, the political debates of Plato's Academy, the debates prior to the Protestant Reform with Luther's thesis and translations of the Bible into German, of Calvinism in the University of Geneva, of Iran pre- and post-Khomeini, of China prior to the People's Republic, the cultural revolution or Tiananmen Square, of Mexico pre- and post- the Tlatelolco massacre, universities are and will continue to be global institutions of major political and social importance. Thus, they must always be an object of major sociological attention.

Second, education at all levels, but particularly at the college level, cannot be subjected to a polarized tension between state and market. Humboldt was right when he argued a long time ago that state interventions get in the way of education. Latin Americans know that the state always embodies power that expresses itself in bureaucracy. Sociologists of education know that the most burdensome part of reforms is carrying them out. Nevertheless, even Humboldt argued that we cannot do without the state completely. We need to demand that the state guarantee the institutional conditions for education. We also need it to keep the University from becoming a battlefield for individual interests. In this sense, education is a public good and universities are public institutions, even if they are funded privately. Its teaching, research and outreach functions are essentially public. Their ability to give out diplomas is based on society's faith in them.

Third, the student movement in Chile, and more generally in Latin America, rejects the commodification of education. The organizing logic of a market economy is incompatible with that of scientific training. Let us observe the collaboration between students and professors more closely. Education is always the result of collective efforts. It cannot be bought and hence cannot be commodified. Students can only become educat-

ed through their active participation in scientific activities. This is why we motivate them to become involved in seminar discussions, to write up reports, to become involved in research teams, to share and debate their ideas with other students. The idea that professors and students are buyers and sellers is not only misleading (and needs to be challenged for more than ideological reasons), it is an obstacle to reaching the goal of education. I find it appalling that colleagues in academia accept the view that their students are *clients*. Students require academic freedom, which depends in turn on the freedom of their professors. Yet this academic freedom is eroded by the market economy. If professors are considered *service providers*, that is employees and dependents on whomever owns the institution of higher education, then they, in turn, will use their students to advance their narrow interests.

Finally, we must say that student protest is good news for societies, universities and sociologists. The university is a place where society transforms itself into a research topic and, in the process, reaffirms itself. There have always been interests and power struggles in this self-awareness that have threatened academic freedom. However, these struggles have not been able to destroy the University. This is how we should look at the student movement in Chile, and beyond Chile in Latin America and the world. I think that the persistence of the movement benefits a democratic society. Society and university are again strongly linked by this student movement, providing a stimulating context for sociology. Those who say that the sociological narrative is in decline are wrong. Sociology is in good health in the southern part of the world and I hope this news will cheer you up, patient readers. ■

¹ Chile is an *emerging* country of the OECD. According to this organization, Chile has a Gini score of 0.50, which represents the highest inequality among the countries in this category (*Society at a Glance, Social Indicators*, OECD, 2011). This point can be illustrated further: the average income of the richest 10% of Chileans is higher than Norway's, while that of the poorest 10% is similar to that of the population of Ivory Coast. The majority of Chileans (60%) have, on average, a lower income than Angolans.

> Executive Committee Meeting in Beirut, March 19-23, 2012

by Michael Burawoy, University of California, Berkeley, and ISA President



Members of the ISA Executive Committee mix sociology with Lebanese delicacies.
Photo by Markus Schulz.

In its annual meeting the ISA Executive Committee met for five days at the American University of Beirut (AUB), generously hosted by Professor Sari Hanafi and his colleagues in the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Media Studies. Two days of our meeting coincided with a wonderful International Symposium on “The Arab Up-risings” (reported on in this issue of *Global Dialogue*), sponsored by AUB,

the Lebanese Sociological Association, and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and drawing on speakers from all over the Arab World with comparative perspectives from elsewhere.

The five-day marathon began with separate meetings of the Program Committee for the Yokohama Congress in 2014, chaired by VP Raquel Sosa, the Publications Committee, chaired by VP Jennifer Platt, the Fi-

nance and Membership Committee, chaired by VP Robert Van Krieken, the Research Coordinating Committee, chaired by VP Margaret Abraham, and the National Liaison Committee, chaired by VP Tina Uys.

The Executive Committee met as a whole for two days at the end of the week. I reported on my many trips to different parts of the world and the progress made during the year with

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regard to ISA-on-line (see editorial). One of our most urgent tasks was to decide where to hold the 2018 ISA World Congress. We had five excellent bids from Budapest, Copenhagen, Melbourne, Zaragoza, and Toronto. We short-listed two – Toronto and Zaragoza – and will make a final decision pending a site visit to the former. We decided to take up membership of the International Council for Science (ICSU). Based on a subcommittee report, we discussed the possibility of initiating ISA prizes and awards and decided to pursue the details of one international award, recognizing the research and practice of sociology. Here are reports from the individual Vice-Presidents.

**> Margaret Abraham,
Vice-President for Research**

The Research Coordinating Committee (RCC) had an extremely productive meeting in Beirut. We discussed the following reports: the status of the revisions of the statutes of the Research Committees, Thematic and Working Groups; the activities of all RCs-TGs-WGs in 2006-2010; and the second ISA Forum of Sociology in Buenos Aires in August 2012.

An important part of the meeting was devoted to discussing the ongoing preparations for the Forum. We received 6,019 abstracts from 7,928 authors for a total of 693 sessions (51 in Spanish). We received submissions from all over the world including a strong representation (3,528 or 45%) from Latin America.

Although we do expect high participation, the numbers will be reduced due to the difficult economic climate. I am working with Sage to create an open-access virtual space to disseminate and exchange knowledge and research on issues connected to the Forum's theme – *Social Justice and Democratization*. More information on this will be out soon!

The report and discussion of the revisions of RC/TG/WG statutes noted

that some RCs-WGs-TGs still need to submit their revised statutes. These revisions need to be completed well before the next elections. We also discussed the need for RC-WG-TG boards to review their composition, in particular length of time in office. A number of boards need to take active steps to find new members who will stand for office in the next election.

The RCC reviewed grant applications. A total of US \$16,900 was allocated to eighteen RCs-WGs-TGs in 2011, and €8,660 to thirteen RCs-WGs-TGs in 2012. Jennifer Platt, VP for Publications, put together guidelines for Research Committee journals that are now available online: http://www.isa-sociology.org/about/rc_aims.htm.

Finally, the activities reports submitted by RC-WG-TG for the 2006-2008 and 2008-2010 periods were reviewed and discussed. Most RCs-WGs-TGs were active, organizing conferences, publishing newsletters and undertaking other professional activities. A revised RC-TG-WG Activities form has been designed to capture the data in a more efficient and consistent manner across RCs-WGs-TGs.

