

# GLOBAL DIALOGUE

6.4

4 issues a year in 17 languages

## Sociology, Politics and Power

Anthony Giddens

## Greece's Economic Doldrums

Vassilis Fouskas,  
Maria Markantonatou,  
John Milios,  
Spyros Sakellariopoulos,  
Stratos Georgoulas

## Abortion in Latin America

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- > 40+ Years with International Sociology
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MAGAZINE



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**GD**



# > Editorial

## Looking Back, Looking Ahead

This issue continues to look backwards and forwards, reflecting on the last six years of *Global Dialogue*, and the swing from effervescent social movements – Indignados, Occupy, Arab Spring, etc. – to movements of the right that have installed authoritarian regimes in Egypt, Turkey, Poland, Hungary, Philippines, Argentina, and Brazil. This global trend may be traced in part to the storms of an international capitalism that runs roughshod over nation states, sapping governmental autonomy and discrediting official, electoral politics, leading to populism of both the right and the left – though increasingly of the right.

It is fitting, therefore, that we should open this issue with an interview with Anthony Giddens, theorist and publicist of what he once called the juggernaut of globalization. In his political guise, as a member of the House of Lords, he continues to champion the issues that concerned him as a sociologist – issues such as climate change and the implications of the digital age.

The underside of globalization can be found expressed in the fate of SYRIZA, the movement that nearly brought the EU to its knees but in the end, with power reversed, has brought Greece to its knees. Here we publish five articles that narrate the disastrous consequences of austerity imposed on Greece by the European Union, bringing untold poverty to Greece, but also untold riches to its upper classes.

In Latin America, in reaction to a decade or more of social democracy – the so-called pink tide – country after country succumbs to a rightward shift. Here we publish three articles on the winds of change as reflected in struggles around abortion. Innovative protest has led to clashes with the state in Argentina, Mexico and Peru. Especially interesting is the struggle over the use of common medication to avoid or interrupt pregnancy.

We have three perspectives on the fate of Arab social science. The discussion is sparked by the first report on the state of the discipline authored by Mohammed Bamyeh. He begins the symposium with a summary essay, followed by Seteney Shami's insistence on the importance of changing social science infrastructure. Idriss Jebbari poses critical questions about the implications of the Arab Spring and its denouement, raising the possibility that it continues to give vitality and new directions to social science.

We publish an extract of an interview with the well-known sociologist, George Ritzer, conducted by Labinot Kunushevc, a young and enterprising sociologist from Kosovo. Edward Tiryakian offers us a glimpse into the past with his reminiscences of ISA congresses, starting in 1974. We end with the introduction of the Japanese editorial team led by Satomi Yamamoto who inspires her students to devote themselves to the ardors of translation. In this connection, I'm delighted to announce the inauguration of *Global Dialogue*'s 17th language – Bengali – organized by a team of enthusiastic sociologists stationed in Dhaka (Bangladesh) and led by Habibul Khondker.

> **Global Dialogue can be found in 17 languages at the [ISA website](#)**

> **Submissions should be sent to [burawoy@berkeley.edu](mailto:burawoy@berkeley.edu)**



**Anthony Giddens**, leading British sociologist and theorist, now a politician in the House of Lords, recounts the challenges of being a sociologist in politics.



**Greece's Economic Doldrums.** Five articles describe the fallout of the high-level European negotiations on the terms of Greece's continued membership of the EU.



**Abortion in Latin America.** Three articles recount the struggles over abortion in Argentina, Mexico and Peru.



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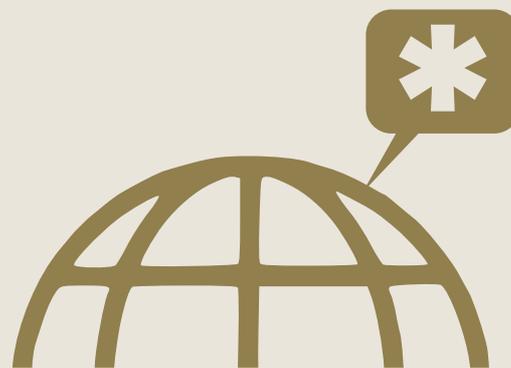
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# > Sociology, Politics and Power

## An Interview with Anthony Giddens



| Anthony Giddens.

**PK:** You have written on a wide range of topics: *structuration theory, historical materialism, late modernity and globalization, transformations of personal life and sexuality, the third way, climate change, the future of the EU, and have most recently started giving talks about the digital revolution. Would you say there is any kind of thread that runs through all or most of these clusters of your work?*

**AG:** My overall agenda has been to look at the nature of modernity – the emergence of the industrial order and its spread across the world, by far the most revolutionary and transformative period ever. To me history is substantially discontinuous: there is no evolutionary model of history that works. There are always situated people, doing things in particular environmental, social and geographical contexts, which condition what they do, but which they also respond to and reshape in a diversity of ways. I don't share a Durkheimian view of the social sciences, where we seem to appear more like passive agents, rather than the knowledgeable beings we all are. Erving Goffman – to my mind perhaps the greatest sociologist of all – emphasizes the skilled nature of what people do in everyday life, without necessarily knowing they do it. My ambition has been to relate that perspective to more macrostructural processes. That's not easy to accomplish but it seems crucial to me: a lot of sociology in the old days made it appear as though we were just the playthings of larger social causes. I wanted to uncover the subtlety of the

**Anthony Giddens** led the rebirth of British sociology in the 1970s with pioneering books on social theory that reinterpreted classics for the modern age. He dissected the question of agency in a structured world, the linking of micro-processes to macro forces, and the relevance of globalization for everyday life. More recently, he has addressed the consequences of the digital revolution and the threat to human existence posed by climate change. He is the author of more than 30 books, a former Director and Emeritus Professor of the London School of Economics and since 2004 a member of the House of Lords. In the interview that follows he reflects on the place of sociology in politics.

**Peter Kolarz** received his PhD in sociology from the University of Sussex (UK). He is a policy research consultant at Technopolis Group and has authored several policy studies and evaluations, including for UK ministries and the European Commission. His book *Giddens and Politics Beyond the Third Way: Utopian Realism in the Late Modern Age* (2016) is published by Palgrave Macmillan. The interview took place in the House of Lords (UK) on June 8, 2016.

relationship between these things. That's one of the reasons I have always been interested in the transformations of communications and connections. The transformation of everyday life and identity is as important as the more large-scale systems and problems that we try to deal with.

**PK:** *So if there were one element in your body of work that you would consider most important for those pursuing social and political change, what would it be?*

**AG:** It would be the format that we're talking about: the immense subtlety of the interaction between how people make their own lives and at the same time are creatures of the larger structures of which they are part. That's as true in politics as in other areas. Well-intentioned policies are never enough and can often rebound.

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**PK:** In my 2016 book *Giddens and Politics Beyond the Third Way*, I highlight your concept of utopian realism. Is that a notion you would still subscribe to?

**AG:** Utopian realism is a concept I still use. The overall challenge is to connect utopian idealism with realpolitik – on the face of it two opposites. A politics devoid of ideals would be without directive purpose. We have to envisage states of affairs on the other side of the status quo at any point in time. At the same time, ideals on their own are empty. The notion of utopian realism seems to me a handy way of sensitizing us to the role of ideals – of getting beyond the here and now on the one hand – but at the same time showing that they have purchase on reality on the other. It's a sensitizing device to think about politics and the world. In democratic politics, a party that devoted itself simply to winning elections wouldn't in fact win any elections; and nor would one that has lofty ideals but fails to show how they relate to the nitty-gritty of people's concerns and aspirations. It's very hard to square this circle, as we all know.

**PK:** Regarding your political work in the 1990s on globalization and the third way, what would be your verdict if you look at the political and policy landscape now? Is there anything from that debate that you would still consider important today that hasn't been adequately dealt with?

**AG:** It's hard to remember it now, but at that point the notion of globalization – meaning the increasing interdependence of individuals, organizations and states across the world – was quite new, especially in a political context. Trying to get political leaders to take it seriously was difficult initially. They would just look at me blankly. Then almost overnight everything changed. You couldn't stop them talking about it, even if often on a pretty crude level. Unfortunately, most politicians and also many social scientists have used the notion to refer primarily, or wholly, to the spread of global markets. The driving force of globalization then as now – with the extraordinary advance of the digital revolution – was above all communication, especially electronic communication.

I used the term "third way" with some reluctance. For me, it did not mean developing a political position "between" left and right, a sort of middle way. Still less did I see it as a version of neoliberalism, a belief in the infinite wisdom of unfettered markets. As I wrote in my book *The Third Way* in 1998, "the regulation of financial markets is the single most pressing issue in the world economy". I was then, and am today, a believer in the crucial importance of active government – which however should not be equated simply with the state, but can come also from a range of other agencies. I was then, and am now, a believer in developing mechanisms of global governance, deeply challenging though that is.

For me inequality was a key issue – as anyone who takes the trouble to look into what I've written can easily see. It's become even bigger now because of the extreme inequalities that have emerged at the top of the wealth pyramid and the failure to raise productivity, and therefore wages, for many

people working in low-level jobs. Thomas Piketty's book *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* has become a worldwide success because it provides a powerful interpretation of the structural reasons that have produced these glaring disparities, as well as some possible strategies for reducing them.

But of course politics is national and the world is global. So there remains a key thing: we still have the issue of how we can reconcile national politics with an inherently global world. A good deal of the sources of populism comes from that difficulty, and from the fact that everybody knows that national politicians don't have the power that they must claim they have.

**PK:** Do you see any way into cracking this disjuncture between national politics and global transformations and inequalities?

