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Dorothy Smith,
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Between Sociology and Politics

An Interview with
Nicolás Lynch

Uprising in the Ukraine

Volodymir Paniotto,
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Yuan Tseh Lee and
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- > **The Coloniality of Power**
- > **From Chiapas: Facing Inequality**
- > **Inside Syria's Prisons**
- > **The Fate of Iranian Women**
- > **Jan Szczepański: Building Bridges**
- > **Neoliberalizing Polish Higher Education**
- > **Open Letter from Polish Students**
- > **Global Dialogue's Turkish team**

NEWSLETTER



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> Editorial

Facing an Unequal World

This is the last issue of *Global Dialogue* before the ISA's World Congress of sociology in Yokohama in July which promises to have record attendance with over 5,500 participants. The theme of the Congress – *Facing an Unequal World* – is fast becoming one of the big issues of the century. Even economists are swarming into this area – once the monopoly of sociology – epitomized by the sensation created by Thomas Piketty's *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*.

This issue of *Global Dialogue* also confronts an unequal world. Yuan Lee and Andrew Yang show how our common interest in reversing global warming also divides us, a point underlined by Herbert Docena. Reporting from the UN Conference on Climate Change he describes how the powerful – led by the US – impose their “solutions” on the rest, and as being in the interest of the rest. The rest disagree but, so far, they have been weak and divided. We can see this in terms of the coloniality of power, explained by César Germana as being at the root of so many global inequalities. We see it at work in the Ukraine – here represented by articles from Volodymyr Ishchenko and Volodymyr Paniotto – where the resurrection of the Cold War has divided and crushed an insurgent revolt against ruling oligarchs.

One of the reasons why global inequality between nations has not increased as much as inequality within nations is the rise of semi-peripheral countries, in particular, India and China. But at what cost? Chinese sociologists Feizhou Zhou, Ying Xing and Yonghong Zhang, go behind the shining citadels of Shanghai and Beijing to the rural hinterland that is being transformed into new urban landscapes, built on the backs of peasant-workers, who, dispossessed of their land, feed the unimaginable wealth of new elites. As we learn, peasants don't take this lying down, although the odds against their protests are steep indeed.

To the chant of “bread, freedom, social justice,” three years ago Egyptians overthrew the Mubarak dictatorship. After experimenting with democracy, they once again face the repressive order of the military. The promises of the Arab Spring have been dashed in other places too, as civil war rages in Syria, pouring refugees into Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. What we know less about are the horrors of torture in Syrian prisons, here described by Abdulhay Sayed. But it's not all gloomy in the region. Iranian sociologist, Shirin Ahmad-Nia, describes the dramatic improvement in the welfare of women since the Revolution of 1979. One finds progress where one least expects it.

Meanwhile Eastern Europe remains in the grip of neoliberalism, now reaching into higher education, with the predictable consequences described by the Public Sociology Lab in Warsaw. Reminding us of a very different era, they also write a moving portrait of Jan Szczepanski, ISA President from 1966 to 1970, a true believer in and fighter for “socialism with a human face.”

> ***Global Dialogue* can be found in 14 languages at the [ISA website](#)**

> **Submissions should be sent to burawoy@berkeley.edu**



Dorothy Smith, renowned feminist, relates how she came to feminism and how she developed her distinctive approach to sociology – institutional ethnography.



Herbert Gans, distinguished US sociologist, advances his idea of public sociology, proposing that we should be especially concerned about the future.



Nicolás Lynch, Peruvian sociologist and politician, describes how he negotiated a life-long trajectory between a precarious left-wing politics and his prolific career as a scholar.

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> In This Issue

Editorial: Facing an Unequal World **2**

Sociology as a Vocation – Lineages of Institutional Ethnography
by Dorothy E. Smith, Canada 4

Sociology as a Vocation – Looking to the Future
by Herbert Gans, USA 6

> FROM LATIN AMERICA

Between Sociology and Politics
An Interview with Nicolás Lynch, Peru 8

The Coloniality of Power
by César Germana, Peru 11

From Chiapas: Facing an Unequal World
by Markus S. Schulz, USA 14

> FROM THE MIDDLE EAST

In the Syrian Prison
by Abdulhay Sayed, Syria 17

Ambiguous Progress for Women in Iran
by Shirin Ahmad-Nia, Iran 19

> UPRISING IN THE UKRAINE

Euromaidan: Profile of a Rebellion
by Volodymyr Paniotto, Ukraine 21

The Revolution That Has Not Even Begun
by Volodymyr Ishchenko, Ukraine 24

> CLIMATE CHANGE

Transforming Human Development
by Yuan Tseh Lee and Andrew Wei-Chih Yang, Taiwan 26

Our Fate Lies with the Market
by Herbert Docena, Philippines 28

> CHANGE AND RESISTANCE IN CHINA

Drama and Devastation in Chinese Urbanization
by Feizhou Zhou, China 32

Land Grabs and Corruption
by Yonghong Zhang, China 34

Channeling the Protest of Displaced Populations
by Ying Xing, China 36

> FROM POLAND

Jan Szczepański – Building a Precarious Bridge
**by Adam Müller, Kamil Lipiński, Mikołaj Mierzejewski,
Krzysztof Gubański and Karolina Mikołajewska, Poland 38**

A Neoliberal Takeover of Higher Education
by Dariusz Jemielniak and Karolina Mikołajewska, Poland 40

Open Letter Concerning the Reform of Higher Education
**from the Public Sociology Lab, University of Warsaw
and the Critical Section, Jagiellonian University of Cracow, Poland 42**

Global Dialogue's Turkish Team **44**



> Lineages of Institutional Ethnography

by **Dorothy E. Smith**, University of Victoria, Canada



Dorothy Smith.

It is difficult for me to write of sociology as a vocation, to see it as somehow drawing me in, calling me to devote my intellectual life to working within it. I became a professional sociologist by accident or rather a series of accidents: first, accidents of my personal history and then through historical accidents of two social movements in which I became involved and which radically transformed my relation to established sociology.

Accidents: I went to the London School of Economics (LSE) in 1952 because I was profoundly bored with secretarial work and thought that if I had a university degree, I'd be able to get more interesting jobs. There I got a bachelor's degree in social science, met and married Bill Smith and then left with him to enter the doctoral program in sociology at the University of California, Berkeley – although at LSE I had specialized in social anthropology.

Dorothy Smith is a pioneer of feminist sociology and what has come to be known as “institutional ethnography” that locates everyday life in its wider context, especially “relations of ruling.” She is the author of many classic works, starting with the foundational article “Sociology for Women” and including such books as *The Everyday World as Problematic: A Feminist Sociology* (1987), *The Conceptual Practices of Power: A Feminist Sociology of Knowledge* (1990), and *Institutional Ethnography: A Sociology for People* (2005). She has received numerous awards from the American Sociological Association and the Canadian Sociology and Anthropology Association. Following her inspiration, there is now an ISA Thematic Group on Institutional Ethnography (TG06).

Berkeley was a radically new experience. At the LSE there had been no sociology to be learned as such. Social theorists, Durkheim, Marx, Weber, and others were read and discussed; we learned demography, about the imaginary of genetic theories of race, practices of social philosophy, and ethics; we talked and argued. I was shocked at Berkeley to discover that to get a decent grade in courses I took I had to accept the views of the instructors. I was shocked also at the exclusion of political debate on campus – this was still the McCarthy era.

In retrospect I can see that in my years of graduate study from 1955 to 1963, sociology was being made as a distinctive professionalized discipline unconnected to its politically ambiguous past. Its connections with its Chicago school heritage were sidelined and, in the changed and changing political order emerging from the McCarthy

period, sociologists at Berkeley and elsewhere were busily making it over in ways that repressed possible connections with socialist politics (that still survived in the work of C. Wright Mills). Talcott Parsons's *The Structure of Social Action* was powerfully influential in designing a social science in which Marx and Marxist thinking had no place. The redesigning of sociology at that period included its conceptual remaking: for example, the concept of social stratification superseded the concept of class or, in the context of the increasing societal dominance of business corporations, there developed the empty rationality of organizational theory (ready-made, of course, for its later managerial takeover).

Accidents: Bill, my husband, walked out on us early one morning in 1963; we had two children and, at that time, one was only nine months old. I was left with the responsibility not just of care but of becoming the major wage-earner. So I realized I had to publish. I had loved doing research and writing but I hadn't thought publishing had any significance; now I had to change; I had to become a professional. And I did.

In 1968 I got a job at the University of British Columbia in Canada. My eldest son, then eight, and I had chosen this among a couple of possibilities (universities were expanding in those days) because when we looked at a map of Vancouver we could see that north of the peninsula where the university was located was a region with no roads.

Accidents: But two years into that experience, the Canadianization movement overtook me. Canadianization was most advanced in literature and history but sociologists in Canada were catching up. We discovered that we were teaching a sociology grounded in the United States with some, but relatively insignificant, influences from Britain. There were original and distinctive Canadian social scientists, but we taught Sociology and they were not included. I came to recognize that the sociology I taught was disconnected from the society I actually lived in. My Berkeley training had prepared me for operating like a legate of the Roman Empire, reproducing the order of Rome in a provincial region.

By this time, having just become a Canadian citizen, in my teaching I tried to understand Canadian society with the sociology I had learned. From my time at the LSE I remembered reading in Marx and Engels of a commitment to

a social science beginning with actual people, their work, and the conditions of their lives. I reread Marx. I discovered his critique of ideology as a method of understanding social process. I came to see that engaging consciously as a sociologist with the society we lived in was a different enterprise than the imperialism built into sociology's established theories, concepts, subject matter divisions, and methodologies.

But then came the women's movement and a change for me that, over a period of two or three years, involved becoming someone I had not known I could be. And my take on the sociology I learned at Berkeley was radically different. Developing a sociology in which women were subjects became, in the long run, my obsession; it had not existed; it had to be made, and it was made in dialogue with those I taught who also adopted it and took it forward. We did not know where our discoveries would take us but we were determined to make them.

What is now called "institutional ethnography" emerged from that discourse and the ongoing dialogue of exploration and discovery in our research, talk, and writing. Is it a kind of sociology? Not if that wording means subordination to the sociological orthodoxy represented in the conventional graduate courses in sociological theory and method that are requirements for a graduate degree. Is it a methodology? No, it is not. Maybe it can be seen as another sociology or an alternative sociology, committed to a grounding in actual people's experience, their doings and how what they are doing is coordinated, particularly with relations extending beyond individual situations. This is where I work, active in a research dialogue with other institutional ethnographers. Discovering isn't a vocation – it's an ongoing fascination and engagement.

And yet, sociology provides the discursive and institutional space where institutional ethnography has its major site (it has also taken off in other unrelated fields such as nursing). Today's sociology no longer has that degree of imposed coherence, which I was learning to transmit during my Berkeley training. Those concerned to better understand society have taken it in various directions. Here I find research and thinking that share institutional ethnography's aims of developing knowledge that can translate people's problems and troubles – as C. Wright Mills proposed – into public issues. ■

> Looking to the Future

by **Herbert J. Gans**, Columbia University, USA



Herbert Gans.

For 50 years **Herbert Gans** has been one of the most prolific and influential sociologists in the United States. During this time he has been a leader in the fields of urban poverty and anti-poverty planning, equality and stratification, ethnicity and race, the news media and popular culture. He has written numerous books including such classics as *The Urban Villagers* (1962), *The Levittowners* (1967), *Popular Culture and High Culture* (1974), *Deciding What's News* (1979), *The War Against the Poor: The Underclass and Antipoverty Policy* (1995) and more recently *Imagining America in 2033* (2008), an optimistic scenario for the future. As a public sociologist he has written regularly for newspapers and magazines, and as a social planner he has participated actively in public policy analysis. He has been the recipient of many honors and awards, including President of the American Sociological Association.

The United States, like other modern economies, is experiencing a new and possibly long-lasting era of rising economic inequality, which may result in further political and class inequality. Consequently, sociologists should be asking themselves what roles they and their discipline can play in understanding these inequalities, particularly the societal changes and social costs they are likely to bring.

However, the discipline as a whole also needs to become more relevant to the country, and thereby also make itself more visible and valued. Although the current rise in inequalities is global, the differ-

ences in national political economies, and in national sociologies suggest that every country must find its own answers – as long as global implications and consequences are also considered. What follows is one American sociologist's attempt to suggest a more detailed scenario, or a vision if you will, of where American sociology should be headed.

A good deal of work in measuring inequalities is already taking place but sociology needs to take a greater interest in its effects on America's institutions and peoples. The micro-sociological aspects of economic, political and social inequality require more exploration than they have so

far received. Whenever possible, sociological research should be policy-oriented. It cannot be expected to engage in actual public policy making, which is beyond the expertise of many sociologists. However, they can conduct research that helps answer questions raised by policy advocates, policy makers, analysts and critics of public policy dealing with inequality.

Since economists and political scientists still tend to deal with issues that concern the country's elite, sociology must intensify its attention on the non-elite. Further research must be undertaken particularly with and about the most vulnerable Americans, notably the below median income population

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that will undoubtedly suffer more from rising inequalities than anyone else. Among them, those who are least well represented in and by the polity and most often left out of the public discourse, should come first.

Sociology cannot speak for these populations but it can focus more research attention on their problems. The studies should focus particularly on the social, emotional and other costs of the most important inequalities. For example, the last several decades, and the last few years especially, have seen a dramatic increase in downward mobility, the frustrations of aborted upward mobility and lowered expectations. Sociologists should long ago have begun to make the processes and effects of downward mobility a major research area.

In addition, sociologists need to pay more attention to the long-range effects of extreme poverty, such as hypotheses that suggest it can result in post-traumatic stress disorders that can last for several generations. At the same time, researchers should understand how people cope with, struggle against and try to resist downward mobility at the various levels of poverty. Properly designed, such studies may provide clues to policies and politics that can offer help.

Even more important, sociology's concern with the below median income populations must also extend to the forces, institutions and agents that play major roles in keeping them in place and impoverishing them

further. Studying the makers of increased inequality is as important a research topic as learning more about its victims.

Concurrently, sociologists should do more to demonstrate the social usefulness of the discipline. This is best done by providing new research findings and ideas relevant to currently topical subjects, issues and controversies. Although easier said than done, sociologists should place less emphasis on contributing to "the literature" and other disciplinary concerns. Fewer studies that unnecessarily elaborate the already known would also help.

Sociologists must also continue to explore topics that the rest of the social sciences are ignoring or do not even see. They should be undertaking more research on and in the backstages of society that do not interest or are hidden to other researchers.