**> Jennifer Platt,
Vice-President for
Publications**

Sujata Patel, editor of Sage Studies in International Sociology (SSIS), has agreed with Sage Publishers to produce books in India, to be sold at Indian prices for ISA members and buyers from the developing world, although the big hardback handbooks will still be available for Western libraries at Western prices. This was warmly approved.

It was agreed to offer national associations the opportunity to reprint in translation (done under their auspices) any articles from *Current Sociology* (CS) or *International Sociology* of special interest to them, without paying the usual permission fee. CS is to publish an

additional issue each year, which will consist of review articles drawn from Sociopedia.

The policy has been adopted that the journal editors and Vice-President should provide some publications-related activity at every ISA event; maybe a "meet the editors" session, a workshop on writing journal articles, or a meeting with local editors. They will also attend major conferences each year to publicize our journals, observe new developments, and recruit fresh authors, referees, and book reviewers.

**> Raquel Sosa,
Vice-President for Program**

It is a pleasure to inform colleagues that the recent meeting of the Program Committee for the Yokohama Congress (2014) in Beirut was a great success. The theme for that Congress is *Facing an Unequal World: Challenges for Sociology*. We have already put out a call for papers and session organizers with a deadline for January 15, 2013. This can be found on the ISA website: <http://www.isa-sociology.org/congress2014/>. We are eager to receive proposals for *ad hoc* and *integrative* sessions, and for *authors meet critics* sessions. We would like members to consider this an extraordinary opportunity to participate in what has become the most transcendent international debate on social matters of our time! As many ISA members have devoted most of their professional lives to working on questions related to poverty, inequality and injustice, we expect that our Yokohama Congress will make a significant contribution to both knowledge and social practice.

The Program Committee agreed to prepare ten semi-plenary sessions on the following topics: configurations of structural inequalities; inequalities and structures of power; production and practice of inequality; social injuries of inequalities; conceptions of justice from different historical and cultural traditions; justice and social

systems; overcoming inequalities; actors and experiences; environmental justice and a sustainable future; sociology and inequalities. Participants will come from diverse traditions and from all over the world. We hope that these semi-plenaries together with the Presidential and Local Organizing Committee sessions will appeal to our colleagues and contribute to the renewal of the world's social sciences for the 21st century.

> **Tina Uys, Vice-President for National Associations**

We discussed and clarified the criteria for regular collective membership of the ISA. According to ISA procedures, regular collective members are admitted by a decision of the Executive Committee upon a recommendation by the National Associations Liaison Committee and by the Finance and Membership Committee. The Statutes of regular collective members must be in line with Articles 1 and 2 of the ISA Statutes:

- Regular collective members must be non-profit associations for scientific purposes that represent sociologists, regardless of their school of thought, scientific approaches or ideological opinion.
- The goal of regular collective members must be to advance sociological knowledge. Their structure should recognize the aspirations of sociologists and endeavor to support and strengthen the free development of sociology through various activities such as hosting conferences and promoting publications.
- The officers of regular collective members must be elected through a regular democratic process.

We confirmed the new process developed for considering applications for Regular Collective Membership received between annual EC meetings. The Slovenian Social Science Association applied for regular collective membership during the sec-

ond half of 2011. This application was evaluated by means of an online process and was approved. The application by the Uganda Sociological and Anthropological Association was approved at the meeting. The ISA now has 60 regular collective members but not all of them have paid the membership fees and, therefore, regrettably are not in good standing.

Based on the criteria established in the National Associations Liaison Committee meeting in Mexico in 2011, regional workshop grants were awarded to the sociological associations of Bangladesh, Bulgaria, Mozambique and the Philippines. Bangladesh and Mozambique also received grants for website development.

The plans for the conference of the Council of National Associations (CNA) are taking shape. The conference will take place in Ankara, Turkey, in May 2013. The theme of the conference will be *Sociology in Times of Turmoil: Comparative Approaches*. It will be organized jointly with the Department of Sociology of the Middle East Technical University, the Turkish Social Sciences Association, and the Sociological Association of Turkey.

> **Robert Van Krieken, Vice-President for Finance and Membership**

The Finance and Membership Committee reported steadily increasing individual membership which is now a little above 5,000 members. The Life Membership fee is currently US \$300, and the committee is now proposing a differentiation of the fee across the country categories: Cat. A - US \$300, Cat. B - \$200, Cat. C - \$100, which could only be changed in the Yokohama World Congress in 2014. We recommended making it easier for members to donate to the ISA via the website, and investigating ways of attracting more donations and bequests.

We provided a summary financial statement for 2010 and 2011, to be

made available to the membership, as well as a report on the 2010-2014 budget details for discussion in relation to requests for additional funding. Overall our financial situation is healthy. We have had significant increases in staff and administrative expenses due to growing ISA activities, but these have been offset by an increased contribution from Sage in the renewed contract negotiated in 2011. Additional funds were approved for *Global Dialogue, Journeys through Sociology*, and editors' travel expenses.

> **Other Items**

We received an encouraging report from Koichi Hasegawa, head of the Local Organizing Committee for the ISA World Congress in Yokohama (2014). We discussed reports from our representatives to the UN (Jan Fritz, Rudolf Richter, Rosemary Barberet, and Hilde Jakobsen), the International Institute for the Sociology of Law (Ramon Flecha), and the Global Development Network (Emma Porio). We heard from Chin-Chun Yi about progress on the 2012 Laboratory for PhD Students in Taipei. We wrote and signed a collective letter from the Executive Committee defending the importance of social science research in the European Union.

We ended on a note of thanks to our hosts who left no stone unturned to make this a most enjoyable and interesting gathering in Beirut, especially to Sari Hanafi, Oubada Kassar, and Chebib Diab at AUB, and to the indefatigable staff of the ISA Secretariat for once again facilitating our complex meeting and overseeing the ISA as it strides into the future. ■

> Exploring South Africa while Discussing your Dissertation

by Tina Uys, University of Johannesburg, South Africa, and ISA Vice-President for National Associations, 2010-2014



| Students from the ISA PhD Laboratory touring Soweto.

The Tenth ISA Doctoral Laboratory took place in the secluded environment of the University of Johannesburg Island in the Vaal Dam near Vereeniging in South Africa, November 8-11, 2011. A diverse group of twelve students from places as far apart as China, Iran, Europe, the USA, Mexico and Brazil were selected from 50 applicants. They were joined by two South African students. Their mentors were also quite diverse namely: Jan Marie Fritz from the USA, Chin Chun Yu from Taiwan, Yoshimichi Sato from Japan. The theme of this year's doctoral laboratory was Social Exclusion, Citizenship and Social Capital.