**AG:** Yes, there has to be one, and in my book on Europe<sup>1</sup> I spoke about the need to attack in a coordinated way the issue of tax havens, and to seek to reverse deindustrialization in the Western economies, leading to a recreation of manufacture, albeit in quite different form from the past. That overlaps with the digital revolution, because once money is electronic, it can be shifted around the world instantaneously – one of the factors helping to generalize tax havens. However by the same token it is more difficult to hide the vast swirl of corrupt money around the world than it was in the past. I think global public opinion has also turned strongly against the idea that you can simply conceal vast wealth on a global level and expect no-one to care about it.

As yet, effective (let alone democratic) global governance is a pipe dream, but we do have a range of agencies, groups of nations and international organizations trying to work together to deal with global problems. It'll be very interesting to see what happens as a result of the Paris climate change agreements: will they turn out to be empty or not? We don't know at this point, but they're certainly very different from anything that's been agreed on paper before. You can see them actually strongly affecting the position of the fossil fuel industries already, as the value of their stocks decline. There is at least the possibility of a truly global revolution in low-carbon energy taking place and a fundamental question is how rapidly or otherwise that will move. Marx famously said that "all that is solid melts into air," and perhaps it will be a version of that principle; we shall see. The new wave of globalization, brought about by the pace, scope and awesome speed with which the digital revolution is advancing, is a major influence here.

**PK:** This has been a frequent theme in your work: globalization as the contraction of time and space, brought about through information and communication technology, and the associated risks and opportunities. Do you think it is possible to steer these developments, or "ride the juggernaut of globalization", as you once said, in a reasonably constructive way, or do we just have to "go with it" and see what happens?

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**AG:** The Internet is an extraordinary phenomenon in terms of its impact. It is truly global beyond anything we ever anticipated. It links the intimacies of self through to the global. However it is only one element of the digital revolution, properly understood. The others are supercomputers and robotics. I have come to see supercomputers as the prime connecting link. The smartphone in your pocket is more powerful than a supercomputer of a few decades ago. This huge algorithmic power is available to the mundane user, just as it is to organizations, businesses and states. Almost every aspect of world society is being affected and transformed. This is a world in which almost everything is visible to everyone, since smartphones have become diffused even to some of the poorest societies of the world. Many of the migrants leaving oppressed areas to seek refuge elsewhere are using smartphones and GPS to track their desired routes. This is 21st century migration – just as IS, which mixes medieval levels of violence with a mastery of digital technology, is 21st century terrorism.

Many people see the digital revolution producing a fragmented world, but most of the innovations have been pioneered by state intervention, quite often with quasi-military purposes. The Internet appears ephemeral, but it has a physical existence in the shape of cables under the oceans and satellites in the sky – things that are ultimately guaranteed by states and state power. So I think the resurgence of geopolitics is not as surprising as others do. Giant corporations and ubiquitous advertising are also driving forces. This is a new environment, and many of the changes that affect us most are not mediated by a political process, but by power, either of states or of giant corporations. Nobody voted for a world in which pornography is freely available, in both senses of the word “free.” It may be innocuous, it may not. We don’t know because it is all so new.

**PK: Let’s talk about politics in the present then: do you see at the moment much of a constructive debate going on about the future of the left?**

**AG:** We have to try and do a new version of the center-left that begins sociologically from the changes in the fabric of world society and in everyday life just mentioned. The third way debate emerged from an analysis of the major changes transforming our lives at that time, and we have to go through a similar exercise today. We must look at the big changes in the world, see what traction one can get politically from those, see how they fit within the framework of national and transnational politics. What has happened within the Labour Party with the advent of Jeremy Corbyn to me is a hybrid – a digital younger generation directly involved, but ideas that in some part derive from years ago.

We on the left have to go forward to the future. We’re well beyond the so-called third way debate period now, and new ideas are urgently needed. I’m also against the idea that somehow everything just becomes fragmented – I don’t think that’s true. You’re still dealing with power politics, you’re still dealing with the grand issues, like how can we get more egalitarian societies in the context of global corporations, how can we recover ill-gotten gains that are stacked in tax havens? So power still counts for a lot. Collaboration between nations and therefore democratic politics within nations, and within the EU, counts for a lot.

**PK: That leads to my last question. More successfully than most, you moved from academe into formal politics. I’d be interested to hear your views on being a sociologist in politics, and relatedly, whether you have any particular advice for social scientists looking to ensure their work has political traction, who might be interested in influencing things that go on in places like this one.**

**AG:** Well, I’m in politics but not of politics. I was an academic and I stay an academic. For me the best milieu is the university since it’s where I feel most at home, and as I’ve tried to stress, ideas and down-to-earth research count for an enormous amount in the political sphere. One of the main problems for any academic involved in politics is that you can lose touch with both your constituencies. To academics you have betrayed your academic objectivity, while to politicians you’re someone who has no grasp of the demands of everyday political life. You can get stranded between the two worlds very easily.

The academic and political worlds are very different and not many people try to bridge them directly. Think tanks play an important mediating role between the academy and politics. They depend crucially on research done in universities. They are in the business of translating academic research into practical policy proposals – and have closer connections in the media than academics normally do. The top such organizations are often closely in touch with the government of the day, or with a wider spectrum of political actors. I’m not saying it is the only route, but when I decided to get a bit more directly involved with politics in the mid-1990s I approached the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) – one or two academics I knew were already involved with them. From there I found it possible to develop a wider network of people in the political sphere. The IPPR and the wider network around it had good connections in other countries, including the US. I never became a formal political adviser to anyone though, and have continued to see myself as primarily an academic. ■

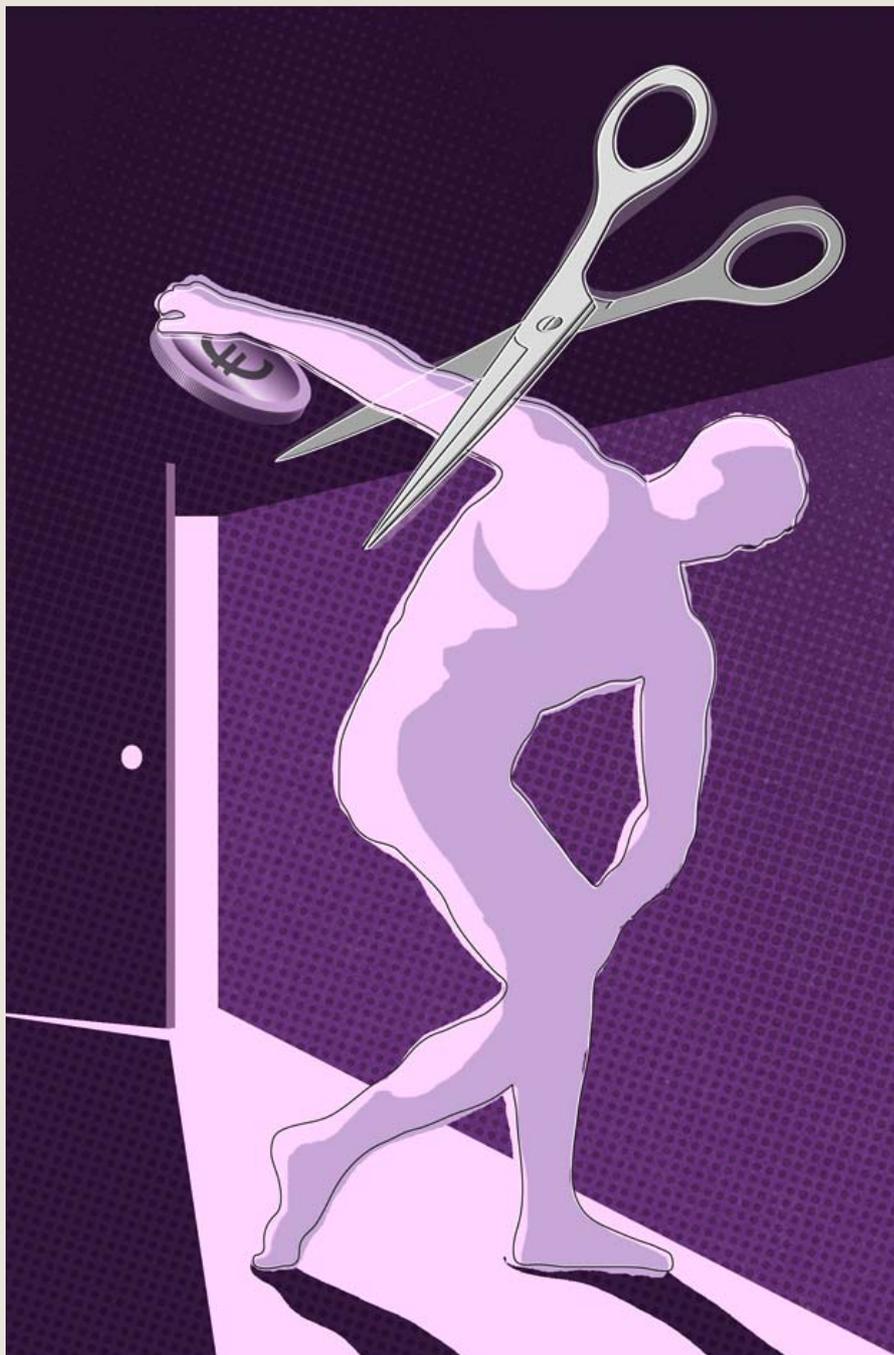
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<sup>1</sup> Giddens, A. (2014) *Turbulent and Mighty Continent* (second edition). Cambridge: Polity.