Whenever possible, sociology should prioritize empirical work, quantitative and qualitative. Despite the increasing availability of Big Data, the discipline must continue to concentrate on the gathering and analysis of small data, particularly through ethnographic fieldwork. Understanding society by being with the people and in the groups and organizations that sociology studies is our distinctive contribution to Americans' knowledge about their country.

The discipline ought also to aim for innovative and adventurous theoriz-

ing, with frames and perspectives that question conventional wisdoms, such as labeling theory in the past and relational and constructionist theorizing more recently. The changes in the country generated by the currently rising inequalities may encourage and even require novel ways of looking at American society.

Above all, sociology must strive harder to reach the general public, by presenting new sociological ideas and findings that should be of interest to this public in clear, non-technical English. Teaching undergraduates and high school students remains the most important obligation of what is now known as public sociology, but relevant research should also be accessible to the general public. Researchers must not only know how to write but they have to be trained in the language of public sociology even as they learn that of basic and professional sociology. At the same time, sociologists producing public sociology must be eligible for the same positions, statuses and other rewards as those working solely as basic researchers.

Needless to say, the above is only one person's scenario for the future, but it is written with the hope that others will suggest additional ones. The discipline needs to do more thinking about its future now, so that it will be able to deal with that future more intelligently when it becomes the present. ■

> Between Sociology and Politics

An Interview with Nicolás Lynch



Nicolás Lynch.

Nicolás Lynch is a Professor of Sociology at the National University of San Marcos in Lima, Peru. He has been President of the Peruvian College of Sociologists (1998-2000) as well as Minister of Education of Peru (2001-2002), Advisor to the President of the Republic (2002) and Peruvian Ambassador to Argentina (2011-2012). With a PhD in Sociology from the New School for Social Research, New York, and an MA in Social Sciences from the Latin American School of Social Sciences, Mexico, he has been visiting professor at several US universities. He has published many academic articles and several books, including *Los jóvenes rojos de San Marcos* [The Red Youth of San Marcos], *La transición conservadora* [The Conservative Transition], *Una tragedia sin héroes* [A Tragedy without Heroes], *El pensamiento arcaico en la educación peruana* [Archaic Thinking in Peruvian Education], *Los últimos de la clase* [The Worst of Education], *¿Qué es ser de izquierda?* [What does it mean to be a Leftist?] and *El argumento democrático sobre América Latina* [The democratic argument about Latin America]. He has been a political columnist for fourteen years at the Lima newspaper *La República* and is the editor of the blog of political analysis, *Otra Mirada* [Another View].

MB: For a sociologist your career is very unusual, in and out of politics. In fact, perhaps we should start there: are you a politician or a sociologist?

NL: I am a sociologist, not only by training but also because I love sociology. I am a sociologist who likes politics. But the fact is that I was born in a country where social change is a matter of life and death so I have been involved in political activities since I was a teenager.

MB: That's interesting. Max Weber was an aspiring politician, but he always saw sociology as science, separate from politics, that's obviously not the case for you. Am I correct?

NL: For me sociology is a science, but a social science, so we are social actors who are also part of the world we study. Sociologists like Alain Touraine, who is very influential in Latin America, underline this "sociology of the actor" and I think he was right about that. Since the beginning, my sociological research has been linked to my political life. Most of my books reflect that.

MB: Now let's turn to your latest engagement with politics. You were Peru's ambassador to Argentina. How did that happen?

NL: I became part of President Humala's electoral team in late 2009, invited by some friends that had already participated with him in the 2006 election, when he came in second after a great campaign. I had resisted the temptation to join someone who portrayed himself as a leftist nationalist but, at the same time, was also a retired army officer who had fought the "dirty war" against the Sendero Luminoso [Shining Path]. But the poor results of the socialist left in that same election of 2006 led me and other friends to join forces with Humala. Seeing things from today I think my original instinct was right, but I also believe we were deceived from the beginning. All Humala and his wife wanted was power for their own good.

MB: So in return for your support in his election campaign, President Humala offered you the opportunity to be Ambassador to Argentina. What did he want you to do in Buenos Aires?

NL: He sent me to Argentina to accomplish several political goals. Peru did not have good relations with Argentina because the government before Humala (The Apra party lead by Alan García) disliked the Argentinian government because of its progressive political positions. The President gave me the task of improving that relationship, which is what I did. This was especially important with regard to South American integration and UNASUR (the Union of South American Nations). Humala told me to put Peru on the map of integration and that was the focus of my work.

MB: What were the challenges and satisfactions of this job?

NL: First, the life in Buenos Aires, especially the cultural and intellectual life, is probably the richest in Latin America. Also Argentina was going through important processes of social and political change which was especially interesting in the light of its strong political traditions. The Argentinians have made incredible advances in terms of the redistribution of wealth, in terms of human rights and in terms of political independence from world powers. As compared to other Latin American countries, Argentina has the highest levels of employment in formal jobs with labor rights. Unusual for Latin America, they have jailed around 200 military personnel involved in the repression of the 1970s. As a result of all these changes Argentinians have developed a strong sense of citizenship, to levels unknown elsewhere in the region.

MB: But it all came to a very sudden end, right? You suddenly lost your job?

NL: Well, the Humala government, elected on a leftist platform to which I was a contributor, turned to the right. Of course, this did not happen overnight, it was a long process. First, he expelled the progressive wing of the cabinet, then he broke up with the leftist congressmen and, finally, with anyone who was connected to his progressive origins. Instead of resisting the pressure of the Peruvian right and the American government, he decided to give up his goals of transformation and to continue the neoliberal agenda of the previous twenty years. As the Humala government turned to the right, so the President's new allies wanted to get rid of me, and they prepared a trap. Maybe my mistake was not to resign first. But it is very difficult to exercise good judgment in these complicated political situations.

MB: What was the trap they set for you?

NL: In late January 2012, while in the Peruvian Embassy in Buenos Aires, I received a letter from a group of Peruvians

who were campaigning for the legalization of Movadef, a political front for the terrorist organization, the Shining Path that was seeking amnesty for their leaders who are in jail for their crimes. Ten months later, in early November, on the basis of this letter, a right-wing Peruvian newspaper denounced me as a Movadef sympathizer, demanding that I be fired from my position. The government neither defended me nor ordered an investigation. They were so scared of the right wing offensive that they asked for my resignation. Of course, I have never had any relationship with Movadef or the Shining Path. Indeed, in 1982 the Shining Path sent me a letter with a death threat and, at that time, they assassinated several of my friends. They are a terrorist group that never undertakes any self-criticism of their actions. Irrespective of the falsity of their accusations, right-wing groups inside and outside the government were strong enough to ensure my exit from government.

MB: Well, I can see how precarious politics can be in Peru. But this was not the first time you were in government. You were Minister of Education in 2001 in the Toledo Government that sought to restore democracy to Peru. Tell me more about that.

NL: This was the result of the struggle against the Fujimori's dictatorship. I had been a member of the Foro Democrático, a civic organization, which formed part of a coalition to overthrow this regime. Toledo, a centrist of liberal origin, at the time represented a new beginning for Peruvian democracy and he formed a first cabinet with people from different backgrounds.

My purpose was to start educational reforms that would improve our system of education which was one of the worst in the region. It operated with a very low budget and its results were of very low quality. I had to deal with two enemies: the World Bank and a Maoist trade union of teachers. The first, as always, wanted to privatize everything and the second wanted to retain job security at any price, blocking any evaluation of the work of its members. We did succeed in putting reform on the political agenda, but Toledo was unable to withstand the pressure from these people and so he fired me and my team.

MB: I see this politics is a treacherous business, especially as you never abandoned your leftist views! So in this context does sociology give you something to fall back on? Does it give you solace in the face of such uncertainty? But does it also contribute something to your politics? Is sociology politics by other means?

NL: It's not just solace. Sociology helped me understand Peruvian society and the place Peru has in the region and in the world. Regarding education, for example, sociology helped me understand that the problems of Peruvian education were ideological and political, not the technical ones that the international agencies wanted us to believe.

Sociology gave me the tools to understand that educational quality is not just a matter of good grades but calls for a collective self-understanding of your place in the world, your sense of belonging.

I have never left academia. For 34 years I have been teaching sociology at the University of San Marcos, which is the oldest and most famous university in Peru. During these years I have participated in at least nine big research projects. They have resulted in quite a few books, of course some more important than others, some more political and some more sociological.

MB: Very few of your books have been translated so perhaps you can give us a sense of these research projects or, at least, one or two that you consider to be most important, showing the connection to politics.

NL: Well, their absence in English has to do with my complicated relationship with the American academy. As an example, take my work on populism. I wrote a piece about populism in Latin America in the late 90s, trying to explain why populist neoliberalism did not exist, that it was a contradiction in terms. I wrote that historically populism had been good for the region and for democracy. After being published in Spanish I sent it to an important “comparative” journal in the US. Months later I received a long comment telling me I didn’t know what populism was about. OK, I said they think differently. But the problem was that in the same journal they published an article criticizing mine, citing the Spanish version. So, my article was not good enough to be published but good enough to be criticized! Many times I have received the same argument: if you disagree you don’t know what you are talking about.

My latest book is about the different approaches to Latin American democracy in theory and in practice. I wrote it trying to explain how the new progressive governments in the region – from Hugo Chávez, to Lula, Correa, Evo Morales and the Kirchners – were trying to develop a different kind of democracy, promoting redistribution, social justice and participation. The goal of the book is to present a different view on democratic regimes from the dominant one, which came from the discourse on transitions and consolidations.

MB: And today are there ways in which your sociology enters political controversy?

NL: Oh yes! For example, in the last few months we have had a debate in Peru about the middle class. The neoliberals and the people who are in the business of polling have been claiming that 70% of Peruvians are middle-class, based on a strange income distribution table. So together with some friends we’ve been writing about social structure, social class, and class struggle – once again after so

many years – to show how these pundits are misguided in theory and in practice, and how sociology has a more precise and sophisticated understanding of these issues.

MB: You got your PhD in sociology in the United States and you have returned there periodically. In fact that’s where we first met at the University of Wisconsin. What’s a Peruvian leftist doing in the US?

NL: I got my MA in Mexico and I have been all over Latin America and Europe for different kinds of academic engagements. In the US, as in any country, there is a plurality of possible places to study. I ended up doing my PhD at the New School for Social Research in the 80s, a very good and progressive university. I have been a visiting scholar in other places too, such as Madison, Wisconsin. I think we must push for dialogue and contact across the Americas. It does not matter if we disagree but we have to understand each other.

MB: I’m wondering whether there is something in your biography, perhaps your early education or your family background that has driven you in two directions – politics and sociology – simultaneously?

NL: Well, for many people I do not fit into the Peruvian political scene. I am of upper middle class origin, I do not have any indigenous ancestry, and I have had (or so I think) a good education. Maybe it is the terrible reality of persistent social inequality in Peru that has led me to be dedicated to this double life of interconnected threads. But I have been happy doing both politics and sociology. As I have said they re-enforce each other. I have no regrets.

MB: Now that you are out of government how are you keeping yourself busy? Are you still engaged in politics? Are you writing more?

NL: Yes, I am in politics. I am a member of a leftist coalition, which has a base in almost every region of Peru. We have good prospects for the next regional elections in 2014. I also have a web site which I organize with a group of friends – a platform for political analysis through the Internet. We send a page of news analysis to almost 15,000 email addresses every day, we have a radio program, and we also write papers analyzing public policy. As I said I also continue to give classes at the University of San Marcos and I am finishing a book, which is a long political essay about the foundations and future of the Peruvian republic.

MB: I think Max Weber would be very envious of you – at home in both sociology and in politics, weaving the two together but still never mistaking the one for the other! Thank you very much for this wonderful interview. ■

> The Coloniality of Power

A Perspective from Peru

by **César Germana**, Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos, Lima, Peru



Peruvian sociologist, Anibal Quijano – prophet of coloniality.

Particularly important is the crisis of intersubjective structures – and especially ways of knowing as it applies to the social sciences. Since the 1970s, we have seen a complex of transformations in the social sciences that speak to the ways they are – necessarily – being reorganized. The Gulbenkian Commission Report is perhaps the most revealing examination of the profound changes that have been taking place in social thought in the second half of the twentieth century (Wallerstein, 1997). This report shows how Eurocentric structures of knowledge have been eroding, both in the core countries and in the periphery, and how schools of thought have emerged aiming to develop alternative forms of understanding social and historical reality.

I consider Eurocentrism to be the structure of knowledge that has ensured and sustained the colonial-modern model of power. It corresponds to a specific way of perceiving and organizing the natural and social world. It is based on three foundational beliefs.

First, is the belief in *simplification*. According to Descartes, to understand complex processes it is necessary to divide them into as many parts as possible in order to study

There is ample evidence that we are going through a period in which the entire model of modern-colonial power, which has dominated the planet for the last 500 years, is facing a structural crisis. This is a crisis in the very foundations of the entire power struc-

ture: difficulties have arisen across all its components and levels – in gender relations, labor relations, political relations, intersubjective relations, and relations with nature – which cannot be resolved within the current historical system, calling for the creation of new forms of social coexistence.

each in isolation, so that what is “clear” is what is simplified. This perspective then produces an increasing compartmentalization and specialization of knowledge, manifested in the emergence of disciplines as intellectual categories, each with its own object and method of study. Disciplines also develop institutional categories that lay the basis of departments and form the organizational structure of modern universities.

The second foundational concept of Eurocentric knowledge is the belief in the *stability of social and natural systems*. This conception views reality as an ordered world that operates according to simple and knowable laws. It is presumed that this knowledge allows us to predict what will happen and, therefore, we can control not only the natural world but also the social world. This belief leads to determinism and the idea of reversibility, in other words that events are repeatable, and thus, the elimination of history as a creative process.

The third foundational belief is *objectivity*, that is, the principle that you can know reality as it is, suspending the subject. The consequence of this belief is an acceptance of the idea that knowledge is value-free.

In the colonial-modern model of power, Eurocentrism imposes itself as the only legitimate form of knowing, thereby marginalizing, subalternizing, or destroying the structures of knowledge of colonized peoples. The knowledge that had developed among these peoples for millennia and that had served as the basis of their specific forms of social existence is violently repressed and relegated to the margins, so that their own bearers seek to rid themselves of such forms of knowledge, as they too start to see them as inferior.

It is at the periphery of this colonial-modern model of power that there have emerged the clearest currents of thought that radically question Eurocentric structures of knowledge.