The activities kicked off with a "welcoming the students back to Africa" through a visit to the Sterkfontein caves, a World Heritage Site in the Cradle of Human-

kind where scientists have discovered many hominid and other animal fossils, dating back more than 4-million years, to the birth of humanity. The most important and most famous of these fossils are "Mrs Ples," a 2.1-million-year-old *Australopithecus* skull, and "Little Foot," an almost complete *Australopithecus* skeleton that is more than 3-million years old. After the visit the students and faculty members were transferred to the Island first by minibus and then by boat.

The laboratory itself lasted 4 days with sessions during the day where doctoral students and faculty members presented their work. This allowed for lively discussions to take place as the multicultural audience provided for much spirited and robust debate. Activities during the warm summer evenings included a game drive and a boat cruise around the Island, which provided an opportune environment for everyone to get to know each other better. The activities on the Island were concluded with a traditional South African *braai* (barbecue) and a camp fire. On the Saturday the students and faculty got to know some of South Africa's more recent history with a tour through Soweto where they were entertained with a typical *shebeen* lunch. The laboratory ended with a farewell dinner on the Saturday evening at The View Hotel which has a spectacular view of the Melville Koppies Nature Reserve in Johannesburg.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, Professor Rory Ryan, who provided the bulk of the funding for the local hospitality of the Laboratory. I am sure that the participants of this Doctoral Laboratory will have fond memories of their stay on the Island and of Johannesburg. ■

> Journeys through Sociology

by Laleh Behbehanian, University of California, Berkeley, USA

Laleh Behbehanian hosted the program “Journeys through Sociology”. *Global Dialogue* asked her to assess what she learned from her interviews with the ISA Executive Committee.

Journeys through Sociology is a series of recorded interviews with the Executive Committee of the International Sociological Association. Conducted via Skype with committee members located throughout the world, the interviews provide a rare glimpse into these scholars’ personal journeys through sociology. The interviews focused on exploring two main questions: *how they came to be drawn to sociology, and the challenges they have faced*. All of the interviews can be found on the ISA’s webpage at <http://www.isa-sociology.org/journeys-through-sociology/>.

While the interviews are full of fascinating personal accounts, collectively they also highlight the many experiences shared by sociologists across space and time. Most fundamentally, they point to a deep sense of curiosity about the social world. Thus, Yoshimichi Sato discusses how he was drawn to sociology as a way of making sense of “social puzzles,” while Jennifer Platt describes the excitement of work-

ing with different sorts of empirical data. For many of these scholars, their sociological curiosity was ignited through experiences of travel or migration. Michael Burawoy’s sociological imagination was fueled by his travels to the US, India and Zambia, while Habibul Khondker’s experiences of migration from Bangladesh to Canada, Singapore and the UAE shaped his perspective as a “roving sociologist” engaging in comparative research. Tom Dwyer describes early experiences of “estrangement” growing up in an immigrant Irish family in New Zealand, as well as during travels throughout his youth, and how this estrangement inclined him towards thinking sociologically about the world. Vineeta Sinha discusses a similar theme when describing the sense of “discomfort” instilled by her sociology professors and how this presented exciting new possibilities for interpreting the world.

It is no surprise that many of these scholars were initially drawn to the discipline through inspirational teachers, an inspiration they aim to pass on to their own students. Tina

Uys recounts the impression made by her own teachers, and how she utilizes sociology to understand and address the challenges currently facing students in South Africa. Simon Mapadimeng, also from South Africa, was introduced to the discipline by professors that were deeply involved in anti-Apartheid struggles, leading to his own commitment to nurturing a new generation of black South African sociologists.

One theme, however, surfaced recurrently in the interviews: that of pursuing sociology as a means of social change, with virtually all the discussions turning to the potential power of sociology to address urgent social, political and economic issues. Jaime Jiménez recalls working on the first computer in Mexico as a university student in 1958 and how it seemed to hold the promise of solving the nation’s problems, leading him to pursue quantitative research geared to socioeconomic problems. Dilek Cindoğlu describes how the political unrest in late 1970s Turkey led her to sociology. “I wanted to understand what is going on in Turkey. And I still do!”

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Many of the interviews provide fascinating accounts of the intersection of biography and history that led scholars down the path of sociology. Ishwar Modi speaks of the period after Independence in India and how the attention of social scientists turned to reconstruction and development. Chin-Chun Yi was led to sociology by the dramatic social transformation of 1970s Taiwan, while Emma Porio's journey through sociology was fueled by a desire to understand the rapid social changes overtaking the Philippines under Martial Law. Elena Zdravomyslova offers a captivating account of the influence of her father and his colleagues as they launched Soviet sociology, and how after becoming disillusioned with the discipline in the late 1970s, sociology once again began to flourish with the openings created by Perestroika.

The interviews also provide a view of the range of challenges facing sociologists throughout the world. Some of these challenges are difficulties posed by gender, race or nationality, while others are more universally shared. Many scholars in the Global South emphasize the struggle to expand sociological theory beyond its traditional Eurocentric boundaries and the need to address the continued global inequalities

in the production of sociological knowledge (in terms of language, journals and publications, research priorities, etc.). Many of these scholars grapple with the challenge of undertaking research that is both locally rooted and globally relevant. Sari Hanafi eloquently captures this tension in relation to publishing, describing it as a choice between "publishing globally and perishing locally," and "publishing locally and perishing globally."

“fascinating accounts of the intersection of biography and history”

There are also a number of challenges that surface more universally throughout the interviews, including those related to the constraints of disciplinary boundaries. Raquel Sosa describes her efforts to develop interdisciplinary research and collaboration within Latin America and the importance of “looking for different kinds of explanations of social reality.” Robert van Krieken argues that sociology

can play a leading role in encouraging interdisciplinary thought and describes how he was always inclined towards the field because of the ways it enabled him to draw upon and engage with other kinds of knowledge. Many of the interviews also focus on the challenge of balancing the different roles of the sociologist (teaching, research, administration, activism, etc.) and negotiating the different moments of sociological research (professional, critical, policy, and public). Margaret Abraham reflects on this balancing act through a discussion of the intersection of her research, teaching and activism on domestic violence within South Asian communities in the US.

These interviews demonstrate the diverse fascination of sociology to different generations in different places in the world. They show just how interesting and entertaining are the leaders of the ISA. If you doubt me, then turn to the end of each interview where the respondent tells us what they would have done had they not been a sociologist – lawyers, doctors, journalists, architects, but also belly-dancers, ballerinas, bar owners, carpenters, or the host of a culinary show called “stirring it up.” We are lucky, indeed, to have such a diverse and humane group serving our association. ■

> The Arab Uprisings

Sociological Perspectives and Geographical Comparisons

by Amina Arabi and Julian Jürgenmeyer, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Lebanon



Revolutionary Art in Mohamed Mahmoud Street, Cairo. Photo by Mona Abaza.