# > Greece: A History of Geopolitics and Bankruptcy

by **Vassilis K. Fouskas**, University of East London, UK

*Bankruptcy rather than discus symbolizes Greek history. Illustration by Arbu.*



**F**ounded in 1830 in the very southern cone of the Balkan Peninsula encompassing the Peloponnese, Southern Rumelia, Euboea and the complex of Cyclades islands, the Greek state resulted from an imperial geopolitical accident rather than from an economically-expanding, national industrial bourgeoisie. Instead of reflecting national-revolutionary processes led by industrial capital against a feudal mode of production – as was the case, for example, with Prussia's Junkers or Italy's Piedmont – a limited Greek state was perceived by Western imperial powers as a geostrategic necessity, as part of an effort to deter Russia and Egypt's territorial expansion in the Eastern Mediterranean. Geopolitical factors were paramount to Greece's founding – and today, geopolitical/geostrategic questions are of crucial importance in understanding the historical origin of the Greek debt crisis. Since the founding of the modern Greek state, Greece's important geographical position has been used by the West, not for the benefit of Greek society, but for its own advantage.

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### > Nineteenth Century Ties to Global Finance

In order to conduct the war of independence against the Ottomans, Greek elites borrowed large amounts of money from the West. In the 1820s, Greece received two loans of £800,000 and £2 million respectively. A primitive Greek state apparatus experienced its first bankruptcy in 1824-25, when it could not service the loans received from France and England. In 1832-33 another loan of 60 million (in golden francs) was contracted and entirely consumed for the expenses of the regency and the maintenance of the army. That loan led to another Greek bankruptcy in 1843.

Between 1827 and 1877-78, Greece was excluded from Western financial markets. During these five decades and beyond, governments resorted (rather unsuccessfully) to internal borrowing while encouraging investment projects from wealthy diasporic Greeks, whose comprador capital, together with that of Jewish and Armenian merchant classes, was prominent in the Ottoman Empire. With low levels of industrial development, and unable to pursue economies of scale due to its small size, Greece was marked by a backward peripheral economy and a deeply dependent polity throughout the nineteenth century; in 1893, Greece declared bankruptcy once again.

Yet, despite its dilapidated finances and its unsophisticated banking and industrial sectors, Greece was always viewed by Western powers through the prism of their imperial geopolitical interests. As the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires retreated, new spaces opened up for Russia and West European imperialism, now renewed by new actors such as Germany and Italy. Christian Balkan micro-states offered the West splendid opportunities, providing proxies in ongoing wars against the Ottoman Turks. By the end of the First World War, the Ottomans were pushed outside Europe, and the borders of the Balkans/

Eastern Europe and the Near/Middle East were re-drawn.

Conquering land and incorporating populations – not all of whom were Greek – Greece saw substantive industrial activity in the first two decades of the twentieth century under the liberal-nationalist leadership of Eleftherios Venizelos. Under British sponsorship, Venizelos led a losing proxy war against Kemalist-nationalist forces in Asia Minor. The aftermath was a total catastrophe for both Greece and modern Turkey. Although Greece saw the inflow of some 1.4 million Christian refugees, it achieved ethnic homogeneity for the first time in its history while Turkey, having lost its most enterprising merchant classes, relied heavily on a state-led authoritarian form of economic development, and failed to achieve ethnic or religious homogeneity.

Without a robust economic base, and with its ruling political elites closely tied to imperial interests, Greece could not capitalize on its geostrategic advantages. Thus, instead of its geographical location serving as an asset, it became a permanent liability. This translated directly into a balance of payment problem which, coupled with constant internal borrowing needed to fund a clientelistic and corrupt state machine, repeatedly produced unsustainable debts.

### > The Financial Crisis of 1929 and its Aftermath

In the wake of the 1929 global financial crisis, Greece suffered a fourth bankruptcy in 1932. Afterwards, the dictator Ioannis Metaxas pursued an import substitution industrialization policy, substantially improving the country's balance of payments. Moreover, as the imperial torch was passed onto the new global hegemon, the USA, the Cold War produced dividends: Greece's geopolitical importance guaranteed a massive inflow of American capital and loans while marginalizing Greece's domes-

tic left communist forces during "the Golden Age of capitalism."

Yet, once more, Greece remained peripheral and deeply dependent. Characteristically, in the 1960s, when the Governor of the Bank of Greece, Xenophon Zolotas, went to the US ambassador in Athens to ask for a loan, the ambassador replied by pointing to a geopolitical conflict. Effectively, the ambassador said that if Greece wanted a loan, then it had to accept Dean Acheson's plan for Cyprus – a plan secretly negotiated among NATO powers proposing partition of the island between Greece and Turkey, dispensing with Archbishop Makarios, who was at that time Cyprus's elected leader and a founder of the non-aligned movement. Thus, the geopolitical issue and the debt problem were dealt with through a straightforward swap. Such was the importance of Cyprus for NATO and the West that the USA, via the CIA, instigated a military dictatorship in Greece; democracy was only restored in 1974, when Cyprus was partitioned.

From the 1950s through the mid-1970s, Greece did not manage to catch up with the Western core. Yet throughout this period – and in contrast to the demand-led Keynesian policies of the West – Greece pursued policies that would later be termed neoliberal. Its economic development was supply-led and pro-monetarist, largely because of Cold War politics. Although the pro-Soviet Communist Left had been defeated during the Civil War (1944-49), it still enjoyed widespread popular support, which meant the conservative government feared any attempt to open up politics in civil society. Both political participation and demand-led economic policy remained stalled until 1974.

But after 1974, successive Greek cabinets under right-wing Constantine Karamanlis (1974-81) and socialist Andreas G. Papandreou (1981-89, 1993-96) shifted Greek policy-making to a demand cycle, replenishing the state machine with their party-po-



| Greek economy in ruins.

litical personnel, nationalizing major private enterprises and, especially in the 1980s, funding Greece's welfare state through unscrupulous borrowing (both external and internal) rather than through taxation. Even as it entered the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1981, Greece continued to pursue demand-led policies at a time when most of the West was already shifting to embrace neoliberal globalization/financialization.

Time and again, geopolitical considerations figure prominently: Greece was admitted to the EEC five years ahead of Portugal and Spain as part of a strategy to stabilize NATO's southern flank, at a moment when US fixed capital investment in Greece was drying out. In the 1980s, German and French capital increasingly dominated the Greek economy, and pushed the country to adopt a neoliberal agenda so that it could use Greece as a launching pad from which to spread financial services across the Balkans.

### > Deteriorating Economic Situation in the Eurozone

Over the following two decades, and especially after the country's entry to the eurozone in 2001, Greece's competitive position deteriorated sharply. Traditionally profit-making industries, such as textiles, disappeared. Financial and banking services dominated Greece's economy, spreading out to the Balkans and the Near East. Public assets were privatized one after another. The country's dependence on external and domestic borrowing increased to such a degree that, given the opening up of public assets to foreign capital acquisition and the loss of monetary sovereignty, one wonders whether the term "dependence" adequately describes the country's global economic standing.

When the global financial crisis trickled down to the eurozone, Greece suffered most, because it was and is the weakest link of the

neo-imperial financial chain of capital accumulation. Twenty years of neoliberal financialization, followed by acute austerity measures and bail-out agreements, have solved none of Greece's historical economic problems: industrial backwardness; institutional malaise; massive current account deficits and high debt to GDP ratios; massive budget deficits and fiscal problems. What is needed is robust public investment, an effort to build up new industrial and agricultural sectors based on niche production, such as solar energy and green growth. At the same time, an independent foreign policy could take advantage of the country's geostrategic position and its pacifist mission in the turbulent Balkans and the Near East. If this cannot happen within the eurozone as it is currently structured, then it is the eurozone that has the problem, not Greece. ■

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# > State-Imposed Austerity in Greece

by **Maria Markantonatou**, University of the Aegean, Greece



A street vendor collects his clothes outside the shutters of a shop in central Athens  
Petros Giannakouris/AP Photo.

Since its establishment, the eurozone has followed proposals influenced by the great liberal economist Friedrich Hayek, especially the insulation of monetary and fiscal policy from national politics and thus from democratic processes and control. This project has been realized through a supposedly independent central bank and an institutional framework which requires heterogeneous economies to adhere to hard currency rules – even if, as in the gold standard era, these rules do not work to all countries' advantage equally. The eurozone's market orientation has become more obvious since the beginning of the global crisis. Even if some political forces within the project of European integration were initially in favor of social welfare, since 2010 the management of the crisis, especially in relation to Greece, has signaled the defeat of the vision of a "social Europe."

Since 2010, a hard-core economic liberalism has been imposed on Greece, beginning with the country's exclusion from international markets. Over the past six years, governments of various political orientations (social democratic, right-wing, left-wing, technocratic, temporary, and coalitions)

have hastily imposed dozens of new laws and regulations within the framework of the so-called "Memoranda of Understanding," a series of agreements between Greece and its international creditors. In order for Greece to gain access to loans to service its payment and debt obligations, austerity measures have been imposed, along with business-friendly legislation, privatization, and further shrinking of the Greek welfare state – already shrunken since the mid-1990s.

Beginning with Memorandum I, through today's Memorandum III, fiscal discipline has become the new doctrine. Threats, pressure and more or less open psychological terrorism from creditors regarding the effects of a possible "Grexit" (Greek Exit from the European Union) have prevailed despite intensified resistance, involving hundreds of strikes, demonstrations, protests and occupations, and new social movements and political parties opposing austerity agreements.

As a result of the austerity policies, since 2010 Greece's GDP fell by more than 27%, a decline comparable to that of the US's GDP in the 1930s. Living standards have deteriorated drastically; wage and pension cuts have ranged

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from 20% to 50% along with increasing emergency taxation; large parts of the population have been driven into poverty. In the public sector, expenditure has been rapidly reduced, thousands were dismissed and recruitment frozen; at the same time, fast-track procedures allowed the government to privatize many remaining state assets. Public organizations – ranging from publicly owned enterprises, to schools, hospitals or even asylums – were closed or merged with little consideration. Remaining institutions were overloaded, and thus unable to meet increased social needs, leading to a radical degradation of public services, including health, education, and social welfare.