Major contributions to this perspective include postcolonial studies, subaltern studies, and the production of African intellectuals. Within these currents, the analytical approach associated with the “coloniality-decolonization of power” offers one of the most promising alternatives to Eurocentric knowledge, and a means to understand the tendencies of the contemporary world as well as to think through options for the future. The seminar *The Questions of Dis/Coloniality and Global Crisis*, organized by Aníbal Quijano in Lima in August 2010, was surely the culmination of earlier debates and the point of departure for the analytical perspective of the coloniality of power.

The analysis of the coloniality-decolonization of power offers a perspective on knowledge – a way of perceiving reality, of generating questions and organizing the responses in relation to the social life of human beings – that enables us to broach important questions that Eurocentric thinking had closed off. It has emerged as a challenge to Eurocentric forms of producing knowledge, because it questions the foundations of the hegemonic structures of knowledge of the modern-colonial capitalist system. The purpose of this article is to examine the epistemological and theoretical assumptions and possibilities inherent in this alternative perspective on knowledge. I seek to explore some of its most important lines of inquiry, which contribute to the reorganization of social theory.

Following the innovative theories of Aníbal Quijano, I suggest that with the European conquest in 1492 of what would later be called America, there emerged a *sui generis* model of power, that had *coloniality* and *modernity* as its key characteristics. On the one hand, it was defined through coloniality, inasmuch as the power relations established during the conquest were intertwined with the idea of “race” as the core social classification of human beings. In other words, the conquerors imagined themselves as

superior humans and self-identified as “white,” while they saw the conquered as inferior humans and identified them as “Indians” and “blacks.” In naturalizing the social relationship, the idea of “race” legitimized the domination and exploitation of indigenous people and African slaves and became an essential feature sustaining the model of power, even after the colonies won independence from Spain and Portugal. It guaranteed that both dominators and dominated accepted domination as natural. Meanwhile, *modernity* served as the other face of coloniality, inasmuch as it increasingly rationalized social life, with scientific and technological progress as its main indicator.¹

Epistemological decolonization entails questioning the assumptions on which Eurocentric knowledge structures were built and proposing alternative interpretations that may be more fruitful for developing a systematic understanding of the social world and for proposing realistic options for a more egalitarian and democratic future. I propose five modes of questioning the presumptions of the European way of producing knowledge about social life – and five alternative interpretations that emerge from the analysis of the coloniality-decolonization of power.

1. Questioning the state as an analytical framework for understanding social life. State structures cannot be considered the borders within which social relations are defined. Hence, the need to take as our unit of analysis the global, modern-colonial model of power that emerged in the sixteenth century with the European conquest of what would become America.

2. Questioning the notion of colonial power in order to understand the relations of domination and exploitation established between colonizers and colonized. Thus, we are not only examining economic, juridical, and political exploitation and domination, but also how, within the modern-colonial system, these relations of power

are also intertwined with a symbolic and legitimizing set of ideas captured in the notion of “race.” Thus, the racialization of power relations constitutes the global, capitalist, Eurocentric model of power.

3. Questioning the epistemology of simplification, in particular, the belief that understanding complex processes involves separating them into as many parts as possible in order to study these parts independently. The analysis of the coloniality of power insists on the importance of understanding the global, modern-colonial model of power as a historical totality. That is, it understands power as a complex system of heterogeneous elements, closely interwoven with each other, that emerged in the sixteenth century and extended to global control in the nineteenth century – a system that is currently entering a period of bifurcation, or structural crisis. From this point of view, the arbitrary separation between the political, economic, and sociocultural spheres is not useful; rather, we should see them as moments in a total historical process. Furthermore, according to this alternative hypothesis, the specialization of social knowledge into disciplines, which stemmed from the historical construction of the social sciences in Europe in the nineteenth century, does not have any epistemological justification. Rather, the only useful specialization would be around specific problems or fields of study.

4. Questioning the separation between the subject and object of knowledge. Here the challenge is both to objectivism (which brackets the

subject) and to subjectivism (which brackets the object) since both perspectives preclude a full understanding of reality – and particularly social reality. In other words, there is a need to recognize that a world exists outside of the subject – but that the subject intervenes in the production of knowledge so that measuring, for example, modifies that which is measured. Thus, knowledge appears as an intersubjective product, understood in terms of the intersubjective structures and epistemological rules – social rules – that establish the truth.

5. Questioning the separation between scientific and humanistic knowledge. If scientific knowledge has been exclusively concerned with the search of truth through empirical procedures, and humanistic knowledge has discussed ethical and aesthetic values, the perspective of the analysis of the coloniality of power highlights the importance that knowledge, in the very process of its production, is at once true, good, and beautiful. We seek, therefore, a re-enchantment of the world that coloniality and modernity have rationalized and disenchanted.

In conclusion, we have here a perspective on knowledge with promising characteristics that can be extended in various directions to more elaborate general but also specific theories: general theories about the broadest arenas of the global model of power, its crisis, and the historical alternatives that can replace it; and specific theories about the most particular arenas of this historical model of power. ■

¹ Anibal Quijano introduced the concept of the *coloniality of power* in 1991. He later developed the idea in various other texts, including Quijano and Wallerstein (1992) and Quijano (1993, 2000a, 2000b, 2000c, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2007, 2009 and 2010). For a debate about this concept, see the following texts: Mignolo (2003), Escobar (2003) and Pachón Soto (2007).

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> From Chiapas: Facing an Unequal World

by **Markus S. Schulz**, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA, member of the Program Committee of the 2014 ISA World Congress, and President of the ISA Research Committee on Futures Research (RC07)



Indigenous Maya women in the struggle for dignity. Photo by Markus Schultz.

The year 2014 marks the twentieth anniversary of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between Canada, Mexico, and the USA. NAFTA was the first such agreement between countries at different levels of development and thus became the basic reference for subsequent treaties and the current negotiations toward the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) of twenty Pacific Rim countries and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) between the European Union and the USA. Conceived during the first Bush administration and imple-

mented under Clinton, it provided a model for bringing down tariffs to benefit export-oriented corporations while undermining workers' interests and environmental concerns.

2014 also marks the twentieth anniversary of the indigenous uprising in Chiapas. When the Zapatistas rose up in arms on the day NAFTA took effect, they connected local struggles for land, civil rights, and a dignified livelihood with broader struggles for democracy and social justice on a global level. Over the years, the Zapatistas inspired a critical discourse and the formation of transnational activist net-

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Communal work – preparing a field for organic radishes in the highlands of Chiapas.
Photo by Markus Schultz.

works that, in turn, organized the large demonstrations in Seattle, Prague, Genoa and at other summits where global elites plotted the neoliberal restructuring of the world economy.

Although the mass media spotlight has turned away from Chiapas, it would be a mistake to think the Zapatista movement has withered away. The rebellion continues, albeit in changing ways. The insurgent Mayan communities have established their own autonomous municipalities where they experiment with grassroots forms of self-governance. The rotating delegates of the local and regional boards are bound by the principle of “mandar-obedeciendo,” i.e. to govern by obeying. In December 2012, the Zapatistas displayed their strength by mobilizing tens of thousands in a silent march through San Cristobal de las Casas, the major city in the highlands.

This past summer, the Zapatistas started their latest initiative by inviting visitors to their communities to learn what they mean by freedom. Their “Little Schools” (*escuelitas*) turned the tables: The world was invited not to teach the indigenous about development but rather the other way around, to see, listen, and learn from their experience, how they carve out a social alternative, how they create participatory structures of autonomous self-governance. The *escuelitas* were not

for big speeches on high podiums but for first-hand learning from their lived practices of daily resistance.

More than twelve hundred people of all ages traveled from across Mexico and countries around the world, including activists, artists, intellectuals, farm workers, musicians, poets, street vendors, students, and sympathizers from diverse walks of life. There were no tuition charges. Room and board were free, even transport. Attendants were only asked to pay one hundred pesos (roughly ten dollars) for printed study materials, while a sealed jar provided opportunity for anonymous donations. The Zapatistas explained that big donors should not feel too full of themselves while those without money should not be embarrassed.

Common meetings provided opportunities for questions and answers about the Zapatistas’ visions and guiding principles but the main part of learning took place in the communities who had prepared the visits over several months. Each student was provided with a *Votán*, or guardian and tutor, as an embodiment of the community. “There is not one teacher,” explained Subcomandante Marcos, the Zapatistas’ spokesperson, “but rather a collective that teaches, that shows, that forms, and in it and through it, the person learns, and thus also teaches.”

The story of one of the guardians, a young Tzotzil, stands for the experience of many in his generation. Having obtained two years of secondary schooling, he was now himself teaching in the community’s own elementary school. He had experienced a different way of life in Cancún. Allured by the prospect of earning money, he went to the big city and got jobs in construction, restaurants, and hotels. He described his fascination with the splendor of the city’s shiny-white mansions and resort complexes but also how he witnessed the abject poverty of the majority population just a few blocks away from the coastal strip and the wealthy neighborhoods. He endured for over a year this way of life in the cash economy, being bossed around, often even being cheated of tips, sometimes of wages too. In the end, he had enough and returned to his community. He preferred dignity over discipline, community over competition.

Twenty years after the uprising, an autonomous school system is now in place, in which the Zapatista communities define the curriculum according to their needs, values, and priorities. They had started by building a secondary school in one of the regional centers, where students would typically stay for two-week periods, due to the often-lengthy commutes. Elementary schools were established

at the local community level, taught by those with at least some schooling. The Zapatistas consider this system far superior to the official schools run by the government with teachers who often do not speak the local language and who despise being sent to remote locations away from family and urban amenities. The Zapatista teachers prefer to be called promoters of education because they reject the conventional top-down approach of instruction in favor of a more cooperative way of learning together. Their teaching is unsalaried. The community provides accommodation, food, time off from communal works, and a small allowance for clothing.

Sharing life in a community included working in the fields, planting vegetables, picking fruits, swimming and washing clothes, preparing food, eating together, singing songs and telling stories. If classified by material measures, the living standard of the community where I stayed in the summer was quite poor. The adobe huts were simple and had only barren floors. There were neither any modern appliances nor access to the electric grid. On the other hand, there were many advantages too. The setting was tranquil, well away from noisy highways or polluting industries. A nearby stream provided fresh running water. The diet consisted mainly of corn tortilla, rice, beans, vegetables, occasionally an egg, but usually neither meat nor commercial soda. Largely locally produced, it was fresh, organic, and flavorful. Perhaps most important, the community showed a strong sense of dignity and took pride in their autonomy.

Corn is the main pillar of Mayan subsistence farming. NAFTA exposed

Mexican peasants to competition from the US where corn is produced at industrial scales in large monocultures with heavy government subsidies. This brought pressure to abandon the land and seek jobs in cities or abroad. The Zapatistas continue to grow corn for their own consumption in traditional ways on their *milpas*, small fields on often steep slopes, shared with other plants such as edible weeds, squash, and especially beans, which use the corn stalks after the corn harvest. The Zapatistas oppose the GMO seeds propagated by corporate giants such as Monsanto. They contrast the genetic diversity that evolved during almost 9,000 years of Mesoamerican cultivation with the narrowness of the few in-bred lines of US agribusiness that rely on pesticides.

A major transformation occurred in gender relations. The Revolutionary Women's Law promoted gender equality. As this constituted a break with deeply rooted patriarchy, some communities adopted it faster than others. For example, when faced with the high expenses for transportation and food, families living far from the secondary school may send only their son but not their daughter, thus reproducing imbalances. However, there are many signs that the younger generation is embracing gender equality more readily. For example, young men no longer consider the washing of clothes to be a woman's task but can be seen doing laundry themselves. Likewise, an increasing number of women serve as promoters of education and health and on the boards of self-governance.

The Mexican government's strategic response to the Zapatistas has changed over time. It had halted its

early military campaigns after massive protests across Mexico and abroad. More recently, the government sponsored the construction of a Rural Sustainable City and an assembly plant right next to Zapatista strongholds. Yet, the promised jobs that could have lured peasants into abandoning their land quickly disappeared when the subsidies ran out, and the brand-new, brightly painted houses are mostly vacant, as they were deemed deficient in construction. While there are currently no army incursions into the communities, there are worries over low-altitude overflights by military airplanes. The Zapatistas consider the current Mexican President as having come to power only thanks to an unfair election system and massive media bias. The political system is in the Zapatistas' view so corrupted that they refuse to cooperate with any of the political parties.

The Zapatistas' resistance is simultaneously political, economic, social, and cultural. It is about making self-governance and subsistence work, creating a social model with inherent appeal. Their answer to the question of social justice starts with freedom. They do not ask for permission, but they do things. Structural adjustment policies have increased urban slums worldwide; it is time to recognize development innovation from the ground up. A sociology with global aspirations and attuned to the problems of inequality can benefit from paying close attention to the struggles at the grassroots in the peripheries of the Global South. ■

> In the Syrian Prison

Disconnected and Desubjectified

by **Abdulhay Sayed**, formerly with the University of Damascus, Syria

The Qatari-financed report drafted by an independent team of former UN prosecutors, which analyzed thousands of smuggled photographs of corpses of starved and tortured detainees in Syrian detention centers, provided further evidence of an already suspected “[industrial scale](#)” killing of detainees. The report followed similar accounts by Syrian grassroots human rights organizations, which described the atrocious conditions of detention in present-day Syrian regime’s prisons. This essay will focus on the testimonies rather than the images.

Indeed, there is now abundant documentation of testimonies from detainees who have survived Syrian prisons. I look at how prisoners survived the space of detention, how their bodies lived through the slow descent to the bottom, towards the limit between life and death, and how they witnessed other detainees “disconnecting,” before they vanished. I ask whether and to what extent the devastating experience of the *Muselmänner*, which had marked Auschwitz in the memory of Primo Levi and many other survivors, and which Giorgio Agamben recently turned into a paradigm, can help us understand both the present tragedy of “disconnected” detainees in Syrian prisons and the calamities inflicted upon the Syrian political space.