The fate of the popular uprisings in the Arab world remains uncertain. Yet, it is already clear that the political landscape in the region has been transformed to an extent unseen since the formal end of colonialism, and that the seemingly ineradicable essentialist idea of “Arab exceptionalism” has been finally discredited. On March 20 and 21 (2012) a conference held at the American University of Beirut brought together academics

from throughout the Arab world but also from India, Latin and North America as well as Europe and Africa to discuss a wide array of topics related to the uprisings and revolutions. The conference particularly aimed to bring often neglected sociological perspectives to the fore and to develop scenarios for the future trajectory of the uprisings through historical, cross-country and -continent comparisons.

In his presentation on the Occupy Wall Street movement, Markus Schulz

(University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) enabled such a comparative perspective by advancing a theoretical framework for research on social movements. Many astonishing parallels between the Arab uprisings and the Occupy movement became apparent, such as their dialogic, leaderless nature that, for the Arab case, Mohammed Bamyeh (University of Pittsburgh) traced back to a long-standing tradition of anarchist ethics. For him, the popular movements throughout the Arab world can be considered the ex-

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pression of a historical memory that is deeply suspicious of authoritarianism and strives after the installation of the people as not merely the represented but as the *actual* rulers.

The role of a genuine longing for democracy in the uprisings was repeatedly subject to debate. Although participants agreed on the pre-eminent importance of economic grievances, they dismissed a purely materialist interpretation as reductionist and inappropriate to account for the profound transformations Arab societies are undergoing. The case of Bahrain, analyzed by Abdulhadi Khalaf (Lund University), served as an instance of a genuinely *political* revolt with its protagonists protesting against the King's "bread and circuses" policy and demanding to be "citizens, not subjects." Sari Hanafi (American University of Beirut) argued that a new form of political subjectivity has arisen in the wake of the uprisings, which does not, in stark contrast to the so-called neoliberal individualism, propagate a total emancipation from collective entities but urges its actors to actively reflect on their social ties and, if necessary, not only to change these ties but also the collective entities themselves. For Hanafi, this "reflexive individualism" has the power to transcend sectarian and ethnic cleavages and thus to pave the way for a "new patriotism." As became evident in the subsequent discussion, whether it will actually do so, hangs, however, in the balance – considering that even in Tunisia and Egypt, the alleged strongholds of reflexivity, post-revolutionary voting behavior was still largely determined by ethnic and sectarian loyalties.

Drawing upon the Latin American experience, Raquel Sosa Elízaga (National Autonomous University of Mexico) and Edgardo Lander (Venezuelan Central University, Caracas) further emphasized the need for a *social* revolution instead of a mere regime change. Only in this way would it be possible to overcome structures of exploitation and oppression that,

in most Latin American countries, persisted after the "negotiated transitions" to (liberal) democracy. Tina Uys (University of Johannesburg) offered a similar criticism of the "negotiated revolution" in South Africa depicting it as inherently conservative.

As seen in Latin America, the armed forces have to be considered one of the key actors in regime transitions. Yezid Sayigh (Carnegie Middle East Center, Beirut) pointed to the penetration of nearly all societal spheres by the military in consequence of the crucial role armies played in the construction of authoritarian power in the Arab world. The re-configuration of civil-military relations is therefore one of the most urgent and most risky challenges for post-revolutionary governments – the necessary disturbance of long-established societal interests, Sayigh argued, might become a serious obstacle to constraining military power in society. Elaborating on the role of public space in the on-going clashes between revolutionaries and the army, Mona Abaza (American University in Cairo) showed in her "Reflections on the Post-Revolution" that the Egyptian military is still a far cry from being under democratic control and aims to seize power for itself.

The civil-military relations in Turkey have been often evoked as a possible model for the Arab world. This was called into question by Dilek Cindoğlu (Bilkent University, Ankara) who indicated some of the shortcomings of Turkish democracy and cautioned in particular against a "gender-blind democratization." Fatima Kubaissi (Qatar University) and Jan Marie Fritz (University of Cincinnati, USA) further elaborated on the role of women in transition processes, with Fritz pointing to the fundamental contingency inherent to moments of political change that provide therefore a "window of opportunity" for social transformation and women's empowerment.

With regard to the question as to who to empower to foster democratic change, Justin Gengler (Qatar Univer-

sity) contested the conventional wisdom that civic engagement translates into a greater appreciation for democratic values. Based on data from the *World Values Survey*, Gengler put forward the controversial hypothesis that, at least in Qatar, civil society as such is not a channel for democratization but rather facilitates access to clientelist structures. Göran Therborn (University of Cambridge) extended Gengler's argument and claimed that also in democratic nations, civil society is first and foremost a sphere where particular interests rather than genuinely democratic values are being represented.

In his closing speech, Michael Burawoy (University of California, Berkeley) praised organizer Hanafi for his "stroke of genius" in paving the way to a systematic comparative perspective on the uprisings. This conference was an important step towards a truly comparative approach even if it could not yet provide a synthesis of different countries' and regions' democratization experiences. Only a few participants were primarily concerned with the question of what conclusions to draw for the Arab uprisings from experiences elsewhere as most presentations and discussions dealt mainly with the specifics of nations or regions, thus focusing on detailed but nonetheless isolated case studies rather than systemizing our empirical knowledge on revolutions and democratization. Thus, a more general framework for comparative analysis of regime changes that does not fall into the trap of making all too simple causal claims still remains to be developed. One must remember that the defining spontaneity of the Arab revolutions cannot be captured by (quasi-)deterministic models but rather has to be attributed to the "unpredictability of human agency," as Göran Therborn put it. Hence, as Nahla Chahal (*al-Safeer* newspaper) reminded us in her engaged talk, those who argue for political change ought to seize the opportunity of this truly *historical* moment and translate their theoretical reflections into revolutionary practice. ■

> One or Many Sociologies? A Polish Dialogue

by Mikołaj Mierzejewski, Karolina Mikołajewska, and Jakub Rozenbaum, Public Sociology Laboratory, University of Warsaw, Poland¹



A Global Dialogue Symposium in Warsaw on the Future of Sociology.

With its lively debate on the status of sociology in an unequal world, *Global Dialogue* 2.2 was the first issue published in Polish. The local editorial team, working together in the student-organized Public Sociology Lab, decided to move the global discussion into a more local context. We organized a seminar devoted to the problems raised by Piotr Sztompka and his opponents, as seen from a Polish perspective.