With unemployment soaring from nearly 9% in 2006 to 27% in 2014, Greece's working classes no longer see any prospects for a better future: it is clear that the economy will not recover soon. With more than half of Greece's young people unemployed, and with intensified precarization of working conditions, newcomers to the labor market face severe problems. Families are less able to support children and the elderly due to wage and pensions cuts – challenging the Greek familistic model and the residual welfare state that was never as fully developed as in Northern Europe. Although this familistic model is sometimes considered a symptom of an underdeveloped capitalism – a view that is reflected in the “modernizing” reforms set out in the EU Memoranda – there is currently no evidence that Greece is moving towards any kind of European welfare state. Treating Greece's familistic model and the residual welfare state as needing “reform,” creditors have insisted on deregulation and a shift to a market model – meaning that today, social protection remains available only to those who can afford it.

This deregulation has not been the outcome of any kind of dialogue between social actors, or any social consensus. National and supranational decisions taken in non-transparent ways through “emergency procedures” – representing both the creditors' priorities and those of domestic elites – have fused during the crisis, blurring the lines between the corresponding tasks and responsibilities of national and international political actors. Greek voters have been excluded from political decisions, with conferences of the Eurogroup and the Economic and Financial Affairs Council replacing parliamentary functions. The imposition of a “technocratic government” in 2011, with an international banker serving as prime minister, has been the high point of this process. Meanwhile, democratic tools were rendered ineffectual, with referenda cancelled or treated as cancelled throughout the crisis period.

Karl Polanyi's idea that the separation between economy and society is inherent to market liberalism is nowhere more identifiable than in Greece today. This separation constitutes a form of liberalization fostered by state intervention. Far from being a contradiction in terms, as Polanyi explained, the market system has always been a product

of deliberate state intervention. This pattern is evident also in the Memoranda agreements, which constitute perhaps the broadest and most detailed political interventions in the history of the European Union.

In Polanyi's rendition of nineteenth century capitalism, liberals blamed the crisis or malfunctioning of the self-regulating market on specific social groups. Similarly, in contemporary Greece, the prevailing narrative blamed society for the country's situation: laborers enjoyed overly high wages, public employees were too numerous, social benefits too generous, public property too large. Thus, supervised austerity has been presented as legitimate punishment, designed to end the general profligate behavior in order to help the market to recover.

Greece's crisis management is part of a strategy for the institutionalization of austerity throughout the eurozone. One of the instruments has been a Fiscal Compact which gives supposedly non-political European authorities enhanced surveillance of national budgets. But the crisis also brought to light the structural deficiencies and frailty of the European Monetary Union. As the eurozone's economies have been reoriented toward a competitive neo-mercantilism, far-right and neo-fascist forces have increased their electoral influence. Optimism about European integration has gradually given way to political appeals for more national and state sovereignty – concepts that, only a few years ago, were considered outdated. Proposals from the camp of “more Europe” and “more political integration” now sound rhetorical; the eurozone's elites are more concerned with strengthening economic liberalism, opposing any effort to ease austerity or fiscal discipline for countries under structural adjustment programs, or to increase funds for labor and public investment, much less for debt relief.

Punitive austerity, constitutionalized fiscal discipline and neoliberal, intra-European colonialism have worsened conditions for labor and created further precarization, deepening social deregulation and political instability in Greece and elsewhere. As long as no convincing plans offer a route out of austerity, asymmetries between national economies and class inequalities will increase, strengthening the sense among ordinary citizens in different countries that key decisions will be taken somewhere else, by some impersonal international elites; in that climate, Euroskepticism, anti-globalization demands and arguments for breaking up the eurozone will attract broader audiences. The question is what political form these demands and arguments will take, and which social forces will be dominant. Will those struggling for democratization and a break with neoliberalism prevail? Or will Europe's far-right be able to promote a deeper nationalist turn? Up to now, Polanyi's pendulum of the “double movement” suggests that market forces and their political representatives have emerged victorious, leaving democracy wounded and raising prospects of dark future scenarios. ■

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# > SYRIZA

## From Subversion to Pragmatism

by **John Milios**, National Technical University of Athens, Greece



| SYRIZA Rally in Athens.

**S**YRIZA was formed in 2004 as a fairly loose coalition, involving more than ten different left currents and political groups. Its formation grew out of a process that started in 2000, when most political groups that later composed SYRIZA coexisted in the Greek and European Alter-Globalization movement. In 2001, several thousand Greek leftists participated in the Genoa G8-Summit protest, possibly the largest European anti-globalization demonstration ever; many of those participants belonged to political organizations that later formed SYRIZA, a coalition that emerged as an assertive left pole in the political scene and the Greek parliament.

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Historically, SYRIZA derived from four major traditions: a communist tradition (marked by tensions between former pro-Soviet and Euro-communist groups); an extra-parliamentarian left tradition (marked by its own tensions, mainly between Trotskyist, Maoist and radical Euro-communist sub-traditions); the “Alter-Globalization movement” of the early 2000s; and Greece’s reformist social democratic tradition, especially after the crucial 2012 elections, when the Greek social democratic party (Panhellenic Socialist Movement – PASOK) disintegrated. From 4.6% in the 2009 national elections, SYRIZA rose to almost 27% in 2012. Meanwhile, PASOK plummeted, falling from almost 44% in 2009 to 13.8% in 2012. Since military rule ended in 1974, PASOK had alternated in power with right-wing Nea Demokratia, but in January 2015, PASOK collapsed to a mere 4.6% while SYRIZA became the ruling party with more than 36% of the vote.

SYRIZA continued to evolve. From 2012, when SYRIZA became the country’s major opposition party, it gradually adopted a reformist stance, shifting towards “pragmatism” and distinguishing between the “old SYRIZA of 4%” and the “new SYRIZA of 27%”; in this period, also, many former PASOK members joined SYRIZA. In the 2014 European Parliament elections, SYRIZA led with 26.5%, and seemed poised to form a government as the leading partner in the coming national elections. Calling on party members to consider “effectiveness” and “safeguarding our electoral victory,” many SYRIZA leaders started flirting with center-left politicians and small center-left political formations.

The official language of the party in the mass media, the slogans, and its former targets started changing. Its slogan, “For a Government of the Left”, was gradually replaced by a self-description as a “Government of National Salvation”; “Redistribution of Power, Wealth and Income to the Benefit of Labor” was replaced by the “Productive Reconstruction of the Country.” Programmatic positions – including democratic control of the society and the economy by the people, the development of self-directed, cooperative productive schemes and a non-market social economy – were put aside.

SYRIZA’s pre-electoral program promised an end to austerity policies and a deal with the country’s creditors to fund the Greek public sector; a few weeks after SYRIZA’s rise to power, those promises gave way to negotiations for a milder Memorandum, and a preliminary agreement signed by Minister of Finance Y. Varoufakis in February 2015. Varoufakis had never been a SYRIZA member or supporter of any left-wing current; soon after his appointment as a Minister, he publicly distanced himself from SYRIZA’s programmatic positions. He described the crisis as victimizing all social classes equally, calling for an export-orientated model and rejecting wage increases as undermining competitiveness. Thus, his oft-repeated public claim that 70% of the Memoranda’s measures would be beneficial for Greece, was no coincidence.

However, SYRIZA did not come to power with the promise of promoting 70% of the Memoranda’s measures. If it had, SYRIZA would probably not be included in the Greek parliamentary map today, let alone playing a key role. The vision reflected in Varoufakis’ statements redefined SYRIZA’s mandate, practically amounting to an attempt to reshape the social alliance which until then had supported the historical experiment of a left-wing government in Greece.

The February 2015 agreement made clear that the Greek government was negotiating within the European neoliberal austerity framework, merely seeking a fig leaf to conceal its compromises. This fig leaf involved, on the one hand, a moderate program to “end the humanitarian crisis” (by providing energy subsidies, food stamps for the extremely poor, etc.) and, on the other, a rejection of direct nominal reduction of wages and pensions, while maintaining preexisting directives regarding mass layoffs and low VAT coefficients for certain basic consumer goods. The government surrendered its pre-electoral program, instead seeking an agreement that would simply leave intact Greece’s neoliberal institutional and economic framework, hoping to avoid further austerity measures regarding low and medium incomes.

However, creditors never accepted these proposals, instead offering a plan to further finance Greece through deeper neoliberal policies, including new wage and pension cuts (the “Juncker Plan”). Through five more months of negotiations, the government never received any of the promised tranches from its creditors, although Greece continued paying its debt obligations to the European Central Bank (ECB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) until the final depletion of all public funds, and the delay, by necessity, of an IMF payment in late June, 2015, when the government practically ran out of cash. That week, Prime Minister A. Tsipras called for a referendum on the “Juncker Plan.” In anticipation of the vote, Greece had to limit withdrawals from Greek banks (“bank holiday” and “capital controls”) as the ECB refused to lend the banks additional cash while anxious depositors withdrew their savings.

The referendum campaign highlighted class and social divisions unseen for decades. Two “Greeces” fought each other: the poor, wage earners, the unemployed, and many small entrepreneurs demanded a “No” vote, while the upper classes agitated for “Yes.” With the banks closed, mass media propaganda warned that a “No” vote would lead to disaster, while employers pressured workers to vote “Yes”; nevertheless, almost two-thirds of Greeks (61.3%) voted “No.” But in Parliament, the government transformed the “No” into a “Yes” vote, working together with the conservative opposition. In July 2015, when SYRIZA signed a new Memorandum which was practically duplicating the “Juncker Plan,” it was described as the result of blackmail, a defeat in the struggle between Greece, its creditors, and the dogmatic European elite.