According to the testimonies of many survivors, there are growing numbers of detainees, arrested for involvement in peaceful demonstrations or relief work, who may have perished in detention and their bodies buried in secret mass graves. The testimonies of survivors frequently point to how detainees face a crushing limited space and excessive overpopulation in the place of detention. The extreme conditions of torture become routine. Violence and inhuman degradation are not confined to interroga-

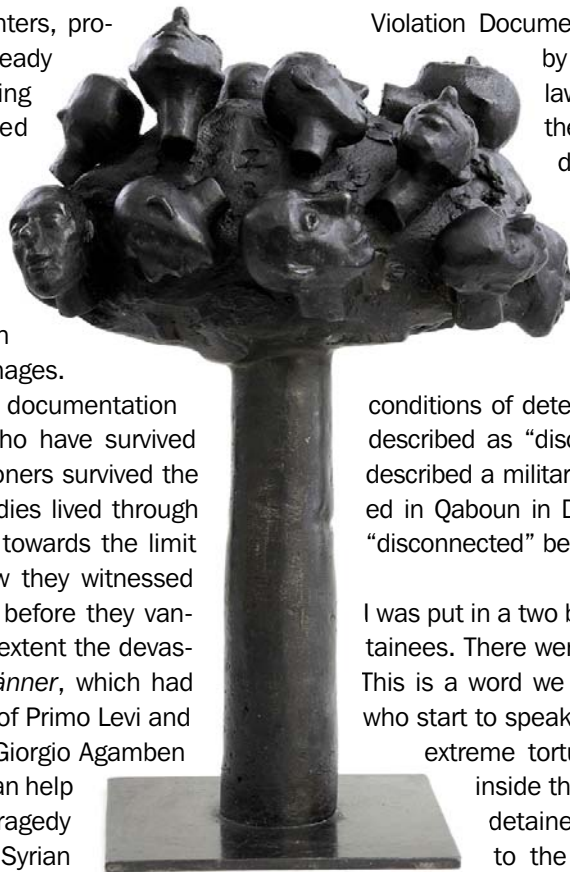
tion sessions, but appear to be part and parcel of the life of an inmate in a Syrian detention center.

Testimonies collected by the Syrian grassroots NGO, the Violation Documentation Center (VDC) – co-founded by the renowned and now abducted lawyer, Razan Zeitouneh – indicate that the jailors frequently resort to starving detainees to bring them to the brink of collapse. Starvation appears to be used both as a torture technique, and as a means to inscribe hunger into the memories of survivors, as characteristic of the *quotidien* of [detention](#). The harsh

conditions of detention frequently led to what may be described as “disconnection.” Here is how a survivor described a military intelligence detention center located in Qaboun in Damascus where numerous inmates “disconnected” because of the conditions in his cell:

I was put in a two by five meter cell with about 180 detainees. There were a lot of “disconnected” inmates. This is a word we used to designate those detainees who start to speak and act in a disoriented way due to extreme torture and the very high temperature inside the cells... We used to see one or two detainees who disconnected every day due to the psychological pressure, the moist and hot weather... The detainee would start to say and do very strange and meaningless things...

When a disconnected detainee vanishes, there is a system of evacuating corpses from the cell, and taking them out of the detention center. In some detention centers, the evacuation is entrusted to [veteran detainees](#), who would be forced to collect dead corpses and carry them out. In other detention centers, so-called “[consolation](#)” rooms



“Tree” made of bronze, by Syrian sculptor, Fadi Yazigi. By permission of sculptor.

are created, often adjacent to washrooms, for the disconnected and the dead. The memories of survivors fixate on the corridors outside the cells, where the bodies of the disconnected detainees are amassed near the washrooms, awaiting and receiving their slow death. Here is how a survivor described his experience [looking into the eyes](#) of disconnected detainees:

Every day about twenty detainees were thrown into the corridor to meet their “destiny” and slow death... The cases ranged between detainees who were about to die because of severe torture, disconnection or high temperature, and those who looked like skeletons out of acute ulcerations. They peed in the same place, which was full of pus and blood. They were about to perish. Their eyes remained open and capable of focusing a look, as though to ask the inmates who were able to walk, to testify about their suffering to the outside world.

One is particularly stricken by this extended moment in the experience of the detainee, when the mind simply disconnects or shuts down, leaving the body in a kind of vegetating condition, before it perishes. One is obviously tempted to draw parallels with the figure of the *Muselmann*, known in the Auschwitz concentration camp, which Giorgio Agamben recently epitomized in his 2005 book *Remnants of Auschwitz*. It was Primo Levi who, as a survivor of Auschwitz, first testified in his 1946 book, *If this is a Man*, to the existence of a category of detainees in Auschwitz which were called by the SS as well as the other detainees the *Muselmänner*, or the Muslims. The description of Levi was graphic: the *Muselmänner* were the “drowned,” or the “non-men” who populated Auschwitz. They were those who “marched in silence,” with bodies in “decay,” their heads “dropped and shoulders curved,” and on whose faces and in whose eyes “not a trace of thought is to be seen.” According to testimonies of survivors, the figure of the *Muselmann*, as the “living dead,” “walking corpse,” a “moving skeleton,” a “mummy-man,” was known in other concentration camps, but under different names. There is little research on the origin, and the extremely pejorative use of the term *Muselmann*.

With the figure of the *Muselmann* Agamben was interested in two interrelated questions: how it was possible to bear witness to the extreme situation of the concentration camp, where the intentions of the Nazis purported to annihilate all prisoners and any possibility of testimony; and how Nazi power ultimately “desubjectified” human beings. Agamben showed how by starving the “other,” by letting that “other” reach the condition of the *Muselmann*, power gains time. It erects a “third realm” between life and death. The condition of the *Muselmann* epitomizes the triumph of power over human beings, by desubjectifying them, and

by reducing them to their biological existence. Power lets them survive in the condition of bare life.

Although one is tempted to draw parallels with the “disconnecting” Syrian detainee who in effect is desubjectified with his conscious life separated from his biological life, this common experience stops here. Indeed there are many differences between the *Muselmann* of Auschwitz and the “disconnected” Syrian detainee. The condition of the *Muselmann* was incidental to Auschwitz, as the entire enterprise was geared to annihilation, including of the possibility of testimony. In contrast, the condition of the “disconnected” Syrian plays a central role in the overall machinery of the Syrian regime’s power. The image of the “disconnected” serves the primary function of setting an example. It must be carved into the memory of survivors. The testimony of survivors constitutes and completes the condition of the “disconnected.” There is no “disconnected” without the survivor, and no survivor without the “disconnected.” The experience of the “disconnected” must be relayed by survivors as part of the regime’s relentless effort to inscribe fear in the minds of Syrians.

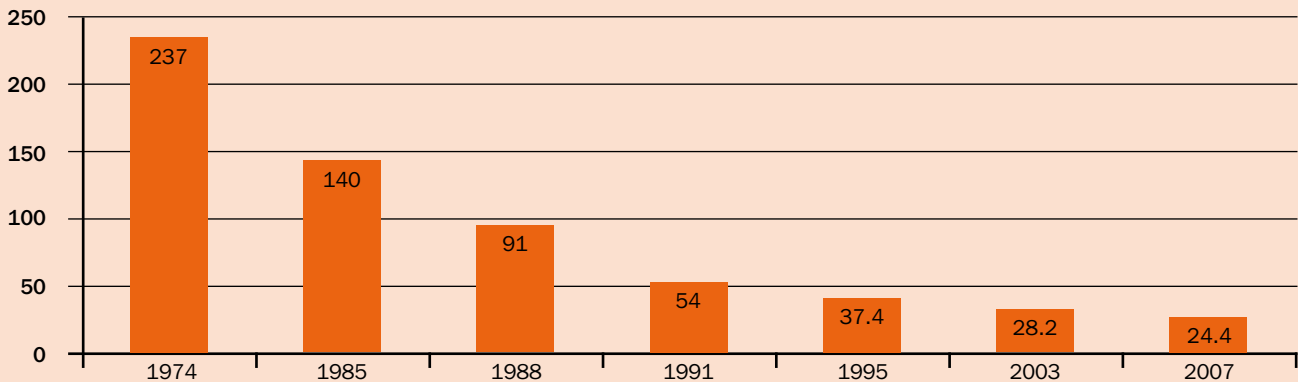
Furthermore, the “*muselmannization*” of Syrian detainees exemplifies how the regime represents and deals with the Syrian political space. The regime’s power machinery is not primarily geared to eliminating a category of population, but more to removing the capacity of the people to develop any oppositional collective political claims in a public place, by reducing the people to a mere biopolitical fact, or a population to be regimented and disposed of at will. Elimination by way of industrial-scale murder, destruction and displacement is not the end of power, but only a means used by the regime to reconquer and subdue society. In the face of peaceful political mobilization, the regime arrests protestors and throws them into its infernal prisons, which are organized to strip them of the very consciousness of political rights, by bringing them into a state of disconnection, and then expelling the dead among them as mere biological waste.

Is one able to draw a parallel between the trauma inflicted on individual bodies in Syrian detention centers, and that inflicted on the Syrian body politic: torture of the body here, destruction of entire cities there; bringing detainees to disconnect here, obliterating public squares where citizens peacefully assemble to express political aspirations there; ejection of corpses of detainees here; dislodging of civilians there? Surely, this is a theoretically facile and unsustainable parallel, but it strikingly expresses the lived reality of the Syrian tragedy, which is fundamentally marked by the regime’s systematic crushing of any civil and peaceful movement for political freedom. ■

> Ambiguous Progress for Women in Iran

by **Shirin Ahmad-Nia**, Allameh-Tabataba'i University, Iran

Maternal Mortality Ratio (per 100,000 live births) in Iran, 1974-2007



Source: "Health Profile Indicators in the Islamic Republic of Iran", Center for Health Network Development & Health Promotion, Ministry of Health and Medical Education, 2009

Iranian society has undergone dramatic socio-political, economic and cultural changes since the Islamic Revolution of 1979, changes that are especially noticeable in new patterns of family, education and urban life.

Just before the revolution in Iran, less than half of the people (47%) were living in urban areas, while according to the last National Census in 2011 the figure had risen to 71%. Over the last 50-plus years (1956 to 2011), the overall literacy rate of urban Iranians has grown from 39.5% to 88.9% while the gender gap in intermediate and higher education has been narrowing dramatically.

According to the formal statistics, around one tenth of the households in Iran are female-headed, and the percentage of women who are single, widowed or divorced is growing fast. However, cultural beliefs strongly work against women's economic participation in the for-

mal sectors of the economy. Traditional values of gender segregation, such as "men are the main or only breadwinners," bar women's easy access to the official labor market with the result that Iranian women's economic activity rates are still just above 12%, almost the same as before the revolution. This is at odds with women's flourishing presence in educational spheres today, and, in particular, with the increasing numbers of female university graduates, in a variety of disciplines, for whom unemployment rates are almost double that of men.

Despite such discrimination against female participation in the labor market, women's higher educational attainments, their increased access to international media, the widening use of information and communication technologies that has brought *cultural* globalization, and thus their familiarity with new ideas and ideals, lifestyles and multi-cultural values, all these have inevitably brought re-

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markable changes in younger women's gender identity.

Younger generations of women have redefined gender identity away from traditional roles of wife and mother, in favor of participating in communal and cultural events as well as economic activities. Entering the "public sphere," despite cultural barriers, has empowered women and made them financially independent. With their enhanced potentials and capacities these young women make new individualistic choices, leading to new family patterns and lifestyles.

While early marriage (around puberty) was the commonly accepted response to the basic needs of adolescents seeking intimate relationships in a deeply traditional society that actually had not been touched by the modernization policies of the Shah's era, over the last 50-plus (1956 to 2011) years the mean age at first marriage for women has increased from 18 to 24 years. Over the same period, there has been a gradual decline in the average family size (from 4.8 to 3.5 people), and a drastic drop in average fertility rates from 6 to around 2 births per woman. The

overall population growth rate, which was at its highest level (3.91%) in the period of 1955-65, has fallen precipitously to 1.29% in 2011.

Since the revival of family planning program in 1989, the percentage of married women using contraceptives has grown to around 74%. This has reduced the birthrate and the number of unwanted pregnancies and as a result there has been a remarkable decrease in the maternal mortality ratio from 237 (per 100,000 live births) in 1973 to 21 in 2010. The improved health of women is also reflected in higher life expectancy, which grew to around 75 years in 2011.

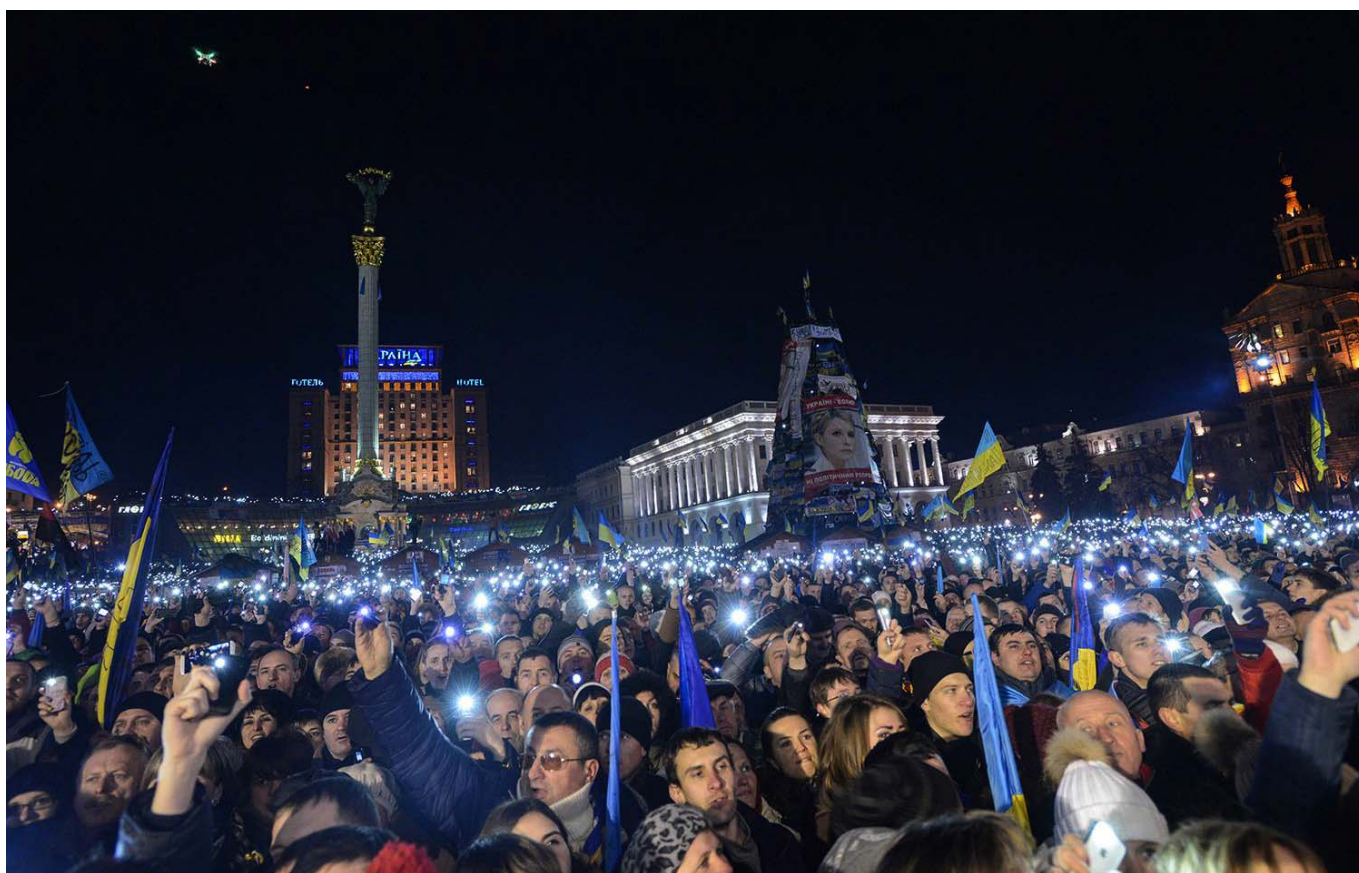
These socio-cultural changes have contributed to independent spouse-selection, pre-marital intimate relationships, and family breakups. Mate selection now takes place in universities, workplaces, parks, shopping malls, internet forums, chat rooms, on the streets and even during religious ceremonies and rituals, wherever youngsters find spaces to encounter and make friends. Marriage is far less governed by elderly and traditional matchmakers than it was even a decade ago! Unprecedented

high rates of divorce (one third of all marriages ended in divorce in Tehran in 2012) have led to a growing number of less common forms of marital relationships such as the non-permanent Islamic (Shiite) form of marriage (*Sighe* or *Mot'e*), which is a religious response to the increasing amount of high-risk sexual behaviors, pre-marital and extra-marital relationships.