The meeting was held on January

19 (2012) and attracted students, PhD candidates, and professors from various faculties of the University, as well as from other schools. Everyone at the seminar was free to express his or her opinion, but to set the ball rolling three guests were invited to give introductory speeches. Professor Anna Giza-Poleszczuk is a well-known specialist in the sociology of family and social ties, and also active in the Polish NGO sector. Professor Antoni Sulek is a former president of the Polish Sociological Association (PTS). He specializes in methodology, theo-

ries of public opinion, and the history of Polish sociology. Dr. Izabela Wagner's main field of study is the professional careers of scientists and musicians. She has conducted research in France, Poland, and the US, collaborating with EHESS in Paris and with Harvard University.

Discussion at the seminar covered a wide range of topics, from conflicts within the field of sociology to the reform of Polish science and higher education introduced in 2011. Mainly, however, we tried to address the

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question whether one universal sociology is possible (or desirable) or if we should encourage “local sociologies” addressing local problems – in other words, we tried to answer the question posed in the title of the seminar: *One or Many Sociologies?*

Dr. Izabela Wagner started by showing the multiple dimensions of divisions and inequalities among sociologists. There are not only conflicts between North and South, East and West, or elite and non-elite sociologists, but also between theorists and “ethnographers” who start from fieldwork and then move towards theory. For Dr. Wagner, Piotr Sztompka and Michael Burawoy – whose opinions reflect to a large degree their academic careers and social backgrounds – are exemplars of these two standpoints. She compared the situation in sociology to the one in molecular biology that used to be dominated by scientists working in artificial laboratory conditions, using the *in vitro* method, which turned out to be producing mainly artifacts. Thus, the *in vivo* method was rehabilitated. Although it is much more costly and 95% of the experiments end with failure, it generates knowledge and theory that is well grounded in empirical reality. While *in vitro* resembles the theoretical approach in sociology, *in vivo* method is close to ethnography as there are fewer hypotheses framed *a priori* and the theories are drawn from fieldwork. Dr. Wagner expressed her hope that sociology can take a turn parallel to the one in biology.

Professor Antoni Sulek presented another approach to our question by defining sociology as “a science which *speaks of society*,” not “a science of society.” Thus, he claimed, we can discuss the diversity of *languages* that we use in our sociological work, as well as the diversity of *societies*. The latter is a probably insoluble theoretical problem (how profoundly do societies differ). On the contrary, if we consider the sociological language we use, we can see that the oppo-

sition universal-particular is a false dilemma. Professor Sulek suggested that there are two parallel “sociological circuits.” One is a purely scholarly one, in which sociologists talk with each other. Here publishing in English is not only acceptable, but desirable – here “sociologists talk to the world, and you talk to the world in world languages.” The aim is to communicate local experiences in a language of sociological theory, without contextual references. However, there is another circuit, the one in which sociologists talk to their own society. In this circuit lies the key role of sociology. According to Professor Sulek, the best way of realizing this is “sociological writing” – texts meant not for other scholars but for a mass readership. This should not, however, be confused with the role of “media sociologists” appearing on TV, who resemble more celebrities than scholars.

Professor Anna Giza-Poleszczuk also presented different visions of sociology. She raised three important questions that we must keep in mind when searching for a universal sociology. Firstly, does everyone have the same opportunities to present his or her vision of universal knowledge? Do we think of mechanisms that would protect us from “usurpers” monopolizing this one science? Secondly, who sets the sociological agenda? Who decides which problems are important within the “common pool of knowledge”? Thirdly, are we always talking about the same things? Differences between societies do not operate only on the level of their “manifestations” of universal logics. Theories also play a role in determining how we see the world. Indeed, some theories are simply inadequate, as is neoclassical economics in a country where there is no free market.

Professor Anna Giza-Poleszczuk also referred to the debate about the recent higher education reform in Poland within the framework of public sociology.² In a discussion that followed, Dr. Maciej Gdula, mentor of the Public

Sociology Laboratory, argued that the reform profoundly alters the circumstances of Polish academic life. It tries to turn Polish scholars into American scholars by heavily weighting rewards toward articles published in the list of journals recognized by the International Science Index rather than teaching students or performing extra-academic activities in relation to problems of one’s own society. Public sociology, after all, is not looking for recognition in the international publication system, but aims at building ties between various social actors in local contexts.

Academic dependency and a critical reflection on sociology provide another fruitful analytical framework for studying the situation of Polish academic institutions. However, the seminar could not conclude with unequivocal answer to the question posed in the title. It is because – as Jeffrey C. Alexander stated in the last issue of *Global Dialogue* (2.3) – the dispute between universalism and particularism could not be settled once and for all, but must be periodically revisited in different contexts. We can only try to find some common ground, which is what Professor Sulek did in the final words of the seminar. He suggested that what is most important is to do a *good* sociology. We are free to set our own standards of scholarly excellence. What counts is to comply with these standards.

This conclusion is extremely important: sociology does not have to be tailored to one version of what is defined as “good science.” However, even if we choose the path of public sociology, even if we develop a “local sociology” addressing local problems, we should develop and apply criteria to evaluate our work as science. ■

¹ Koło Naukowe Socjologii Publicznej (Public Sociology Laboratory) is a students’ scholarly organization founded in the Institute of Sociology, University of Warsaw. For contact please write to public.sociology.kn@uw.edu.pl or visit <http://www.facebook.com/sociologiapubliczna>.

² For more on the Polish reform, see articles by Izabela Wagner and Anna Szolucha in ISA blog (<http://www.isa-sociology.org/universities-in-crisis/>).

> A Bunch of Kids That's Who We Are!

by Reyhaneh Javadi, University of Tehran, Iran

During the translation of the Japanese team's introduction (GD2.3), when I was reading the degrees and the research areas – remembering the Paulista team – all I was thinking was “Heavens! What we are doing among all of these PhDs and professors? We are just a bunch of kids!”

That's really who we are! A group of interested (very) young sociologists who think and believe we deserve better conditions of study. So we've organized ourselves into the Student Sociological Association of the University of Tehran. We're trying to determine and challenge the shortcomings in formal education and create alternatives. Our board is elected by a vote of the sociology students at our university. Its term of office is one academic year.

Last year, our association resumed its commitment after some years of inactivity. Last year our elected board included: Saghar Bozorgi, Najmeh Taheri, Elahe Noori, Mitra Daneshvar, Faezeh Khajezade, Somaieh Rostampour, and Reyhaneh Javadi. The current team started its work a month ago. New faces on the board, taking the places of those who have graduated, are Nastaran Mahmoudzadeh, Tara Asgari Laleh, and Zahra Babaei. All board

members are undergraduates, except two who are MA students. And we're all women!