*Alexis Tsipras, at one point the darling of Europe's anti-austerity left.*



This interpretation echoes voices within SYRIZA that see the Memoranda either as an economic mistake which will not boost growth, or as an attack on Greece by “foreign interests.” Thus, SYRIZA’s final capitulation is presented as what some of the party members term a “heroic fall in an uneven battle,” which can be reversed in the future by equivalent government measures, such as efforts to combat corruption and modernize state structures. However, austerity is not just a “false policy” but a class strategy promoting the interests of capital over those of workers, the unemployed, pensioners, and the economically vulnerable; it offers fewer rights for labor, weak social protection, and low flexible wages, and no meaningful bargaining power.

Beyond certain limits, the subjection of all parts of social life to unfettered markets may create a political risk for the neoliberal establishment, since it can trigger uncontrolled outbreaks of social protest. This political risk was a strong weapon as the Greek working class and SYRIZA sought to stop austerity. But that weapon rested on a precondition: that SYRIZA would stick to its program, and retain its priorities, putting people before profits.

However, this strategy was abandoned since the victorious European Parliament elections in 2014, when SYRIZA turned toward a reformist-neoliberal path as a prerequisite for “growth and stabilization.” The roots of this shift lay not only in the new challenges as SYRIZA became a ruling party, but also in the political tradition of Greece’s post-Stalinist left. Its patriotic reformism was characterized by governmentalism – that is, the idea that forming a left-wing government is an adequate and sufficient condition for political change – and economism – which views social evolution as the result of the development of the productive forces, believed to make inevitable the transformation of relations of production.

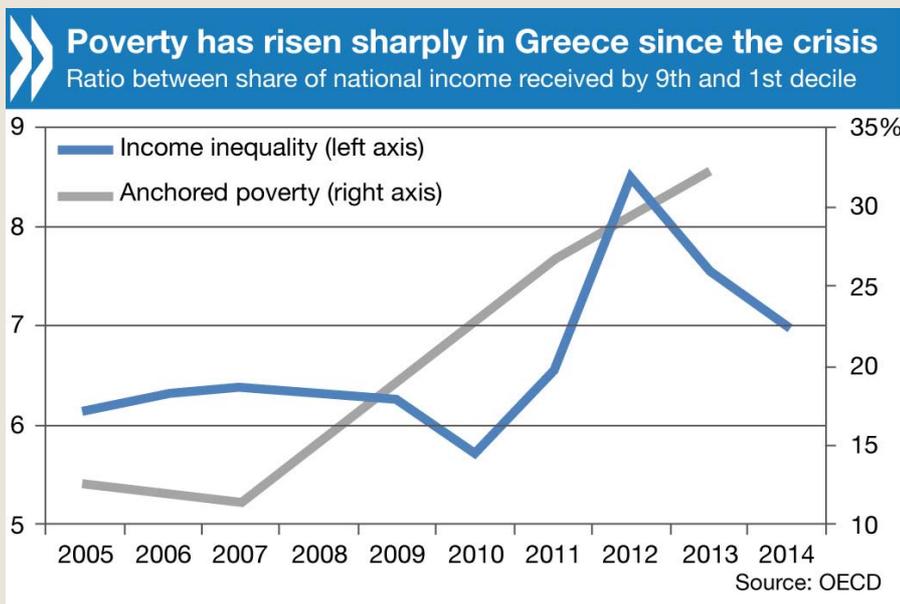
In signing a new Memorandum, SYRIZA agreed to clear the Greek institutional and labor market framework of “rigidities” – which in fact reflected workers’ previous victories. SYRIZA remains dominant on the Greek political scene, but today the party is better understood as a mainstream social democratic party, than as a movement of the radical left. ■

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# > Winners and Losers

## in the Greek Financial Crisis

by **Spyros Sakellariopoulos**, Panteion University, Greece



Graph showing rising poverty and income inequality since the onset of the Greek crisis.

**I**n early 2010, then Prime Minister George Papandreou concluded that the state of Greek public finances was so dire that the country could not hope to borrow on global markets, and thus could no longer service its public debt.

Contrary to prevailing notions, Greece's problems did not stem from high-wage Greek workers, nor was it simply the result of a spendthrift state: Greek wages are only about 83 percent of prevailing levels across the EU15 (i.e. the countries that were members of the European Union prior to the expansion of 2004), while as a percentage of the national GDP, per capita public expenditures are just about average for the bloc. Rather, the Greek financial crisis stemmed

from the strategy of the national ruling class and the way it integrated into the international division of labor, especially with Greece's accession to the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1981 and the European Monetary Union in 2002. The inability of Greek capitalism to compete on the terms set by the single currency led to a collapse in GDP with a consequent increase in the debt-to-GDP ratio.

In any case, in early 2010, in the hope of meeting loan payments to the French and German banks that held most Greek bonds – and in order to avoid bankruptcy, which would have transferred Greece's problem to the very heart of the European economy – it was decided that Greece would take out a loan from

the European Union, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

But before it could borrow the money, Greece would first have to adopt austerity measures. Between 2010 and 2016, three memoranda of economic cooperation were implemented, a medium-term program and eight packages of special measures – which included, among other measures, cuts in public employees' salaries, cuts in pensions for the elderly, reduced minimum wage levels (from 751 euros to 586 for most Greek workers, and to 490 for those under 25 years), an increase in the VAT from 19% to 24%, extensive taxation of real estate, new flexible forms of employment, major cuts in

public sector employment, regressive tax increases, and much more.

How effective were these policies? For a start, the public debt – the cause for which all these measures were adopted – has increased, in both absolute and relative terms. From €300 billion at the end of 2009, Greek debt rose to €314.4 billion by the end of 2015; indeed, because the Greek economy shrank in this period, national debt as a percentage of GDP skyrocketed from 126.7% to 179%. Meanwhile, unemployment rose from 9% in 2009 to 23.5% in May 2016, while GDP fell from €237.4 billion in 2009 to €179 billion in 2015.

These statistics reveal the failure of all the measures taken. But a closer look reveals that the policy has produced winners and losers. On the losing side are the working classes (wage earners and small and medium-sized agricultural producers). It is worth noting, too, that only 15% of the unemployed today receive unemployment benefits; before the crisis, 40% of Greek unemployed were able to claim benefits. The percentage of those unable to meet their basic needs rose from 11% to 20%; today, more than one million Greeks live in households where nobody works, or where those with jobs work less than three months a year. 50% of pensioners receive a pension of less than €500 per month. From 2009 to 2015 the national poverty rate rose from 27.6% to 35.7%.

Even those who kept their jobs lost income. The share of wages in the GDP fell from 64% to 54%, and overall, wage earners have lost a third of their purchasing power. The average purchasing power fell from 84% of the average for the EU15 to 65%.

Between 2008 and 2015, 427,000 Greeks emigrated, the great majority university-educated. Of the 849,289 businesses active in Greece in 2008, only 692,286 were still active in 2014. And inequality increased: the ratio between the income of the richest 20% and the poorest 20% went from 5.6/1 to 6.6/1.

The decline in living standards is also evident in Greek demographic data. Health expenditure fell by 25%. Between 2011 and 2014, the most recent year for which statistics are available, there were fewer births than deaths. Infant mortality rose by 51%.

But who are the winners? Among the biggest winners are the foreign banks, who at the outset of the crisis found themselves holding a large proportion of the Greek debt. In June 2010, the total public and private debt to foreign banks stood at \$252.1 billion, with a total of 75.1% owed to French (\$83.1 billion), German (\$65.4 billion) and US (\$36.2 billion) banks. By December 2010, the sum owed to foreign banks had been slashed by 42%, down to \$145.7 billion (\$56.7 billion to French banks, \$34 billion to German banks, \$7.3 billion to American banks). Under the first memorandum, the banks gained time to sell off a large portion of the Greek debt – a pattern that would become even more evident in December 2011, by which time the foreign banks had reduced their exposure to Greek debt to \$35 billion. By the 2012 elections, foreign banks were almost entirely disencumbered of the Greek debt.

As for the winners inside Greece: In 2010, the country's most profitable companies made profits on the order of €2.2 billion; by 2014 this had risen to €10.2 billion. The 300 companies

with the largest sales (excluding the financial sector) between 2009 and 2014 increased their turnover from 53.6% of the total to 59.8% and their assets from 42.2% to 44.0%.

Last but not least: in 2011, 445 people in Greece held fortunes in excess of €30 million, amounting in total to €50 billion, about 24% of GDP. By 2014, that privileged group had grown slightly: 565 people held personal fortunes that amounted to a total of €70 billion or 39.5% of GDP for that year. In 2014, that elite group included eleven Greek billionaires, with total assets of €18 billion, up from nine in 2013 with assets of €16 billion.