There is scant national-level research on sexual and reproductive health issues of adolescents and youth, but the evidence at local level shows that the age of first sexual experiences has fallen to teenage years for boys and girls. Furthermore, non-conventional relations have led to so-called "high-risk behaviors" that expose youngsters to sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS – all compounded by changes in recreational lifestyles and leisure activities that encourage the consumption of modern narcotics and alcohol easily accessible at cheap prices on the black market. Occurring in a country where none of these activities are allowed by religion or by law, these trends have alarmed both families and officials. ■

> Euromaidan Profile of a Rebellion

by **Volodymyr Paniotto**, National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, General Director, Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS), and member of ISA Research Committee on Logic and Methodology (RC33)



Popular Ukraine Rock Band, Okean Elzy ["Elza's Ocean"] playing at Maidan on December 14, 2013.

“**M**aidan” is a unique sociological phenomenon. Such terms as “mob,” “meeting,” or “demonstration” do not adequately capture its dynamic character. Technically “Maidan” refers to Independence Square in Kyiv, but it is now indelibly linked to a constantly changing encampment that includes both a tent city and several adjacent buildings occupied by the protestors. The dynamism and drama of

the Euromaidan can be broken into four phases.

> Phase One: Protests Begin

Ukraine and the European Union had planned to sign an Agreement of Association on November 28-29 (2013) at the “Eastern Partnership” summit in Vilnius. However, much to the surprise of the Ukrainian population, the Ukrainian authorities suspended preparations for signing the

agreement. The first Maidan meeting took place on November 24, bringing together between 50 and 100 thousand people – the largest gathering since the Orange Revolution of 2004. Supporters of the EU began to erect tents in Independence Square and hundreds stayed there overnight. Since “Maidan” means “a square” in Ukrainian, the following rallies and the permanent tent-city were called “Euromaidan.”

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> Phase Two: The Assault on the Protestors and their Changing Profile

At 4 am on November 30, several hundred members of the special branch of the police, “Berkut” [Golden Eagle], used force to disperse supporters of European integration, mainly young people meeting on the Maidan. It was more than a mere expulsion from the square – the protestors were kicked and clubbed and then pursued along the Khreschatyk (main street) and connecting streets as far as St. Michael’s Cathedral where monks opened the gates and hid the fleeing students.

These events caused a public outcry. Accordingly, the following Sunday (December 8) a record crowd of protestors, estimated to between 700 thousand and a million people, arrived at the Maidan and its surrounding streets, coming not just from Kyiv but also from the surrounding, mainly Western, regions. Who came to the Maidan and what demands did they have? The Foundation *Democratic Initiatives* commissioned a survey of the protestors, conducted by Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS) during the weekend of December 7 and 8. We did 1,037 face-to-face interviews. The follow-up survey was conducted on December 20, which was a weekday, and included only the occupants of the Maidan encampment.

It is necessary to say a few words about the methodology we used. We quickly learned that our experience in exit polls and street interviews was not of much use in this constantly changing context where the number of permanent Maidan inhabitants fluctuated between 5 and 20 thousand but could rise to a 100 thousand on a Sunday rally. Therefore, our usual methodology designed for a stationary context required modifications. Our sampling technique identified sectors of the Maidan (including the occupied buildings), and we randomly selected interviewees within each, weighting the results by the estimated numbers

in each sector. With regard to the occupants of buildings the standard exit poll procedure was used, i.e. interviewing those who exit the building at given intervals. As for the Maidan, we demarcated several interview points on the square. Alongside the interviewer a three-meter line was drawn and everyone who crossed this line was to be interviewed. However, in practice the lines were not visible so the interviewers created an imaginary line between them and a prominent object. Supervisors observed the interviews as they took place and each interview location was photographed from above to estimate the number of people in the specific sector, so as to be able to weight the results.

The two leading motives that drove people to Maidan were: the brutal beating of Maidan demonstrators during the night of November 30 (70%) and Yanukovych’s refusal to sign the Association Agreement with the European Union (54%). Other motives for participation in the protests included the desire to improve life in Ukraine (50%) and to change the power structure of the country (39%). Maidan respondents made the following demands: to release the arrested protestors and stop the repression (82%); the resignation of the government (80%); the resignation of Yanukovych followed by early presidential elections (75%); to sign the Association Agreement with the EU (71%); to commence criminal investigation and prosecution of those responsible for violence perpetrated against Maidan protestors (58%). In short, we can say that the main demands focused on issues of social justice and human dignity, which is why journalists called the protests, “The Revolution of Respect.”

Comparing the permanent Maidan encampment with the Maidan rallies, there was a clear dominance of people from outside Kyiv in the former (81%) whereas the latter were dominated by Kyiv residents (57%). Among *non-residents*, protestors from Western Ukraine dominated both Maidans

(52% at the rallies and 42% of the encampment), indicating a slightly higher proportion from other regions in the encampment. The educational level at the rallies was very high: those with college education accounted for 64% while incomplete college education accounted for another 13%. As regards occupation, almost 60% were professionals, entrepreneurs, and managers. In other words most of the participants attending the rallies were from the middle classes. At the encampment, however, the proportion of professionals was less than half that of the rallies and the holders of college degrees comprised less than 50% of occupants.

> Phase Three: The Radicalization of Maidan

Maidan endured week after week, but its demands were not heeded and activists were continually arrested. The protestors – living in tents at temperatures of 10 degrees below zero – became more radical. On January 16, Parliament passed very tough laws that significantly increased penalties for protest (journalists called them “dictatorial”). Outraged by these laws, protestors organized a march from Maidan to Parliament which was stopped by the police. In the course of fights around the barricades erected on Grushevskovo Street, many were wounded and several people were killed. In addition, unknown infiltrators abducted protestors to the forests where they were brutally beaten. One activist was found dead and several went missing.

On February 3, together with *Democratic Initiatives*, KIIS replicated the survey of Maidan (the previous one having been conducted on December 20). During these one-and-a-half months Maidan camp was transformed into a military camp: “Maidan Sich” (“sich” refers to a camp of Zaporozhian Cossacks who are a symbol of Ukrainian independence). The proportion ready to resort to more militant forms of protest increased: those in favor of picketing government buildings increased

from 38% to 56%; those in favor of seizing the buildings increased from 19% to 41%; those in favor of creating parallel power structures and military formations increased from 31 to 50%. National opinion polls and daily news pointed to the radicalization of attitudes in the entire country. Attitudes toward Maidan varied by region. A survey conducted by KIIS between February 8 and February 18 in all regions of Ukraine including Crimea (2,032 face-to-face interviews) showed that in the country as a whole 40% of the population supported Maidan, but that this varied from 8% in the East to 80% in the West.

> **Phase Four: Violent Repression and Victory for Maidan**

On February 18, the situation escalated as preparations to storm Maidan were under way. Maidan was surrounded by the police, snipers moved into the occupied buildings, and clashes began, which continued day and night with only short interruptions on February 19 and 20. Assault weapons were used on both sides. During these three days more than 100 protestors were killed or died

> **With which side do you sympathize in the current conflict in Ukraine?**

PERCENTAGE SUPPORT FOR	REGIONS				
	Ukraine Total	Western	Central	Southern	Eastern
Government and Yanukovich	23	3	11	32	52
Protestors	40	80	51	20	8
Neither side	32	13	33	42	39
Hard to say	5	4	6	7	1

from wounds along with five police officers from the Berkut. In addition, more than 1,500 people were injured, and about a further 300 disappeared without trace. This was a trauma for the country. In the Parliamentary Session of February 21, a number of members of the ruling party supported the opposition and Parliament voted to call off all the militias and send them back to their barracks.

At the same time, in the presence of representatives from Poland, Germany, France and Russia, President

Yanukovich signed an agreement with the opposition to settle the crisis. However, in the evening of the same day he suddenly disappeared. Attempts were made to intercept and apprehend him but he managed to escape to Russia. So Parliament appointed a new government, announced new elections for President and, following the Constitution, the Speaker temporarily assumed the position of President. In this way power changed hands in the Ukraine. ■

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> The Revolution has not even begun

by **Volodymyr Ishchenko**, National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, and Deputy Director of the Center for Society Research, Kyiv, Ukraine



Maidan turns to mass violence after the parliament passed the repressive laws restricting civic liberties on January 16, 2014.

Given that the events in Ukraine are still rapidly developing, driven by “separatist” rallies in the Eastern and Southern regions and by Russian military intervention to Crimea, any attempts at theoretical generalization have to be tentative. Still, the rule of President Yanukovich has been toppled; the new government seems to be more or less efficiently taking control of almost the whole Ukrainian territory and has announced the first political and economic reforms.

Many analysts and activists have labeled the events as a “revolution” – “national,” “democratic,” “anti-colonial,” or “bourgeois.” What undeniably happened in Ukraine was a rebellion by part of the Ukrainian population (predominantly concentrated in the Western and Central regions with much less support in the Eastern and Southern regions) under the very weak direction and often contested leadership of the parliamentary parties, involving (in the final stages) violent confrontation between the police and

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armed paramilitary groups. The result was a change in the ruling elite. Although some political scientists¹ claim that this is enough to call it a “Tilly-type” revolution, the change of elites resulting from popular mobilization is not what arouses so much interest in revolutions. Instead, we are usually looking for and hoping for some potential for radical institutional, structural change.

Will the uprising bring forth change in the class or social-economic situation of Ukraine? The commanding heights of the economy are controlled by the same good old “oligarchs” – financial-industrial groups with close connections to the state. Moreover, they are now assuming even more overt control over both the central and local government. The Ukrainian “chocolate king” Petro Poroshenko (who worked in both Yushchenko and Yanukovich governments) has emerged as the most likely winner in the coming presidential elections. In an attempt to legitimize their rule in what are now oppositional regions and to strengthen national unity in the face of Russian intervention, the new government appointed some of the richest people in Ukraine (Ivan Kolomoisky, Serhiy Taruta) to be the regional governors in the Eastern parts of Ukraine.

The political conjuncture is becoming more pluralistic but this hardly means more democratic institutions. The attempt to monopolize power by the Yanukovich “family” has been effectively stopped in favor of a more collective oligarchic rule. Though the new constitution of 2004 gave more power to parliament, decreasing the power of the president, it can scarcely be called more democratic. Parliament’s elections will be organized exclusively on the basis of proportional representation by voting for party lists. The constitution does not propose any mechanism for people’s control over who will be the candidates on the party list (through primaries, for example). The party leadership has almost unlimited power over the composition of the party lists with the right to exclude dissenting MPs from parliamentary groups who in this case automatically lose their mandate. It is possible that the rules of parliamentary control could lead to a repetition of the disaster of January 16, 2014 when, rushing through the procedures and violating the constitution, parliament passed ten laws restricting freedom of speech and freedom of peaceful assembly.

One of the demands raised by the Maidan movement, one of the most important problems which brought people to the streets, and one of the issues at the center of the new government’s plan of action is transparency of political rule and fighting corruption. This issue cannot be ignored even if it is a buzzword for neoliberals. Establishing effective and transparent formal institutions in place of informal processes favoring those few close to the power elite would constitute an important modernizing breakthrough for Ukraine. However, it is highly doubtful that these issues can be tackled without also seriously challenging inequality and poverty in Ukrainian society. So far we have only

seen the opposite – the government has declared its full readiness to accept every austerity measure demanded by the IMF as a condition for its badly needed loans, and thus only aggravating economic inequality. Moreover, any move toward greater transparency in the operation of the higher circles of government would not be supported by the oligarchs who depend on all sorts of informal state benefits that maintain their competitive advantage in the context of Ukraine’s peripheral capitalism. In an open competition with European corporations in the free-trade zone, selective protection and access to state resources will be even more important. International competition is the strongest factor limiting the expansion of Ukrainian national capital, hence the importance of state protection, itself facing competing pressures from the European Union and Russia. Paradoxically Ukraine’s “anti-colonial” revolution seems to be increasing the economic dependency of the country.

In the context of international support violence proved to be effective in confronting Yanukovich’s high-intensity but inconsistent coercion.² Nevertheless, it had also a number of detrimental consequences. Among them was the ascending career of the “Right Sector” coalition, including overt neo-Nazi groups, whose Maidan protests skyrocketed from the margins to the center and within three months became an influential factor in Ukrainian politics. However, these protests cannot be labelled a “fascist coup” – as depicted by the Russian media and some leftist analyses – since this would imply an armed, organized seizure of power from above, which does not capture the Ukrainian events. The Right Sector and the Maidan movement in general were hardly controlled by the political parties that came to power. The Right Sector has got arms (having seized guns from the police departments) and has gained some popular support as the heroes of a successful people’s rebellion.