Our association first focused on creating study groups that read the works of classical and modern sociologists; organizing workshops such as the sociology of religion in Iran; managed a social photography exhibition; and enjoyed the insights of speakers, including Michael Burawoy (Public Sociology), and Jennifer Platt (History of Sociology). Last but not least, we are publishing a student sociological magazine called *Sareh* (“pure”) with two parts in each issue. The first part is a critical approach to the situation of teaching sociology in our faculty and the second part is the translation of an article or a part of a book of a sociologist.

Translating *Global Dialogue* is one of our association's tasks. Unlike other teams, we choose a collaborative way to elect our translators. In fact, this activity was a great way to stimulate our enthusiasm. So for every issue we make an announcement in our faculty, and ask all of the interested students to translate a one-page sample text. For each issue we choose four translators from the best samples. Here is a brief introduction of the translation team.



Reyhaneh Javadi MA student of Sociology at the University of Tehran (UT). She earned her BA from UT in Sociology. Her field of study is historical sociology focusing on reforms in 19th and early 20th century Iran.



Jalal Karimian MA student of philosophy at Shahid Beheshti University (SBU). He received his BA degree from UT in Social Sciences. Of late, he studies existential philosophy and phenomenology of religion. He's also interested in public sociology.



Shahrad Shahvand MA graduate in International Relations from UT, with a BA degree from Persian Gulf University (PGU) in Chemical Engineering. He's now focusing on religion, culture, and politics in South Asia, especially Pakistan.



Saghar Bozorgi BA student of Sociology at UT. Her research interest is historical sociology focusing on Modern Iran.

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Najmeh Taheri BA student of Sociology at UT.



Tara Asgari Laleh BA student of Sociology at UT.



Fatemeh Moghaddasi MA student of Sociology at Allameh Tabataba'i University (ATU). She earned her BA degree from UT in Sociology. Her main research interests are the sociology of education and public sociology, focusing on the history of public sociology in Iran and expanding the public sociology through the educational system.



Zeinab Nesar MA student of Sociology at UT. She received her BA degree from UT. She is now working on gender studies.



Faezeh Esmaeili MA student of Sociology at UT. She received her BA from SBU in Sociology. She is analyzing the social policies during the Pahlavi era.



Mitra Daneshvar BA student of Sociology at UT. She is analyzing youth deviance, concentrating on capital punishment in Iran.

It is, indeed, a pleasure and honor for all of us to collaborate in the great experience of *Global Dialogue*. ■

> The Global Place of French-Speaking Sociology

by **André Petitat**, University of Lausanne, Switzerland, and AISLF President



Georges Gurvitch (1894-1965) – Russian-born French intellectual and distinguished sociologist of his time – was a leading figure in AISLF.

The 19th Congress of the International Association of French-Speaking Sociologists (AISLF) on “Uncertainty” (*Penser l’incertain*) will take place on July 2-7, 2012 in Rabat. AISLF, member of ISA, was founded in 1958 in a context of US

military, economic, technological and scientific hegemony. From the 1950s, graduate and postgraduate students sought out opportunities to visit universities in the United States. This was not to everyone’s liking as the currents of functionalist conformism and statistical empiricism, then dominant in the US, contrasted with European approaches sensitive to conflict and social transformation. Georges Gurvitch, a leading figure in AISLF, developed

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Sorokin's critique of US *testomania* and *quantophrenia* in his own way. Though the McCarthyite madness ended in 1954, it left its traces in US sociology.

The theoretical and ideological distance from US sociology, not to mention its linguistic one-sidedness, was a major influence on the decision to create an international space of French-speaking sociology. *Thus, AISLF is an explicit act of scientific politics as well as an act of linguistic politics: the objective was to protect the diversity of sociological production and linguistic diversity by combining one with the other.*

Over time, AISLF grew from a friendly academic gathering to an association of over 1,800 members from over 50 countries. It is not a regional or national association, but an association of cultural-linguistic spaces, both real and virtual, made up of countries, national regions, educational programs and research centers that are partially or totally French-speaking. Some are located in countries that are not French-speaking, others are simply French-loving sociologists isolated in non-French-speaking environments. This "regional-linguistic" association has over 50 very active thematic groups. It produces the online journal *SociologieS* and gives particular attention to the training of young researchers through *Rédoc* (International Network of Doctoral Schools), which organizes a summer school every

year. The Association's activities are summed up every six months in the *Lettre de l'AISLF*. For more details see aislf.org.

AISLF has also served as an international site for debate among several "schools" of French-speaking sociology without taking any sides directly. It has thus fulfilled its original objective – which remains the same today – of defending pluralism in sociology, and of encouraging debate within research committees. Regional-linguistic associations offer opportunities for the international incubation and spontaneous rooting of new concepts and paradigms that emerge in national contexts often too narrow to provide sufficient space for their growth. To prosper, sociological diversity requires such zones of linguistic proximity. One of the tasks of the ISA is to favor dialogue between areas that are more or less porous, which is what President Burawoy is trying to accomplish with respect to major global problems.

Clearly, linguistic zones are unequal and hierarchical. Today, the English zone stands at the summit. This hegemony, resulting from multiple circumstances and processes, should not blind us to the fact that linguistic zones, including the French-speaking one, have their own internal hierarchies and inequalities. To think and to write in French is not the same for a Senegalese, or a Moroccan, as it is for someone from France or Que-

bec. Indeed, we face a hierarchy of linguistic hegemonies with corresponding relations of inequality.

The context in which AISLF was founded has changed. Sociology in the United States is more diverse. Its most successful exports, the rational actor and interactionism, are two important aspects of French-speaking sociology today. Their success is probably related to the fragmentation of sociological subfields.