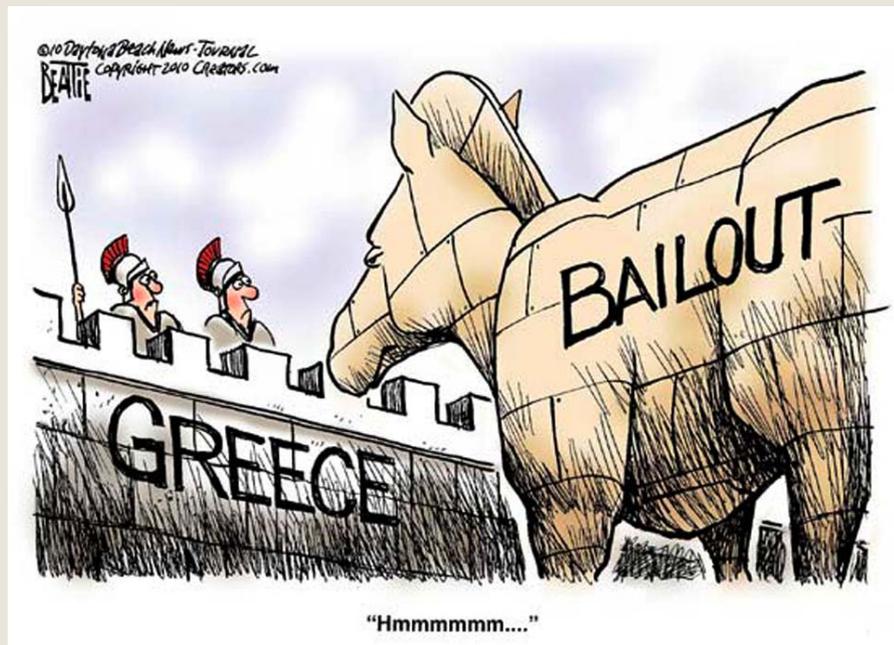
These developments are reflected in the country's patterns of social stratification. According to a recent survey today the Greek bourgeoisie accounts for 2.8% of GDP (down from 3.2% in 2009); the rich rural strata 0.6% (down from 0.7%); the traditional petty bourgeoisie 7.0% (down from 7.3%); the new petty bourgeoisie 21.9% (down from 29.5%); the medium rural strata 1.2% (down from 1.9%); the poor rural strata 7.3% (down from 7.4%); and the working class 59.2% (up from 49.1%).

Whatever the reasons for these policies, the result bears a clear social stamp. Large foreign banks, under the guardianship of international financial institutions and their home countries, took care of their own interests. Despite losses linked to the economic liquidation of some sectors, the country's economic elite has enlarged its wealth, and increased its profit by virtue of the intensified exploitation of the local working class and the contraction of small to medium business. ■

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# > Greek Bailouts as State-Corporate Crime

by **Stratos Georgoulas**, University of the Aegean, Greece



| Who gains from bailouts?

**T**he international academic community has recently sought to define “state-corporate crime” – that is, illegal or socially-harmful actions created through the interaction of political institutions of governance and economic production and distribution.

From a political and a research point of view, the term corresponds to what is often called “corruption,” but there are two important differences. First, the effort to criminalize these acts seeks to protect human rights and prevent social harms; these acts involve far more loss of life, physical or other harm, and loss of property or money, than more commonly recognized criminal acts like murder, attempted murder, theft, etc. Second, the roots of this crime are closely tied to ordinary political and social action: the interdependence of the state and capital – either by directly converting public money into private contracts or by providing facilities and promoting specific policies – lies at the heart of our capitalist society.

Moreover, these state-corporate crimes often involve a further dimension. Thus, “crimes of globalization” add an interesting dimension, when supranational institutions,

such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, cause real social harm to entire populations. The top-down policies and economic programs consistent with the interests of powerful countries and multinational companies have drastic effects on human lives, mainly in “developing countries,” when programs such as “Debt Repayment” lead to political instability, then to paternalistic or clientelist systems of governance, that then spawn organized crime, corruption, authoritarianism, state repression, use of torture, and even the possibility of genocide.

In Greece, where we have been living under the implementation of Policy Memoranda defined by government agreements and supranational organizations, such as international lenders, we have seen human rights violations and widespread social damage. The measures implemented under “bailout programs” have directly affected living conditions, violating the human rights which Greece is obliged to respect, protect and promote under domestic, regional and international law. The drastic adjustments imposed on the Greek economy and society have brought about a rapid deterioration of living standards and are incompatible with social justice, social co-

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hesion, democracy, or human rights. What human rights have been violated? Let us go through some examples.

**The Right to Work.** Labor market reforms imposed by the Memoranda have severely undermined the right to work in Greece, causing grave institutional breakdown. Destroying longstanding collective bargaining agreements and labor arbitration resurrected individual employment agreements as the prime determinant of employment conditions. Successive wage cuts and tax hikes brought massive layoffs, eroded labor standards, increased job insecurity, and created widespread precariousness, pushing women and young workers into over-flexible low-paid jobs. The minimum wage was reduced to a level below Greece's poverty threshold.

**The Right to Health.** The 2010 Economic Adjustment Program limited public health expenditure to 6% of GDP; the 2012 program required reducing hospital operating costs by 8%. Hospitals and pharmacies experienced widespread shortages while trying to reduce pharmaceutical expenditure from €4.37 billion in 2010 to €2 billion by 2014.

**The Right to Education.** Specific measures in the Memoranda cut the recruitment of teachers, forced transfers of teachers through labor mobility schemes, reduced teachers' pay, merged and closed schools, increased the number of students per classroom and extended weekly teaching hours. Teaching posts have been left unfilled, 1,053 schools were closed and 1,933 merged between 2008 and 2012. Budget cuts left many schools without heating.

**The Right to Social Security.** The Memoranda-imposed spending cuts diminished social benefits, including pensions, unemployment benefits, and family benefits. Since 2010 pensions have been cut on average by 40%, falling below the poverty line for 45% of pensioners.

**The Right to Housing.** Greece abolished social housing in 2012, as a "prior action" before offering a rental subsidy to 120,000 households, and housing benefits for elders. New laws and regulations allow rapid eviction procedures, without judicial trial. In 2014 over 500,000 people in Greece were either homeless or lived in insecure or inadequate housing.

**The Right to Self-Determination.** The wholesale privatization of state property, especially through "fast-track" procedures, violates constitutional rights and provisions which guarantee the principle of popular sovereignty, property, and protection of the environment.

**The Right to Justice.** Creditor-imposed measures require Greece to reform its judicial system, including substantially increasing fees. Recourse to courts has become financially difficult for citizens – especially when they have experienced drastic cuts in salaries and pensions.

**The Right to Free Expression.** Since 2010 legislative and administrative measures have restricted freedom of expression and assembly – the right to free expression being systematically and effectively challenged, and the freedom of assembly violated. The authorities have prevented legitimate protest against Memoranda-driven policies, prohibiting public meetings, repressing peaceful demonstrations, making pre-emptive arrests, questioning minors, and torturing antifascist protesters – often in collaboration with vigilantes from the proto-fascist Golden Dawn party.

Today, 23.1% of the Greek population live below the poverty line; the relative poverty rate almost doubled between 2009 and 2012, and nearly two-thirds are impoverished as a consequence of austerity policies. Severe material deprivation increased from 11% of the population in 2009 to 21.5% in 2014; in 2013 over 34% of children were at risk of poverty or social exclusion. The measures have dramatically worsened inequality, with the poorest 10% of the population losing an alarming 56.5% of their income.

At the same time that Greek society has experienced human rights violations and widespread social damage, the legislative agencies have created a "policy of privileges," further enabling corruption. This legislative initiative is multifaceted and leads to criminal immunity regimes, either in the form of a preventive exclusion of prosecution for specific individuals and groups – especially in contracts or public concessions, such as Siemens, armament programs, and privatization – or in the form of repressive legislative intervention in already pending criminal trials involving the limitation, suspension or termination of pending prosecution. Ironically, even as creditors urge Greece to crack down on tax avoidance, they seek to abolish a 26% withholding tax on cross-border transactions.

State-corporate crimes go beyond the individual criminal or deviant act as they become not the exception but the rule, the main feature of an era where anomie prevails – that is, where existing collective representations and the collective consciousness have been weakened. Such state-corporate collusion now represents the "spirit of the times" of our modern era.

We are facing an urgent challenge: What can be done to combat out-of-control state-corporate crime in a time when – much like the fascist period of the early twentieth century – formal social control, modern institutions, and scientific discourse are distorted by the prevailing structures of governance, production, and civil society?

It is important for us to continue to dream of a better world. Besides, although this symbiosis of state and business has been in existence for a long time, it has never been fully accepted. This is a dynamic process, and as scientists and citizens we should continue to expose it and question it. ■

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# > Argentina's Abortion Activism in the Age of Misoprostol

by **Julia McReynolds-Pérez**, University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, USA



On a statue of the Virgin, Women on Waves propagate their message – “Your Decision, Safe Abortion” – and offer a phone number for hotline advice.

**A**n earthquake is rocking abortion debates in Latin America, and at its epicenter is a small white pill. Misoprostol’s availability in the region has changed the practice of clandestine abortion, with far-reaching impact. New self-help activist strategies – some of which involve feminists and health professionals acting together – have changed political debates around abortion, as activists seek to make abortion more accessible and more visible, despite persistent opposition to its legalization.

Abortion has long been illegal throughout Latin America, the world’s most Catholic region, yet the practice has also long been widespread. Across Latin America, rich women have quietly accessed safe, expensive clandestine abortions in the private offices of trained physicians, while poor women have risked their lives in back-alley procedures.

This dual system of clandestine abortions kept the procedure and political debates about its illegality largely out of the public eye, but the terrain of abortion practice and politics has shifted since the early 1990s. Misoprostol, a synthetic prostaglandin approved by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for the treatment of ulcers, has been sold for that purpose in pharmacies across Latin America since then. But misoprostol also happens to cause uterine contractions, making it a powerful tool for clandestine abortion. In countries where abortion is legal, misoprostol is usually taken in combination with another drug, mifepristone, for medical abortions in the first trimester. Importantly, even when taken by itself or without medical supervision, misoprostol is much safer than older methods of back-alley abortion, which all-too-often involved wire coat hangers or knitting needles.

Between 2012 and 2015, I conducted ethnographic research in Argentina, seeking to understand how this new pharmaceutical technology was changing the politics and practices of abortion. In Argentina – indeed, throughout Latin America – misoprostol’s relatively-easy availability has created opportunities for innovative activist strategies. Many abortion activist groups were spurred

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Misoprostol – the widely distributed drug used to induce abortion.

to action by transnational campaigns. In 2001, Dr. Rebecca Gomperts launched “Women on Waves,” bringing a medically-equipped ship to international waters off the coast of nations that had banned abortions, inviting women onboard for safe abortions. After this campaign, she created the ongoing “Women on Web,” where people from around the world can order the full medication abortion regimen; the organization mails unmarked packages directly to women who live in countries where abortion is illegal. Gomperts’ organization also supports abortion hotlines around the globe, so that women in need can call for detailed instructions on how to induce abortions using misoprostol.