As in the case of the great revolutions of the past, foreign intervention is a major factor in curtailing even such weak liberation potential as was found in Euromaidan where rising nationalist feelings pushed aside civic control over the government and other social agendas. Thus, should social-economic unrest arise once again – this time against the new government’s austerity measures and its overt oligarchic rule – it will be led most probably by the populist far right, and not by the incomparably weaker new left. As such it will leave little room for the development of a broader all-national movement so necessary in a culturally divided country, and, more than likely, it will fuel the dynamics of state disintegration without leading toward social transformation. ■

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¹ <http://www.psa.ac.uk/insight-plus/blog/ukraine%E2%80%99s-euromaidan-tillyan-revolution-can-lead-second-crimean-war>

² <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/02/26/why-ukraines-yanukovich-fell-but-so-many-analysts-including-me-predicted-he-would-survive/>

> Transforming Human Development

by **Yuan Tseh Lee**, President of the International Council for Science (ICSU) and former President of Academia Sinica, Taiwan and **Andrew Wei-Chih Yang**, Special Assistant to the President of ICSU

“Neither gradual progress nor incremental tinkering will suffice”

At a meeting a couple of years back, we were discussing the need to restrain development in order to prevent dangerous climate change, when an African colleague spoke up: “No, our people are miserable. We must develop. If that means destroying the earth, then we can all die together!”

The words left a lasting impression. Much as we disagreed about dying together, the words did convey a truth: the world’s poor and hungry deserve a decent life. Every human soul does. There’s no denying the injustice of a world where 1.3 billion people have no electricity, 2.5 billion live on less than \$2 a day, while the richest consume too much.

And they are undoubtedly consuming too much. Today, mankind as a whole devours 50% more resources than the earth generates each year.¹ In 2012, 105 science academies from the world over sounded a stern warning: that over-consumption and over-population are severely straining the earth.² If we keep going as we are, science predicts that the world will warm by at least 4°C within this century. The climate will mutate, species will die en masse, and disasters will displace hundreds of millions.³

Such is the 21st century human predicament: a planet of limited resources and limited ability to absorb human impact, with 7 billion people already using too much and impacting too much. Yet 2.5 billion people deserve much more, while 2 billion more may join them by 2050.

> How could every human live well, but without destroying the earth?

To believe that the current way of development would work is utter insanity. With 7 billion people, this model – which prioritizes consumption and growth – will leave billions destitute and the environment devastated. At 9-10 billion people, it will likely destroy the planet and all semblance of human welfare.

> We must find another way

Our only chance at giving everyone on earth a decent life *within* the bounds of what the planet can provide is to *totally transform the way we develop*. Neither gradual progress nor incremental tinkering will suffice. Wholesale transformation is in order. You may ask: what will this transformed, truly sustainable development look like? Most likely it will assume a multitude of evolving forms as people innovate and iterate. But it ought to fulfill three objectives:

- Sustainable development must safeguard the earth and its ability to support life, because present and future generations depend on it.⁴

- Sustainable development must place a limit on growth – population and consumption growth in particular – because infinite growth is impossible on a finite planet.

- Sustainable development must be equitable, because without equity, it is difficult to develop a sense of ownership – “this is our planet, too, and we are its stewards.”

In one sentence: sustainable development is about meeting the needs of present and future generations – equitably and within the limits of the earth.

> How can sociologists (and all social scientists) contribute?

Actually, the real question is: how can they not? The root of this crisis stemmed not from curmudgeon physics but unsustainable human development – its institutions, behaviors and values. In other words, it is on the territory of social science that the key battles of sustainability will be waged.

“What about natural science and technology?” you may ask. Indeed they are crucial for moving us towards a low-carbon society, but they’re far from enough. In fact, science and technology have often been a powerful force for resource exploitation, consumerism and growth – because these, not environmental conservation, have been the dreams of peoples and nations. As long as nations still dream of infinite growth and con-

sumption, even “green tech” will be deployed to those ends, well beyond what the Earth can withstand.

But if we can transform those dreams and their associated values, behaviors and institutions, then we transform the very ends to which technology is wielded. And the social sciences are not just *relevant* to such a transformation. They are *pivotal*. Areas of potential intervention are legion. Here are three:

1. Our conception of “development” and “needs”: The reigning definition of sustainable development – from the Brundtland Commission in 1987 – did not define the meaning of “development” or “needs”. What do we mean by “development” – a luxurious Western lifestyle or a life of happy sufficiency? And what do humans “need”? A sleeping person survives on a constant supply of 100 watts, yet the average American consumes 10,000, while a Swiss initiative proposes 2,000 watts for all. Which is appropriate? These questions are admittedly tricky, but not answering them has meant that “anything goes” – jaw-dropping levels of waste included. Surely, through a joint effort, sociologists, economists, historians, psychologists and others could propose more sensible ideas.

2. Population: 9-10 billion people by 2050 is bandied-about so universally that we may believe it is pre-ordained rather than merely projected. But population is not destiny. It is heavily shaped by social norms, economics, security of parents, and policy interventions – which makes it ripe for social science interventions.

3. Global cooperation: our *nation-based* governing system has proved vastly inadequate in the face of climate change, which is a global threat. We need superior global institutions. It is time to seriously invest in, and apply, the treasure trove of social science know-how on institutional design.

The potential of sociology and the social sciences to power the transformation of human development is literally infinite. But unless we convert that potential into real action, it won’t matter much. And we had better get going. Science shows that if we don’t turn away from unsustainable development within this decade, it’ll likely be too late. How will future generations judge us then?

Back at that meeting two years ago, there turned out to be no disagreement after all. We were all united by the hope for a very different kind of development – much more equitable and well within the boundaries of our planet. ■

¹ Global Footprint Network: <http://www.footprintnetwork.org/en/index.php/GFN/>

² Inter-Academy Panel, *Statement on Population and Consumption*: <http://www.interacademies.net/10878/19191.aspx>

³ The World Bank, *Turn Down the Heat*: http://climatechange.worldbank.org/sites/default/files/Turn_Down_the_heat_Why_a_4_degree_centrigade_warmer_world_must_be_avoided.pdf

⁴ Griggs D. et al., “Policy: Sustainable development goals for people and planet”, *Nature* 495, pp. 305-307, 21 March 2013: <http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v495/n7441/full/495305a.html>

> Climate Change

Our Fate Lies with the Market

by **Herbert Docena**, University of California, Berkeley, USA

As greenhouse gas emissions continue to soar after 20+ years of UN negotiations, world leaders are relying even more heavily on the market to save us from a catastrophic 4-degree centigrade warming; but a coalition of governments and social movements are fighting back. Herbert Docena reports from the UN Climate Change Conference that took place in Warsaw, November 11-22, 2013.



The march of the social movements in the streets of Warsaw, Poland, at the UN Climate Change Conference.

For the second year in a row, a super-typhoon hit the Philippines on the eve of the annual UN climate change conference. To the delegates gathered in Warsaw and to others back home, this added to mounting proof that climate change is not only already happening, but also that those who contributed the least to it are the ones who are being hit hardest.

More than that, Haiyan – along with other extreme-weather events – also reinforced the conclusion, voiced by many in Warsaw, that these UN negotiations have already “failed miserably,” as one delegate put it. Instead of changing course, however, the negotiations are heading

towards a more dangerous path. Less divided than before, developed-country governments are leaning even more heavily on the market to solve the problem. But a global movement, embracing governments and social movements with different goals, is also fighting back and pushing for a different direction.

> A question of responsibility

The Warsaw conference was just the latest of the increasingly frequent meetings that the world’s governments have been convening since coming together in Stockholm in 1972 to discuss the global ecological crisis. In 1992,

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An “informal huddle” among climate change negotiators, forging the final compromise.

governments signed a Convention to “stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations so as to prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system.”

Such a straightforward task has proven to be more daunting, however, because it entails nothing less than interconnected transformations in how we live – from changing light bulbs to overhauling national energy infrastructures to, some insist, replacing capitalism altogether. And like all changes, these transformations are bound to hurt some and benefit others.

Still, there has been a basic consensus on how to proceed: Developed countries are obliged, under the 1992 Convention, to “take the lead” in cutting emissions. But because even their efforts would not be enough, developing countries are also asked to pitch in, and for them to do so they need resources and technology from developed countries. And because they are more vulnerable, but have fewer resources to cope with climate change, they also need help adapting to and coping with its impacts.

This has proven to be more difficult because beneath this basic consensus have been deeper, underlying conflicts, among unequal parties, about the distribution of costs and benefits but also about the meaning of people’s actions

and the terms of their relationships with each other – conflicts over what kind of people they are and what kind of treatment they deserve from others.

Fearing that they are being made to bear the burden of solving a problem they neither caused nor benefited from, developing countries insist that rich countries are “morally obliged” to do what they have to do because they are “historically responsible” for emitting much of the gases in the atmosphere and they grew richer in the process. Developed countries have to be compelled and even sanctioned – and not merely given incentives or “invited” – to do the right thing.

Almost all developed-country negotiators I interviewed angrily rejected this, saying they cannot be held responsible for actions whose consequences they were unaware of. If they are to do more now, it is only because they are more capable of leadership or charity – never because they are guilty. They are not the kind of people who can or should be punished – only encouraged.

> A question of development

Further complicating matters is that overlapping these struggles over moral status and hierarchies are struggles over how best to sustain or revive growth – or whether this

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should even be the goal to begin with – in a context of protracted economic downturn.

Responding to growing concern about the environment and to the spectacular rise of popular radical environmental movements which blamed capitalism for the problem in the 70s, officials and experts from OECD countries, the UN, the World Bank, environmentalist groups, and corporations, have put forward, and rallied behind, the notion of “sustainable development”: that solving the global ecological crisis does not have to hinder accumulation; indeed, it depends on – and can even contribute to – continuing growth.

This has since become the taken-for-granted justification and project of many governments, multilateral organizations, and “civil society” groups. All that is needed, they all say, is better “global environmental management” or more regulation over how nature is used. But they have clashed over what that entails.

At one pole, the US has been championing a more neoliberal regulation: The market, not some higher international authority, should be counted on to regulate our access to nature. Countries should only be asked to voluntarily “pledge” their emissions-reductions targets; no caps should be set “top-down.” The promise of higher profits is what should prod capitalists to move from dirty to green energy, or to invest in clean technology projects abroad.

At another pole is the European Union (EU), which had been pushing for something more akin to social-democratic regulation: States acting in concert should take a more direct and active role in enforcing emissions reductions, directing capital flows towards cleaner technology, and so on.

Among capitalists, the main divide has been between those whose fortunes are tied to fossil-fuel or “gray” capitalism and those tied to “green” capitalism, i.e. those involved in renewable energy, carbon trading, and all the profit-making opportunities opened up by climate change. The former find more comfort in the US’ approach while the latter tend to rally behind the EU’s. Invested in both colors of capitalism, others find elements of both agreeable.

The developing-country bloc, which includes over 130 countries, has always been more diverse, but they have generally united behind pushing for redistributive justice to be at the center of solutions, for more state-driven punitive regulation (such as imposing levies and fines), and for subordinating markets to (global) society more broadly.

But there remain internal divisions over larger goals: Many seem to subscribe to the “sustainable development” project articulated by Northern officials and intellectuals, while others have sought to redefine it to mean more than just sustaining capitalist development by conserving nature.

> A Failed Compromise

During the early years of the negotiations, the neoliberal no-caps no-commitments approach proposed by the US was quickly shot down after strong opposition from both EU and developing countries. What subsequently prevailed instead was a targets-with-markets or “cap-and-trade” compromise in which developed countries would be given emissions allowances lower than their 1990 emissions while establishing a carbon market where they could buy additional allowances.

Codified in the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, this settlement seemed initially acceptable to both US and EU-led developed-country groupings because it fused market mechanisms (which neoliberals liked) with emissions limits (which the non-neoliberals wanted), but also because it reinforced their common claim of innocence: Unlike the punitive regulation advocated by developing countries, market-based regulation does not stigmatize them as offenders to be punished.

Though largely opposed to market mechanisms and dissatisfied with the low targets, developing countries signed on because legally-binding caps were at least imposed and they were exempt from them, but also because they were promised funds and technology through the market. But this would prove to be too much for those in the US who were particularly incensed not just by the caps but by the exemption granted developing countries – an exemption that was not only seen as a threat to US competitiveness but that also contradicted the US’ moral claim that they are not more guilty than others so their obligations should also be no different from others. The US subsequently ditched the Protocol, while almost everyone else rallied behind it.

After over-ten years of implementation, the compromise achieved little. Some parties managed to reduce their emissions, but only because of slackening growth due to the recession or because they were able to buy cheap “offsets” from the loophole-ridden and now collapsing carbon market. Overall, emissions today are 60-70% higher than when talks began in the 90s. And very little finance or technology has gone into the hands of developing countries.

With the negotiations going around in circles these past years, many in Warsaw had hoped that the most powerful typhoon in recorded history would at least push the negotiations towards a new direction. “We can stop this climate madness here,” pleaded the Philippines’ lead negotiator, who shed tears again during the opening session.

> Hurtling towards disaster

What happened instead was that the negotiations continued down a path that had been previously abandoned. And unlike before, when the US-led grouping and the EU

wanted to go their own ways, this time they seem to be converging. For even the EU is lining up behind the US – or at least failing to provide a discernible alternative pole as it did in the 90s.

Renouncing caps while favoring carbon trading, more developed-country governments are ditching the cap-and-trade compromise in favor of a no-cap-just-trade deal. Less divided than ever, they are stepping even farther back from more direct regulation, and relying even more on the market to solve the climate crisis.

For as they repeatedly argued during the negotiations, the way to reduce emissions is for states to “catalyze” private-sector investments in green energy by putting a “price” on nature, through the expansion and interconnection of national/regional carbon markets, and by creating an “enabling environment” through liberal investment policies and subsidies – actions that ultimately require “top-down” state action.

The task, as the Canadian negotiator in Warsaw put it, is for the world’s governments to send the message that “climate change is good for business.” And people in business, following the logic of “sustainable development,” are the kind of people who deserve to be courted or appeased – rather than compelled or punished – if they are to save us from the climate crisis. To govern through the market is to effectively entrust the future of the planet to them.

But this turn to an even more neoliberal solution also seems to be galvanizing the opposition. Despite growing fractures within and pressures without, most developing-country governments remained united in insisting that

states and not markets should directly ensure that emissions are drastically reduced and that resources and technology are mobilized.