The bipolar world we knew (1950-1970) has disappeared to be replaced by a multi-polar one. We inhabit a world officially recognized for its cultural pluralism, characterized by global interdependence of previously unknown proportions, and anchored in the growing mobility of people, capital, information and products. We live in a time when our technological and scientific powers exceed anything that could have been imagined by the founders of our discipline. The liberal program of *laissez-faire*, associated with Descartes's techno-scientific dream ("lords and masters of nature"), has given birth to such uncertainties in the world's economy and ecology that there are new demands for global regulation after each crisis, simply to avoid drowning in our own contradictions and detritus. In organizing our 19th Congress in Rabat on the theme of "Uncertainty" we believe that sociologists have a special role to play in finding an exit from the narrow passage in which we are presently trapped. ■

> More on AISLF from the Archives

by **Jennifer Platt, University of Sussex, UK, and ISA Vice-President for Publications, 2010-14**

This note supplements André Petitat's article with some more data and background information about the AISLF's long relationship with ISA – at one time a relationship which reflected some internal frictions. The 1949 foundation of the ISA was initiated by UNESCO, whose headquarters have always been in Paris, so that the French language had a practical importance as well as a formal status there; historically, too, French was the language of international diplomacy, though this special status was shifting with the international dominance of the USA after World War II. The ISA's two official languages were French and English – omitting the languages of the other countries with significant early sociology which had been on the fascist side in the war. As ISA became more independent of UNESCO the practical importance of French in its affairs lessened and, in reaction to this, the archives show that in 1954 French sociologist Georges Gurvitch proposed a francophone section of the ISA; this proposal was seen as undermining the ethos of internationalism, and not accepted. In 1958 the independent AISLF was therefore founded, at the initiative of Gurvitch and Belgian sociologist Henri Janne. However, by 1963 it joined ISA as a collective member; it probably helped that Girod, then ISA's joint Secretary, was also a member of the Executive of AISLF!

ISA's regular figures on its activities have always been kept in terms of national contributions, but it makes a difference to the picture if language rather

than geographical location is taken into account. As Petitat points out, France has not been the only francophone contributor to the ISA; French Canada, Belgium and Switzerland have been quite prominent. From 1949 to 1956 ISA had an American president, while one of the vice-presidents was the French Georges Davy. Georges Friedmann then became president for 1956-9. There was then a long gap until the next francophone president, Michel Wieviorka for 2006-10, but over the years between there was always at least one francophone member of the executive, and for seven of the eleven terms there was a francophone vice-president.

In francophone settings (usually ones located in bilingual nations) there have been three World Congresses (1953, Liège; 1966, Evian; 1998, Montréal), and three of the Secretariats before the period when it settled in Madrid (1959-62, Louvain; 1962-7, Genève; 1974-82, Montréal). It is worth noting, too, that some very prominent ISA members not of francophone national origin, such as Anouar Abdel-Malek, have either held jobs in Paris for many years or have had strong and lasting intellectual connections there. Similarly, francophone migrants such as Jacques Dofny, who went to Québec from Belgium¹, have created important links. Thus, we can see how linguistic ties have helped to create links, as well as expressing separate identities. ■

¹ For a very interesting account of his role, see « Entrevue avec Jacques Dofny, professeur et bâtisseur », *Sociologie et sociétés* 23 (1991): 61-77.

> Challenges Facing the Indian Sociological Society

by **Ishwar Modi, President of the Indian Sociological Society, and ISA Executive Committee Member, 2010-2014**



Ishwar Modi lighting the sacred and auspicious lamp at the annual conference of the ISS in Jaipur. His Excellency the Governor of Rajasthan, Hon'ble S. K. Singh (center), looks on.

al claims, rapid expansion of the middle classes, social inequality, changing contours of the rural-urban divide, etc. A People's Sociology needs to be our motto in the 21st century.

To realize the new goals, we have to learn a lot from countries like Brazil, Russia, China, and South Africa. The East European countries can also offer a great deal based on their experiences of the post-socialist era. We also need to look into the indigenous intellectual traditions of the Oriental, Middle-Eastern, and African societies to develop alternative sociologies. That is to say, our task is not only to retain the positive aspects of Western sociology but also to draw lessons from developing countries. We need to establish links between mainstream Indian sociology and India's provincial societies and cultures. To achieve this the ISS will have to build close relations to regional/provincial associations to engage India's rich social and cultural diversity. I am quite optimistic that ISS will make major strides in all these directions. ■

Reference

Modi, I. (2010) "Indian Sociology Faces the World." Pp.316-325 in Michael Burawoy, Chang Mau-kuei, and Michelle Fei-yu Hsieh (eds.) *Facing an Unequal World: Challenges for a Global Sociology* (Volume II). Institute of Sociology, Academia Sinica, Taiwan, and Council of National Associations of the International Sociological Association.

Indian sociology has attained an admirable height in terms of teaching and research. In this achievement the Indian Sociological Society (ISS) has played a significant role over the six decades of its existence. I am extremely happy to be its President from January 2012 for a term of two years. The ISS has nearly 3,500 Life Members from India and some from abroad. Sociology in India is at the crossroads today. Several challenges have appeared in recent years in our century-old academic profession of sociology. The colonial past of Indian society is still haunting pedagogy and methodology, and the American academic supremacy reigns over our academic endeavors, including concepts, frames of reference and theoretical constructs. Indian sociology has not yet succeeded in making its own contributions to social theory and conceptual development (Modi, 2010).

Rational indigenization needs to be made a reality if we are to understand the complex issues with empathy and concern. We have to develop a relevant sociology. Under my Presidency, new initiatives to broaden the horizons of Indian sociology are being discussed. At the same time, Indian sociology can't remain aloof from the global scene. The mouthpiece of the ISS is its journal – *Sociological Bulletin*. We need to expand its frequency, widen its coverage, make it multilingual, and make it, in a true sense, an international publication. We need to bring out special thematic issues. Senior scholars may be requested to contribute articles. An e-Journal is also on our agenda.

Besides the reshaping of the *Sociological Bulletin*, there is a need to initiate fresh debates on issues relating to development, social bases of politics, new dimensions of identity and cultur-

> Public Sociology at Ankara University

by Günnur Ertong and Yonca Odabaş, Ankara University, Turkey



Workers huddle in the city of tents created in protest against TEKEL Corporation's labor policy.

We are a group of sociologists working with Professor Aytül Kasapoğlu in the Department of Sociology of Ankara University. Our group includes graduate students, young postgraduates and fully-fledged academicians.

Our group is a dynamic one; people join us to study, they contribute to our publications and continue their academic lives with these experiences. They are mainly students who are writing their doctoral or master theses under the direction of Professor Kasapoğlu. We are connected through our research network even when we move away from the department to take up different jobs. In what follows, I briefly introduce the books we have published as a part of our research, the seminar courses of Professor Kasapoğlu where we develop our field research, and a journal where we frequently report our research findings.

The books we have published concentrate on the contents of the courses taught by Aytül Kasapoğlu. They build upon the works of students and academicians, integrating theory and practice. The first of these books, *Character in a Changing Social Structure*, is about character erosion due to the exigencies of social structure. The second, *New Social Traumas*, examines narratives of social trauma. The third, *Social Life and Conflict: Different Panoramas*, deals with social life and conflict, while the latest, *Two Sides of the Coin: Health and Illness*, focuses on the area of sociology of health and illness. The seminar series, organized by Professor Kasapoğlu, direct students to the relevant literature and generate new ideas that are then discussed with colleagues. Even after they have graduated, former students continue to participate in the courses, inspiring the new recruits.