While Dr. Gomperts’ transnational efforts attracted international media, less attention has been paid to the local activist strategies that have surged in response to these new possibilities. Across Latin America, young feminist activists are taking the lead to make safe abortion more accessible to poor women using misoprostol: some groups provide information, others provide pharmaceutical abortion services, and some medical professionals have begun to play an activist role from within the public health system.

Lesbianas y Feministas por la Descriminalización del Aborto (Lesbians and Feminists for the Decriminalization of Abortion, or LFDA) has emerged in the past seven years as one of Argentina’s most prominent abortion activist groups. LFDA started by setting up a safe abortion hotline with support from “Women on Web,” and now provides information about safe abortion to women from across Argentina. Additionally, starting in 2013, LFDA opened face-to-face abortion counseling clinics throughout the city of Buenos Aires, where activists provide complete information on how to safely induce abortion, in simple, non-technical language. Clients are expected to acquire misoprostol themselves, either from local pharmacies or on the black market.

LFDA, like other activist groups providing similar services, describe their work as protected by “freedom of information” norms, and by a public health imperative of “harm reduction.” The former claim is based on the fact that they provide only information that can be easily obtained through many other means; because they don’t provide the pills, these activists do not provide a medical service, only information. The “harm reduction” claim borrows language from public health programs like needles exchange programs, to claim a broad societal obligation to address the public health dangers of illicit activities.

Other activists have gone even further. Since around 2014, a loose association of local activist groups launched a national movement known as “Socorristas en Red” (First Responders Online). This online network provides not only information, but also what they call *acompañamiento* (accompaniment), providing misoprostol or the full course of pharmaceutical abortion drugs (acquired through transnational activist contacts), as well as ongoing support through cellphone contact throughout the process of home abortion. Because these groups provide abortion drugs and not just information, most keep a lower profile. Groups in the liberal capital city of Buenos Aires operate relatively openly, but in more conservative provinces, activists must rely on their clients’ discretion to avoid prosecution.

Finally, some health professionals have begun to change Argentina’s public health system from within, often by offering what they call “pre- and post-abortion counseling.” Like LFDA activists, these services provide detailed information for inducing abortion using misoprostol, skirting the issue of legality by leaving it to the women to obtain misoprostol, and to undertake the actual abortion in their homes. In a handful of clinics, these activist professionals are backed by municipal health ministries or by their immediate supervisors’ benign neglect. A few clinics actu-



ally process all abortions as “legal pregnancy terminations based on legal indications,” arguing that taking an unwanted pregnancy to term is an inherent health risk – so that all abortions should be considered legal based on the penal code provision that allows abortion to protect a woman’s health. They provide abortion services directly to their patients. But even outside those more explicit cases, many health professionals told me in interviews that they provide misoprostol counseling behind closed doors, and sometimes write out prescriptions for the drug while swearing women to secrecy.

There is no way to get an accurate estimate of how many doctors might be involved in this kind of activism, though they are certainly a minority in a hierarchical profession that is still largely controlled by a socially-conservative, Catholic old-boys’ network. But the broader impact of these activist practices is obvious – especially because activist groups gather demographic and health data from their clients, which is then published as a way to make visible the public health issue of illegal abortion. Reports made available online, papers presented at national conferences of medical professionals, and shadow reports filed with the United Nations’ Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) have made the practice of abortion far more visible than it once was through what I have called “feminist epidemiology.”

Importantly, Argentina’s activism around access to medication abortion reflects a failure on the part of the state to aggressively police the country’s abortion laws, which have remained on the books despite changing practices. Indeed, there has been little obvious political will to actively prosecute a practice that is widespread – especially since enforcement efforts might create sympathy for vulnerable young women, who would be seen as victims of an overzealous police force. According to data compiled by activists, tens of thousands of women have been helped

to terminate pregnancies without risking their lives. Meanwhile, the broader Argentine feminist movement continues to demand the legalization of abortion on demand.

Argentina’s recent political shifts, however, have created new uncertainty for feminist activists. In late 2015 a right-wing political party came to power, replacing President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner’s center-left government, which had seemed happy to look the other way while these activists expanded access to safe procedures.

Recently, international human rights groups have condemned Argentina’s decision to punish a young woman for murder in the conservative northern province of Tucumán, after she sought help at a local hospital for a miscarriage. Because misoprostol is widely used, and because its use cannot be proven after the fact, conservative doctors tend to suspect that any patient who experiences a miscarriage has used the drug. In this case, Belén (a pseudonym used in media reports) was sentenced to eight years in prison, a daunting sentence indeed – especially since no evidence can prove whether the miscarriage was induced. By early 2016, she had already spent two years in prison awaiting trial. When the lengthy sentence was handed down, abortion and feminist movements mobilized marches across Argentina calling for Belén’s release. Under mounting pressure, in August 2016, Tucumán’s provincial Supreme Court ordered Belén to be released pending an appeal.

Will the shift in Argentina’s broader politics lead to a backlash against abortion activism, with a crackdown on abortion activists – and many more Beléns? While this new right-wing turn is certainly worrisome, it is clear that these activists do not intend to back down or be intimidated: over the past two decades, their efforts have permanently altered Latin America’s political dynamics around abortion, and activists hope that the genie cannot be put back in the bottle. ■

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# > Mexico's Reversal of Abortion Rights

by **Susana Lerner**, El Colegio de México, Mexico, **Lucía Melgar**, Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México, Mexico and **Agnès Guillaume**, Institut de recherche pour le développement, France



The Mexican movement to legalize abortion.

In 2007, Mexico's Federal District (*Distrito Federal*, recently renamed Mexico City) legalized abortion in the first twelve weeks of pregnancy – a victory for civil society, which had been fighting since the 1990s to give women the right to choose. In most of Mexico, however, restrictions on abortion have been tightened.

Since 2008, new legal and constitutional reforms seeking to “protect life from the moment of conception” have been passed in eighteen of Mexico's states, most recently in Veracruz in July 2016. What drives these so-called reforms, and with what implications?

The debates and main actors involved in Mexico's abortion discussion must be understood within the broader context of population politics. Since the 1970s, the Mexican government has promoted family planning programs and other programmatic initiatives to reduce fertility rates, offering women various options to control family size,

and to improve family health, life, and wellbeing. In spite of its success in reducing its population growth rate, in the absence of broader social and economic policies to support these efforts, the material conditions of the population did not improve.

In the 1990s, national policy shifted to “focus on reproductive health,” after the Mexican government reaffirmed the Program of Action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development. This agreement, signed in Cairo, prioritizes sexual and reproductive rights, arguing that abortion practiced under inadequate conditions constitutes an important public health problem, calling on signatory states to allow women access to safe abortions – including the removal of legal obstacles and the loosening of anti-abortion laws.

Over the past twenty years, feminists and academics have pushed Mexico's Federal District to legalize abortion, culminating in Mexico

City's moderate and gradualist reform. In 2007, the local legislature of the Distrito Federal voted to allow abortion through the twelfth week of pregnancy (although, except in some specific situations, abortion remains illegal through the later trimesters of pregnancy). Importantly, by defining pregnancy as “the part of the process of human reproduction beginning with the implantation of the embryo in the endometrium,” the Distrito Federal's reform avoids any discussion of when and whether human life begins. Under the 2007 law, doctors may refuse to perform abortions as “conscientious objectors,” but by law, health institutions must include doctors who are not objectors on their staff. Liberal parties, including the ruling PRI, voted in favor, while the right-wing PAN voted against.

By compelling public health services that fall under the City's exclusive authority to offer free and safe abortion services, the law guarantees access for all women to the legal termination

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of pregnancy. Importantly, the law allows pregnant women freedom to decide what to do: women may continue a pregnancy, give the child up for adoption, or terminate the pregnancy, once informed consent is signed. Further, they are guaranteed access to contraceptive methods to prevent additional unplanned pregnancies (and thus, to avoid subsequent abortions).

Thus, Mexico City's reform frames unsafe abortion as an issue of public health, social justice, and discrimination. Above all, it protects human rights, recognizing the right of a woman to make her own decisions regarding her body and her sexual and reproductive autonomy. Over the past nine years, this reform has granted access to safe abortions to over 160,000 women – including women from other Mexican states, who can travel to Mexico City for the procedure.

Conservative forces – led by the Catholic hierarchy and supported by Evangelical and other Christian denominations – did not take long to react. As in much of the world, conservatives insist that the “defense of life” requires subordinating the liberty and lives of women to the supposed rights of the embryo, which they consider a “person” – refusing to recognize the reality of unsafe abortions, or the consequences of those abortions on women's health or family life. On the other side, feminist groups defend the primacy of women's rights and a universal right to health, asserting that motherhood must be entered into freely and voluntarily, and insisting that the principle of separation of church and state must remain central to Mexico's democracy.

As Mexico City began to allow greater access to first-trimester abortion, organizations like *Provida* (Pro-Life), *Profamilia* (Pro-Family), and the Catholic Bar Association of Mexico insisted that “life begins at the moment of

conception and from that moment a human being with rights exists.” Anti-abortion activists have tried multiple strategies, including constant street protests, calls to action by bishops in various cities, direct action to block women from having abortions, lobbying, and litigation. Similarly, they have vehemently opposed same-sex unions, which have already been legalized, and fought against family planning and sex education in public schools. More subtly, they have successfully eliminated the term “sexual and reproductive rights” and references to a gender perspective from many public national and international documents.