At least part of this uncompromising stance could be attributed to what appears to be the growing influence of left or left-leaning governments such as Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador and others within the bloc. Though still pushed to the margins and sometimes even deliberately silenced, negotiators from these countries seemed to have played a leading role in successfully blocking developed countries’ all-out push for “globally-connected carbon markets.” They have also been at the frontlines promoting “Non-Market Mechanisms” or a caps-no-trade approach to reduce emissions – perhaps the most fleshed-out alternative to market solutions ever tabled in the talks.

“Civil society” too seemed to be converging. Around 800 NGO, trade union and social movement representatives – radicals and moderates together – walked out in protest against the direction the process is taking. All these seemed to have slowed the push to vest the fate of the planet in the hands of business. But unless developing-country governments and social movements worldwide are able to exercise real leverage over developed-country governments; unless the international community manages to exercise leverage over all those who make the decisions about what, how much, or with what sources of energy to produce (even in developing countries), the world is now on track to a 4-degree centigrade increase in global temperature – to a world in which Haiyan would be tame by comparison. A force more powerful than super-typhoons is needed to steer us away from that fate. ■

> Drama and Devastation in Chinese Urbanization

by **Feizhou Zhou**, Peking University, China



A farmer irrigates his field as his future lies beyond in the apartments of China's new cities.

involved “contracting production to the household” (*baochan daohu*), and land rights, both in terms of use and income, were evenly redistributed among villagers. As a result, every village household received several pieces of farmland, but there was always one piece that was near the family dwelling. Moving to apartment buildings increased the distance between the farmers’ living quarters and their farmland. Many farmers had to walk for one or two hours, and sometimes even longer, to get to their land. It was under these circumstances that the local government invited urban corporations to invest in the countryside, renting large areas of farmland to grow high value-added cash crops. In Chengdu the price of land leasing is about 800-1000 Yuan per mu, roughly equivalent to the value of the farmers’ annual output of food crops. Thus, when farmers moved into the new housing projects, their farmland was taken over by urban corporations and traditional family farming was converted to corporate farming.

Since ancient times Chengdu Plain has been a densely populated agricultural area. In 2007 the central government chose Chengdu City as a “Pilot Region for Coordinating Urban and Rural Development” that aimed to change the relationship between urban and rural areas. Chengdu’s reform measures had a strong demonstration effect on other regions, and have been studied, learnt and copied since 2009. The most essential part of Chengdu project is to encourage farmers to relocate from traditional but usually scattered village communities to apartment buildings built with government funds. Each apartment building can hold between 100

and 500 households, equivalent to the size of one to three village communities. These housing projects have been equipped with basic infrastructure such as tap water, electricity, gas, road access, garbage disposal and fitness facilities. The quality of life in these communities approximates the average level of rural towns. The relocation project is called by local governments as “New Countryside Construction” or “Balancing Urban and Rural Development.” However, for some news media, it is known as “The Vanishing Villages.”

Meanwhile, agriculture operations are also in transition. Since the 1980s decollectivization reform has

Apartment living has dramatically changed farmers’ productive activities and lifestyle. On the one hand, since

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farmers have no space to grow vegetables and fruits, or breed livestock such as pigs and chickens, rental income is all they get from their land. On the other hand, farmers now have to pay for basic subsistence – food, water, gas, etc. According to the survey we conducted in Chengdu, the living costs of farmers in apartment buildings rose by an average of 30%. Not only production relations, but village social relations and governance are undergoing major transformation with changes in dwelling patterns and the merger of villages. The far-reaching influence of the reforms is still unclear at this moment, but they can only be understood in the context of the rapid urbanization now occurring in China.

Two kinds of ownership coexist in China's land system: collective ownership of rural land and state ownership of urban land. If cities need rural land for urban development and construction, they must first legally convert the collective ownership of rural land into state ownership. The process is called "land requisitioning" (*tudi zhengyong*). Only local governments have the right to requisition and sell the land.

Local governments can earn large land revenues from "land transfer fees" (*tudi churangjin*), through expropriating rural land and then selling it to urban developers. In 2013, the total amount of land transfer fees nationwide was above 4.12 trillion RMB, accounting for more than 59% of local government fiscal revenue. Meanwhile, since the local governments are allowed to retain most of the tax revenue generated from urban construction after the 1994 tax-sharing reform, they have a strong incentive to compete for urban construction. This part of tax revenue, together with land transfer fees, is the basis of what is called "land-centered local fiscal regime" (*tudi caizheng*).

Besides utilizing non-governmental capital for urban development and construction, local government also

has to invest in municipal public infrastructure, which is far beyond its financial capacity. According to the law, it is illegal for local governments to take out loans for urban construction. Government agencies can neither obtain loans directly from financial institutions nor can they act as a guarantor of loans. However, in practice, local governments usually use governmental fiscal funds as registered capital to establish state-owned companies, such as urban investment development corporations, urban transit corporations, urban waterworks groups, land reserve centers and so on. These companies are usually managed by the local Administration Committee of State Assets, which is a department of the local city or county government. The main function of the companies is to obtain bank loans for urban construction by mortgaging government transferred state-owned land-for-construction to banks. Almost all counties and cities in China now have such companies, known as "local financing platforms" (*difang rongzi pingtai*). These financing platforms usually obtain loans equivalent to 70% of the assessed value of mortgaged land, loans that are used for urban infrastructure and public goods. According to a survey conducted by the central government, local governments had a total debt of 17.9 trillion RMB at the end of June 2013. Most debt was attributable to the financing platforms.

Based on the above analysis, behind China's urban expansion lies a powerful land, fiscal and financial mechanism. First, local government can obtain state-owned land through land requisitions for urban development as well as revenues from land sales. Second, under the operation of the local financing platform, local government can use the land as a mortgage to obtain bank loans for urban construction. This synergy between land and finance has created rapidly-changing, prosperous cities that appear from processes very different from traditional urbanization that was based on industry and population agglomeration.

The key to the new pattern of urbanization is to have sufficient state-owned land for mortgaging and development. However, defending arable land protection and food security, the central government strictly controls the amount of arable land that local government can expropriate. The Chengdu reform emerged from contradictory forces: a strict control over land expropriation, on the one side, and a powerful demand for land to foster urbanization, on the other.

In rural China, the homestead (*zhaijidi*), that is land on which houses are built, does not belong to arable land. Because of the traditional courtyard dwelling pattern, farmers usually have a large homestead. One of the main motivations for Chengdu to move farmers in apartment buildings is to "produce" land for urbanization. Once farmers move into apartment buildings, their vacated homestead can become arable land after reclamation. In this way local government can use the "increase" in arable land to obtain land needed for city expansion. For example, after villagers moved into apartment buildings, a village reclaimed 100 mu of homestead and turned it to arable land. Then cities can appropriate 100 mu of arable land wherever it needs urban development. At the same time, the total amount of arable land is unchanged.

Therefore, in general, the change in farmers' dwelling patterns, from scattered homesteads to concentrated apartment blocks, is the ultimate source of land and capital for China's rural urbanization. If farmers did not give up their homesteads, there would be no arable land for local governments to requisition, and no land to mortgage for bank loans. The pace of urbanization would be far slower. Currently, the Chengdu experiment is being imitated in many regions of China, resulting in a rapid urban expansion into the rural areas. ■

> Land Grabs and Corruption

by **Yonghong Zhang**, Sun Yat-Sen University, Guangdong, China



Villagers hang slogans against local corruption in Shenzhen.

During the unprecedented process of urbanization in China, along with the requisitioning of collective land for urban construction, the management and distribution of rural collective assets have become the main focus of social contradictions and conflicts. In the early 1990s, the urbanization of the Southeastern coastal areas was far more rapid than the development of other areas in China. Under the direction of local government, the villages around cities gradually converted villagers' collective land assets into shares, and allocated them to individual villagers. Without changing the overall system

of collective ownership of rural land, these villages established “community shareholding corporations,” and the villagers became the shareholders in collective land assets, and enjoyed the dividends this brought.

The community shareholding corporation was the attempt by local governments to adapt rural society to urbanization without radically changing the prior power structure inherited from the era of the people's commune. Board members of the corporation were elected by shareholding villagers, but the outcome was deeply influenced by local government and village clans. In most cases, the vil-

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lage party-branch secretary “naturally” became the chairman of the board, monopolizing political, economic and social power. The community corporation continued the connection between local government and surrounding villages, thereby becoming a tool of the government in meeting the new challenges of urbanization. For instance, the community corporation not only managed the collective asset but took over from local government the responsibility for village infrastructure, public safety, community welfare, and environmental protection.

Although the village committee and the community corporation are nominally grass-roots autonomous organizations, the influence of local government and village clans often override the independent democratic rights of villagers. The result is a conspiracy of the chairman of the board (also village party secretary) and local government to appropriate the collective land claims and control collective assets.

In recent years, due to the continuous appreciation of land values, the chairman of the board or village party secretary enriched himself from the sale or rent of expropriated land. This has given rise to village protests. Since spring 2012, induced by the dramatic events in Wukan, almost every village under the jurisdiction of Guangzhou and Shenzhen Municipal Governments (Guangdong province)

– studied by my research institute – has seen an outbreak of collective violence stemming from conflicts over land. In the case of Guangzhou municipality, for example, after several years of protest, villagers finally won in 2013 their appeal against the leaders of the original shareholding corporation, and the newly elected board signed a new lease on the collective property, bringing in an extra 100 million RMB (\$16 million).

Unlike labor disputes, struggles against land expropriation and corruption entail the protection of villagers’ personal economic interests as well as serious challenges to the legitimacy of local government. Thanks to the intricate traditional patterns of family and community ties and their multi-generation residency in the villages, land struggles tend to be long-lasting and pose a serious threat to the social stability of the regime. Moreover, without settling village protests, future land redistribution and urban development will be permanently arrested. Therefore, local governments have begun to take strict measures to investigate and punish corruption. Thus, in Guangzhou municipality, almost a quarter of village party cadres have been punished for illegal activities.

Under China’s authoritarian system, procedural games (e.g. village elections and lawsuits) are effective means of resolving protest. Aware of how the provincial government dealt

with the Wukan protests, in places where village opposition is strong and there is ample evidence of corruption, local governments have responded to conflicts around land grabs by investigating suspect village leadership and by organizing the election of new ones. At the same time, in most villages, elections still do not protect the property rights of the villagers, but instead they become a tool for leaders of community corporations to abuse power and seek personal profit. Therefore, villagers harbor a bleak view of elections. They do not consider elections an inalienable right of the citizen but merely an instrument for them to protect their personal interest. As they told us during our fieldwork, anyone who wins the election will turn it into a means for personal aggrandizement.

The existing system of village governance, based as it is on the collective land ownership, severely erodes village autonomy. As urbanization progresses, the government is supposed to be accountable to the needs of the people and endow villagers with the same civil rights as urban residents. To date, interactions between state and villagers are in flux, as both parties explore new modes of local governance. However, notwithstanding all the experiments, without transforming the current system of landed property ownership, villagers are inevitably going to lose out in the process of urbanization. ■

> Channeling Protest

The Case of the Three Gorges Dam

by **Ying Xing**, China University of Political Science and Law, Beijing, China



*A protester from YunYang County tells the story of the protest led by He Kechang.
Photo by Ying Xing.*

In contemporary Chinese society, when conflict arises between officials and ordinary people, there are four major ways for people to seek remedy – class action, group petition, on-the-spot resistance, and collective riot, the combination of group petition and on-the-spot resistance being the most common. I will analyze the legal

remedy pursued by those displaced by China's Three Gorges dam in the first class-action lawsuit known as the "Case of He Kechang."

846,200 people were resettled in the Three Gorges reservoir area, of which 361,500 were from rural areas. There has been a group petition of peasant farmers from YunYang

County, Chongqing Municipality since 1997. The petition of Mr. He Kechang, the representative claimant, has gone through four stages.

From the Petition of Ten Thousand People to the Commencement of a Group Petition: October 1997 to March 2000. In July 1997, the county government of YunYang began an experimental project on the displaced population. When the local government announced the low levels of compensation, it aroused much disturbance among the displaced. The peasant farmers of the area decided to send letters directly to the central government.

The petition signed by 10,000 people led senior officials and cadres from Chongqing and the central government to send a joint working group to YunYang County. However, they concluded their investigation by denying there was “insufficient compensation for the displaced,” it was just a misunderstanding of the representatives of the displaced population who were also faulted for bypassing the head of the local leadership. He Kechang and the other representatives were so dissatisfied with this outcome that, from 1998 to 2000, they wrote several letters to Beijing, paid two petition visits to Beijing and many to Chongqing, but none of them were answered.

Group Petition and the Escalation of Local Mobilization: March 2000 to March 2001. In May 1999, the State Council decided to change the Three Gorges resettlement policy so that peasant farmers would no longer be settled locally but in faraway places, which aroused another wave of opposition from the displaced population of Yun Yang. Led by He Kechang the displaced population combined a number of strategies: face-to-face confrontation and argument with local functionaries; improving organization; acquainting themselves with policies and disseminating information about resettlement; increasing the intensity of petitions both through letters and visits to Beijing; and communication with foreign media.

Adversity of Imprisonment: March 2001 to March 2004. In March 2001, He Kechang and two other representatives made another trip to petition Beijing. Chongqing local government arrested the three representatives in Beijing. Later on, the People’s Court of YunYang County declared the Resettlement Investigation Organization was challenging the government resettlement plan, and sentenced He Kechang to three years in prison and the other two representatives to two years in prison for “assembling to disturb the peace.” This was the first time Three Gorges petitioners were sentenced to imprisonment, and the

fate of YunYang peasant farmers became an international concern.

An Endless Battle: March 2004 to Now. On 11 March 2004, He Kechang was released after serving his sentence. Although he underwent intense physical torture in prison with his legs broken and hands deformed, and his property confiscated in August 2002, still his fighting spirit remained. After his release, he refused to collaborate with the local government, and persisted in collecting information on the displaced population. He had entered an endless battle.