One field research project we completed very recently focused on the TEKEL strike of December 2009. TEKEL is

a large former state enterprise in the tobacco and alcoholic drinks sector. The strike lasted for 78 days at Ankara, the capital city of Turkey. The cause of the strike was the change in TEKEL workers' status. The rise of privatization in the 1990s and increasing labor costs in the public sector resulted in the widespread use of contract workers employed by subsidiary firms with the result that the percentage of workers with security of employment took a dive.

Worker resistance to such "flexibilization" strategies started in Ankara on December 14, 2009, sparked by oppressive tactics of the security forces. Because of the cold weather and the prolonged wait for the government to respond, TEKEL workers built a city of tents in the streets where they were protesting. These tents became a focus of public attention. Despite the hegemony of the government, TEKEL's tented workers received much local support from scientists, artists and students. Our group was present, supporting the workers, with field research that applied Herbert Blumer's crowd-mobilization model to the TEKEL strike. The results of this work became a paper that was presented at the meeting of the European Sociological Association (ESA) in Geneva in September, 2011.

Yurt ve Dünya – Homeland and the World – is an online journal which has been published since 2010 at www.yurtvedunya.net. However, it has a much longer history. *Yurt ve Dünya* was first published in 1941 under the leadership of Behice Boran, a public sociologist working at the Faculty of Humanities. We have been inspired by Michael Burawoy's public sociology movement and decided to revive *Yurt ve Dünya* in 2010 drawing on the energy of some graduate students and professors at the Department of Sociology. The aim of the journal is to share the research conducted in the academy with different publics outside the academy. The first target public of the journal are the students of different sociology departments in Turkey.

We are planning to extend our efforts on public sociology to the international area. We are all members of ISA and ESA. Since we strongly believe in the importance of collaboration among sociologists at the national as well as regional and international levels, we are also active in our national association.

We are excited to be developing a collaborative research culture and producing public sociology. If you are interested in our works or communicating with our group, you can contact us at:

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> Democratizing Futures: Searching for Equality and Participation

by Markus S. Schulz, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, USA, and Member of the ISA Program Committee for Yokohama World Congress, 2014



Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, Buenos Aires. Photo by Markus Schulz.

The ISA's Research Committee on Futures Research (RC07) convenes its program for the upcoming Forum in Buenos Aires under the motto "Democratizing Futures." This motto is meant to connect the Forum's overall theme of "Social Justice and Democratization" with the research committee's specific focus. The motto conveys (in its English version) a dual meaning: read as an adjective, "democratizing" expresses the hope that some futures

will bring more democratization; read as a verb, "democratizing" refers to the task of democratizing the very process of envisioning and making futures. Democratizing futures, thus, relates to the social quest for justice and participation. "Futures" is intentionally used in its rather unusual plural form. As postcolonial scholars such as Arturo Escobar, Aníbal Quijano, Walter D. Mignolo, or Boaventura de Sousa Santos have urged, we need a plural epistemology of diverse

knowledges. Despite their appealing parsimony, unilinear models do not describe history as we know it. Transversal concepts seem to be a better fit to muddy and often contentious realities. Democratizing futures implies dialogue about alternative visions.

The future had seemed rather closed during the 1990s when the so-called Washington consensus prescribed neoliberal recipes for structural adjustments to rigid market models in



Occupy Wall Street at Zuccotti Park, New York. Photo by Markus Schulz.

countries around the world. Challenges were mounted from the remote jungles of Chiapas to cities such as Seattle, Prague, Genoa or Davos that global elites had selected for summit meetings behind closed doors. The politics of fear in the name of a global “war on terror” seemed to further extend the neoliberal reign until over-speculation in financial markets blew up and even mainstream media begun talking about a “collapse of capitalism.” Such headlines were of course premature, as a multi-trillion dollar bailout of banks was organized overnight, but they do indicate how shaky is the legitimacy of the economic regime. US power has waned in the wake of the Iraq invasion and vis-à-vis the rise of China and other emerging countries. South Americans from Argentina to Venezuela and from Brazil to Ecuador found new leverage to reject IMF or World Bank “conditionalities” and pursue new paths. The uprisings in the Arab World ousted long-ruling tyrants, opened new spaces for democratization of the region, and set examples that reverberated even in the US.

A small protest on Wall Street grew into a national movement with linkages to counterparts in Europe and elsewhere. Although the Occupy movement was ridiculed by corporate media for not having a clear list of demands, this lack of a fixed ideology contributes greatly to its appeal.

Above all, the occupation of Liberty Square in New York, just like the occupation of many other squares around the country, was meant to create space for dialogue. It had transformed the often barren “semi-public” but corporate-owned Zuccotti Park into a thriving public sphere with arts, music, shared food, a library, and vibrant political debate about how to create better futures not just for the wealthiest 1% but also for the other 99%. As attested by the canopy of self-made cardboard signs, many of the demands and proposals that were being debated were quite specific, ranging from a fairer economy to a cleaner environment and reforms of the tax system and campaign finance law. The movement’s horizontal organization itself embodied the goal of reclaiming democracy. The Occupy movement challenged the growing social inequality and increasing corporate influence on politics. Police repression succeeded in shutting down the occupied spaces in most of the hundreds of US cities but a new generation of activists has had a formative experience in collective action and is ready to continue the struggle for more democratic futures.

Sociology can learn from these movements about the malleability of futures. The questions that are being addressed in a diverse range of sessions organized by RC07 at the Forum in Buenos Aires include: How

can we create more democratic futures? How do assumptions and aspirations about the future influence daily routines and long-term collective lives? What defines the horizon of social imaginaries? How do we need to rethink democracy in the age of advanced globalization? How can pressing problems such as global climate change, environmental degradation, hunger or violence be tackled in sustainable ways? What is to be done to democratize governance, infrastructure, production, media, and technology? How can the distribution of goods, risks and opportunities be made more equitable? How are different forces positioned to shape futures? What can be learned by comparing social struggles in different countries and settings? How do emancipatory movements and everyday practices at the grassroots resist discipline, exploitation, and misrecognition? What visions for alternative futures are imaginable, desirable, and achievable? What are the roadmaps for social transformation? How can future-oriented social research relate to broader public debates?

Many thanks go to Alberto Bialakowsky, Alicia Palermo, Margaret Abraham, Michael Burawoy, and Raquel Sosa for their hard work and intellectual enthusiasm in making the Forum in Argentina possible. Let’s look forward to many exciting debates and inspiring encounters in Buenos Aires. ■