What we see in the case of He Kechang is a certain pragmatism in the choice of protest strategy, shifting between judicial and non-judicial remedies and even using them simultaneously. From the point of view of the displaced population, the division between rule-of-law and rule-of-man is of little importance. What is important is the practicality of the strategy in achieving a specific dispute resolution. They appeal to the courts not because they believe in legal justice, and they petition not because they believe in the integrity of senior officials. They adopt both lawsuit and petition as expedient approaches in the same way that those in power adopt each as expedient strategies of governance. ■

> Jan Szczepański

Building a Precarious Bridge

by **Adam Müller, Kamil Lipiński, Mikołaj Mierzejewski, Krzysztof Gubański, Karolina Mikołajewska**, the Public Sociology Lab, University of Warsaw, Poland

Jan Szczepański (1913-2004) was a Polish sociologist, who served as President of ISA from 1966 to 1970. He was the first person from the Eastern bloc to occupy this position. His publications appeared in many editions in Poland. His newspaper columns were also highly appreciated and widely discussed. He was not indifferent to public issues, and participated actively in political life, being a Member of the Parliament of the People's Republic of Poland (1957-61, 1972-85) and a Member of the Council of State (1977-82). As ISA President at the end of the 1960s he faced two major challenges. Firstly, dialogue between East and West as well as with the Global South which resulted in organizing the Congress of ISA in Eastern Europe (Varna, Bulgaria). Secondly, according to his diary, as President he was weighed down by tedious paperwork when trying to settle even the simplest organizational matters.



| Jan Szczepański in party mood.

The specificity of the Polish political situation in the communist era, as noted by sociologist Winicjusz Narojek, consisted in the limited legitimacy of the state. On the one hand, the communist regime was recognized by the majority of the population, especially in the initial

period, as an external force imposed from above by the Soviet Union and, thus, contrary to traditional national values. On the other hand, representatives of the authorities themselves were often seen as a necessary evil, acceptable insofar as they were able to distance themselves from their Eastern Protector. One of

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the pillars of legitimacy was the ability and willingness of those in power to circumvent the implementation of the orthodox Soviet doctrine. The "People's Democracy," especially in times of crises (1956, 1970, 1980), was both strong and weak, controlling and seductive.

The Polish intelligentsia adopted widely different attitudes toward this situation: from total opposition to devoted and enthusiastic contributions to the system. Many people took difficult, and morally uncomfortable intermediate positions. That was where we can find Jan Szczepański, who, after 1956, participated in the creation of a new political line within the Communist Party while, at the same time, he remained critical of the many abuses and distortions perpetrated by the communist system. Thanks to the efforts of such people, forming a shaky bridge between absolutist power and intellectual elites, it became possible for the Polish intelligentsia to hold on to a certain relative autonomy. In assuming a certain freedom of action, the intelligentsia played a significant role in the creation of the later oppositional structures of the "Solidarity" movement. In most countries of the Soviet bloc sociology departments were not present in the university, because Institutes of Marxism-Leninism had a monopoly of the interpretation of social life. In this regard the revival of the social sciences in Poland after

the death of Stalin was unusual in the Soviet Bloc, giving birth to Polish sociologists who were also great public intellectuals such as Jan Szczepański, Maria Ossowska and Stanisław Ossowski, Zygmunt Bauman, Maria Hirsztowicz and Stefan Nowak – all famous and familiar figures.

The unique position that Szczepański was able to forge in these difficult circumstances – an independent sociologist, advising an authoritarian government in matters of education and social policy – gave him the opportunity to practice public sociology in this gloomy period. He saw himself not as a detached academic, but as a researcher highly concerned with current social problems, and promoting possible solutions. Due to his influence in political life, Szczepański made it possible for many important Polish scientists to travel abroad. He also fought for the allocation of printing paper to public institutions so that many sociologists and other intellectuals could publish their books. He was even involved in social protests, something very rare in the Stalinist era, requiring great courage. For example, in 1954, he was one of 34 intellectuals who signed a letter protesting against censorship, although, after the first arrests, he withdrew his support.

He was a widely read journalist and columnist. His political position gave him the possibility of limited criticism

of authority. The public he reached with his popular writings gave him influence over the minds and attitudes of an entire generation of Poles. In this way he introduced some basic concepts of sociology into public discourse, creating space for a modicum of public debate in an era when freedom of speech was precarious. However, this mode of practicing sociology has meant that today – ten years after his death – Szczepański is all but forgotten in Poland. Despite his hundreds of publications focusing on current problems, he did not leave behind any timeless theory or impressive school of thought. On the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of his birth, a series of events and conferences were organized by the Polish Academy of Sciences and the Polish Sociological Association. However, his name does not resonate with contemporary students of the social sciences.

The life of Jan Szczepański was a constant struggle to improve the fate of people – an attempt to fulfill the promise of "socialism with a human face." His balancing act proves that even in an extremely undemocratic system, a space for public sociology can be found. However, such a possibility came at a price: trapped into a series of indoor games and having to make uncomfortable compromises. ■

> A Neoliberal Takeover of Polish Higher Education

by **Dariusz Jemielniak** and **Karolina Mikołajewska**, Kozminski University,
Warsaw, Poland



Students and professors at a gathering of the New Opening of the University (NOU), an NGO founded by PhD students in Poland to conduct research on Polish academia. Photo: courtesy of NOU.

It is not the first time that the condition of contemporary Polish academia adorns the pages of *Global Dialogue*. In GD 2.4 members of the Public Sociology Lab pointed to the neoliberal reforms of the Polish universities¹. Over the last seven years the Polish system of higher education has undergone major changes, on the grounds that Polish academia must meet world-class standards. While the cause seems to be a noble one and is generally supported, the actual outcomes have brought about many adverse effects, thereby making the situation worse, not better.

To understand the dire condition of Polish academia, it may be worth-

while briefly delineating a few key elements of the structural transformation that we consider to be particularly problematic. This is particularly timely since Poland has a new Minister of Higher Education, Lena Kolarska-Bobińska, a Professor of sociology and a former Member of the European Parliament. She insists that she is going to continue the policy of her predecessor.

Funding for academic fields amounts to only 0.4% of the GDP, which puts Poland at the lower end of the countries in the European Union. We should also emphasize that even though Poles have gained access to EU research funds, they only rarely apply for them and succeed

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even less often. The recent changes mean that more public resources are allocated to the newly established granting agencies, such as the National Science Centre (NCN), rather than being sent directly to academic institutions. However, at the country level the granting system – officially promoting merit and professionalism – reinforces disparities between the regions. The overwhelming majority of grants are allocated to researchers from the Mazovia province, dominated by Warsaw, the capital.

This inequality is reinforced by the organization of competition for PhD funding – 20% of the overall evaluation of the research proposal is dependent upon the achievements of one's supervisor, giving enormous advantage to those who enter academic centers with the most distinguished professors. This competition for scarce resources is further intensified by the fifteen-fold increase, over the last twenty years, of the number of PhD candidates. At the same time, the completion rate is only twice as high². This is because only a small percentage of PhD candidates receive scholarships while research and teaching assistantships have been dismantled in the vast majority of universities, so that graduate students are turned into a new precarious class of "disposable academics."³

This process has a lot to do with the overall demographic changes in Poland that had a powerful impact on the structural conditions of the academia. The proportion of school leavers going to university has risen from 9.8% at the threshold of the post-socialist transformation to almost 50%, which is among the highest rates in the world. At the same time public funding of academic institutions was tied to the number of students with only a small amount for research (time-limited grants and not offering a possibility of more

permanent employment). As Poland now faces a demographic crisis, with the number of students falling, universities face financial problems that have mainly hit those departments that have difficulty recruiting students. The recent decision to close down the philosophy program in Białystok in north-eastern Poland and open a faculty of cognitive science instead – which is likely to attract more students – has drawn a lot of attention. All over Poland, publicly funded philosophy institutes (as well as other departments of humanities) are facing particular difficulties with the introduction of payment for second majors – humanities are usually chosen as a second major, a luxury students now have to give up.

At the same time, the official mantra of striving for research quality rarely holds water. For instance, the Ministry of Science introduced a Research Assessment Exercise, relying on a ranking of journals largely based on the private company-owned and methodologically suspect "Journal Citation Report" from Thomson Reuters. Even if the JCR ranking is reasonable, its Polish iteration distorts the evaluation of academic merit: journals outside those on the JCR list are chosen in a non-transparent way, many quality outlets are omitted, and the ranking attempts the impossible, namely comparing performance in fields as different as biology, sociology, classical studies, through to law and medicine. All other kinds of publications are treated as substandard, and without discriminating among them so that a monograph published at Oxford University Press is "worth" just as much as a book in any vanity press outlet as long as it is in English. The effects of such a policy, especially for the humanities and the social sciences, are disastrous and ignored.

Many of the reforms, including the iron cage of the evaluation of academic production, are driven by the

need for control rather than for quality. For instance, all faculty are now required to prepare detailed syllabi that are assessed according to the national system for measuring teaching effects. The significant increase of bureaucracy is aimed at reporting what faculty do rather than making sure that what they do makes sense.

The neoliberal discourse of quality in academia results in praising applied research and disparaging fields which don't bring immediate dividends (including philosophy and sociology). But even this concept of quality is not entirely consistent. For instance, the non-public universities in Poland – founded after 1989 and run as non-profit establishments – cannot receive state funding for classes they offer even if the quality of their teaching and their research is higher than public universities and the classes are more cost-effective. All this suggests that the reforms do not aim to improve higher education, but rather are designed to disempower academics.

The situation of Polish academia is grave but it is not unique: universities worldwide face similar challenges and predicaments. Unless the academic community in general, and social scientists in particular, formulate concrete, constructive proposals for alternative ways of organizing higher education, addressing the concerns of the reformers but avoiding the disastrous consequences of the current changes, the situation may only worsen. In fact, the time for action may have already passed. ■

¹ Mierzejewski M., Mikołajewska K., Rozenbaum J., "One or Many Sociologies? A Polish Dialogue," *Global Dialogue* 2:4, May 2012.

² Michałak D., "Studia doktoranckie w Polsce – łatwo zacząć, trudniej skończyć," March 2013: <http://noweotwarcie.wordpress.com/2013/03/11/studia-doktoranckie-w-polsce-latwo-zaczac-trudniej-skonczyc/>

³ Editorial: "The disposable academic," *The Economist*, 2010, retrieved from <http://www.economist.com/node/17723223>

> Open Letter Concerning the Reform of Higher Education

Presented to the Polish Sociological Association by the Public Sociology Lab, University of Warsaw and the Critical Section, Jagiellonian University of Cracow, Poland

In September 2013 the 15th Congress of the Polish Sociological Association met in Szczecin. After a series of student debates, the Public Sociology Lab issued an open letter on changes in higher education. It was read out at the Congress and met with a huge response from lecturers. In January 2014 a conference entitled "Sociology and Sociologists in Contemporary Poland" took place in Warsaw to which only a single student representative was invited. Here we present the letter that began the diagnosis of student problems and possible solutions to the crisis of the university. The letter was composed by Krzysztof Gubański.



Polish students at the Congress of Young Sociologists in Cracow discussing dilemmas of higher education reform.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Academics!

We are a group of students concerned about issues related to academia. We do not claim the right to represent the voice of all students of sociology. However, as representatives of student organizations from

the University of Warsaw and Jagiellonian University in Cracow, we would like to publicize our lively discussions about contemporary changes in academia and, thereby, show that students are not apathetic, as is the common accusation. We have organized a series of meetings and seminars concerning these issues,

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which have attracted wide publicity,¹ demonstrating that students want a voice of their own rather than have others speak for them.

We have observed with concern how the public debate about the reform of higher education ignores the voice of scientists. The Ministry of Science and Higher Education, acting as an arbitrator, refuses scientists the right to vote, treating them as a conservative opposition to the otherwise progressive changes of modernization. Furthermore, resistance to the reforms is viewed as the defense of privileges that derive from a pathological system, which is how contemporary academia is represented. At the same time, the sponsors of reform legitimize it by claiming it advances the interests of students, emancipating them from an ossified education system. But the interest of students remains an imaginary product as their actual voice is never recognized as significant. Student organizations that manage to rise above everyday particularism meet with indifference at best, and are often accused of lacking objective reflection or being able to articulate their own claims.

Discussion of the reform focuses on the (presumed) irreconcilable opposition – “market vs academia” – which gives rise to two forms of resistance from scientists. In the first strategy scientists defend their position with arguments that uphold the market order, which means accepting the Ministry’s definition of the situation, shaped by New Public Man-

agement and neoliberal ideologies. The second strategy is to defend the conservative position, which means upholding an idealized community with its associated elitism and institutional autonomy. But what is the meaning of autonomy here? It refers to autonomy from the forces of market and state, but such autonomy is infeasible. Such a conservative defense is grist for the mill of ministerial discourse that labels scientists as feudal reactionaries.

In place of such pretentious accusations and counter-accusations of “educational fraud,” we offer a mutually enhancing public dialogue about the characteristics and needs of the modern university. We propose that teaching consider students to be our first public and a direct transmission belt of sociological knowledge from the academy to wider publics. In opposition to the proposed governmental logic of a provider-client service, scholars still command authority and should determine the process of professional socialization. In their attitudes and teaching we would like our lecturers to point to the variety of uses of sociological knowledge, and not just the conventional ones. An example might be the development of the collective production of knowledge through a common struggle for equal participation in the discussions about higher education in Poland and Europe.

We believe that undergraduate and graduate students – claimed to be the main beneficiaries of the reforms – have the potential to chal-

lenge the opportunistic interpretation of resistance as the “reactionary convulsions of the feudal university.” So far the potentiality has not been realized, despite our attempts to increase student involvement. Part of the problem is that students don’t have sufficient knowledge of the reforms (which we are trying to rectify), but also that there is a lack of support and leadership from their lecturers with whom they share daily activities and common problems. Ceding the field of the public debate to external experts means both researchers and students lose. When academics lose their influence even over conditions within the university, students no longer perceive their competences as potential tools of social change and they fall into a state of indifference.

Instead of the current atomization of the academic environment that reinforces the hegemonic position of the Ministry, we call for an alliance of lecturers, undergraduate and graduate students. We believe that the Polish Sociological Association can be a catalyst in spreading participation and responsibility for the fate of sociology. This letter is an invitation to dialogue, a prelude to collaboration and concerted action. We appeal, therefore, to our masters – that they recognize our agency in joint pursuit of our common interests. ■

¹ E.g. Third Congress of Young Sociologists, “Sociology in the future – Debate among students who care” (Cracow, June 2012); Fourth Congress of Young Sociologists, “Dilemmas of the student community facing changes in higher education – resistance or adaptation” (Cracow, June 2013); Summer Critical Marathon, “Student agency in the educational system” (Rabka, June 2013).

> Global Dialogue's Turkish Team

We started our journey of translation with GD 2.4. At the beginning it was difficult to find and organize people who would be willing to be part of this adventure. But now, the editorial team is more or less settled. We live and work in different cities of Turkey. Despite the considerable geographical distances that separate us, we manage to keep our labor alive via digital media. That is the short history of Global Dialogue's Turkish Team. Below you can see who we are in more detail. ■



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