In 2008, conservative groups appeared before the Supreme Court to challenge the reforms. Although the Court found the legalization of abortion constitutional, its ruling was based on three additional findings. First, the Court established the right of a woman over her own body – a right which implies that the state must safeguard women's human rights so that they may make decisions about their physical and mental health, and about their lives. Second, however, the court ruled that the right to life is neither an absolute right, nor a “super-right” above other rights established in the constitution and international treaties; thus, when rights enter into conflict with each other, the legislature must weigh the alternatives. Finally, based on that second finding, the Court established the authority of local legislatures to make changes in local penal codes.

In the wake of the Supreme Court's ruling, conservative groups turned to state legislatures, seeking to modify state constitutions or penal codes, claiming to “protect life from the moment of conception” or “fertilization,” and penalizing women who have abortions.

By mid-2016, with support from the Catholic Church and from legislators of all political parties, including some leftists, anti-abortion forces had accomplished this goal in eighteen Mexican states. Because of these new laws, Mexican women are currently serving time in prison, sometimes charged with “homicide aggravated by kinship” (that is, with infanticide), sometimes sentenced to up to 20 or 30 years in prison. Others have been subject to psychiatric interventions, as if exercising one's autonomy were a mental illness. These new punishments come on top of persistent failure on the part of many Mexican states to follow the country's legal norms, which permit legal and safe abortions in some situations, such as in cases of rape (the only indication that is legally valid throughout the country), in cases of fetal abnormalities, or when there is a threat to the life or health of the woman.

As of mid-2016 the debate still involves two contrasting positions. Conservative groups argue for a “defense of life,” subordinating women's lives and freedom to the life and alleged rights of the embryo, which is considered a legal persona. These groups fail to consider the consequences of unsafe abortion, such as maternal death and illness or its impact on the family. Liberal groups, on the other hand, advocate for the primacy of women's rights, freely-chosen motherhood, the universal right to health, and demand respect for the secular state, a key concept in Mexico's constitution.

The long struggle for women's rights in Mexico continues. Too often, feminist and women's NGOs have been reactive rather than proactive when conservative forces aim at criminalizing abortion. This dynamic must change. In our view, civil society must reassert its voice, and demand the liberalization and legalization of abortion at the national level. ■

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# > Abortion as Violence

## A Peruvian Struggle

by **Erika Busse**, University of the Pacific, Peru and member of ISA Research Committees on Migration (RC31), Women and Society (RC32), Social Movements, Collective Action, and Social Change (RC48) and Family Research (RC06)



The "Great March for Life" against abortion in Lima, Peru on March 23, 2013.  
Photograph: Paolo Aguilar/EPA.

**I**n mid-August 2016, thousands of Peruvians took to the streets of Lima, mobilized by the slogan "Ni Una Menos" ["Not One Less"]. Among the protestors were Peru's recently-elected president, survivors of physical and sexual violence, members of women's and feminist organizations, political party affiliates, and ministers and congressional representatives. Denouncing

violence against women, the march has been described as one of Peru's most important social mobilizations of the last 40 years, as women and men, girls and boys, parents and children, grandparents and their grandchildren marched side by side.

The catalyst for the demonstration was a video showing a woman being dragged by her hair by her ex-

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boyfriend in the reception area of a hotel. The case, however, was dismissed; the judge concluded that the woman's injuries suggested no intent to rape or murder.

Under the slogan "When one is hit, all of us are hit," the collective "*Ni Una Menos*" called on Peruvians to protest violence and discrimination against women. Even the organizers were surprised by the massive response – a response that paralleled similar recent mobilizations across Latin American cities, all demanding an end to blatant violence against women and a broken system of justice. For many Latin Americans, these demonstrations indicate a moment of hope: things are changing and women's issues, particularly violence against women, are at the forefront of public consciousness.

The focus on violence against women – and on the impunity granted to aggressors – marks a shift in the way Latin American feminists frame demands around reproductive rights. By reframing the debate about abortion in terms of "sexual violence against women (and minors)," and by highlighting "forced motherhood" (or forced clandestine abortion), feminists have reframed the debate to focus on violence from the state on top of sexual violence itself – in contrast with the previous framing, which focused on reproductive rights as a matter of individual choice.

The violence against women frame combats ideas that abortion is a result of a woman's "selfish" desire after promiscuous behavior, instead focusing on violence against women as a moral issue. To oppose the campaign would be to suggest that violence against women doesn't exist, or doesn't matter. This potentially powerful framing does have the downside

of casting women as victims, potentially reinforcing longstanding gender stereotypes and hierarchies. Nonetheless, the switch from framing access to abortion in terms of women's rights, to linking it to the elimination of sexual violence seems to have expanded popular support for efforts to decriminalize abortion in case of rape.

Instead of focusing simply on the state to decriminalize abortion, activists are also appealing to civil society, to professionals like doctors and to members of religious groups, seeking to change the way Peruvians think about women's rights and violence against women. This broad shift from a reproductive rights framing to a focus on sexual violence has provided the basis for a broader movement, bringing in other groups, including LGBT activists, women's grassroots organizations, Catholic groups, youth, and celebrities. Decriminalizing abortion in cases of rape seems to have gained support in the larger Peruvian society rather than just among a "few" feminists. The campaign combines a bottom-up approach (especially, collecting signatures from ordinary Peruvians) and a top-down approach (a TV advertising campaign involving celebrities, artists, and politicians, as well as ordinary citizens). Together with collectives like *Alfombra Roja* (Red Carpet), the campaign has recruited supporters at demonstrations and fairs. In a context in which there is a low trust in state institutions, the campaign's emphasis on citizen involvement underscores the commitment of activists to making democracy work.

So far, this new framing has failed to generate a strong response from legislators. In Peru, for example, an attempt to change the Peruvian constitution to permit abortion in cases of rape failed to gain traction; similarly, a

Congressional bill that would have decriminalized abortions in case of rape was shelved. Apparently, while most legislators sympathize with the victim of physical violence that produces bruises and broken bones, when physical violence (rape) results in pregnancy, the question of whose rights should prevail becomes a moral issue.

Even so, there has recently been some slight movement in public discourse and policy. In 1924, the Peruvian penal code decriminalized therapeutic abortion in cases where the life of the pregnant woman is at risk, but created no protocol allowing medical personnel to provide abortion in these cases – meaning that any doctor who made the decision to terminate a risky pregnancy could wind up in prison. For the next 90 years, most doctors were understandably reluctant to perform abortions under any circumstances.

In 2014, however, despite widespread criticism, especially from Catholics and Evangelicals, Peru finally adopted a protocol through which doctors can get approval to terminate risky pregnancies. Barriers to full implementation remain: some doctors do not know how to carry out abortions, women lack information, and fear and shame discourage use of the protocol even when the pregnant woman's life is in danger.

The adoption of this new protocol may indicate that framing abortion rights as a matter of women's health may be more successful than presenting it as a matter of reproductive rights. As the massive "*Ni Una Menos*" march suggests, women's issues may have moved to the front of Peru's political debate; but whether this will bring meaningful change, particularly in the treatment of femicide, remains to be seen. ■

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# > The Social Sciences in the Arab World

by **Mohammed A. Bamyeh**, University of Pittsburgh, USA, Editor of *International Sociology Reviews*, and member of ISA Research Committees on Alienation Theory and Research (RC36) and Biography and Society (RC38)

“**N**ew knowledge for new times” sums up the ambition of the recently-released report *Social Sciences in the Arab World: Forms of Presence* (<http://www.theacss.org/uploads/English-ASSR-2016.pdf>).<sup>1</sup> Sponsored by the Arab Council for the Social Sciences (ACSS), the report has been two years in the making, with input from a team of researchers. Almost all data used in the Report are original, collected for the first time by the project’s team.

While the Report provides quantitative and qualitative data on the size and nature of social sciences in Arab universities, research centers, professional associations, and scholarly periodicals, it also looks extensively at *public* social science. It includes a study of how civil society organizations use social science in their work, as well as data on social science in the Arab public sphere – Arab newspapers, television programs, cultural periodicals, and popular magazines.

We documented an exponential growth in the number of institutions housing social sciences in the 22 countries of the Arab region, especially over the last two to three decades. Seventy percent of current universities in the Arab region have only come into existence since the early 1990s; the number of Arab scholarly periodicals increased fourfold since the early 1980s, while during the same period, the number of research centers increased at least sixfold. A silent knowledge revolution has taken shape across the Arab World over the last two or three decades, even though we still know little about that revolution’s actual content.

Interestingly, this expansion of institutions of knowledge seems to be independent of national wealth; we see it in rich and poor countries alike. More important than wealth seem to be factors such as freedom of research; a relatively strong civil society that promotes or benefits from social science research; a relatively large educated class in a country; the level of international interest in local developments in a country; and relatedly, the strength of the local knowledge community’s connections to global social sciences. The growth of civil society in the same period

seems to be correlated with the growth of social science, and both may be part of a larger cluster of factors associated with the Arab uprisings, which began in late 2010 and continue to unfold.

Within Arab universities, the Report documents great imbalances. Economics stands at the forefront of social sciences in Arab universities, accounting for more than a quarter of all social science faculties. Anthropology, with only 2% of faculties, is barely noticeable, and other social sciences fall somewhere between these two extremes.

However, most Arab universities focus heavily on teaching, which means that they provide little time and few incentives for social scientists who hope to engage in research or civic activities. These latter roles tend therefore to be carried out by Arab research centers, which, because they are organized by theme rather than discipline, tend to promote interdisciplinary studies as well as civic engagement. Research centers, the vast majority of which were founded relatively recently, also show substantial scholarly productivity, currently publishing most of the Arab World’s scholarly periodicals. Lebanon, Palestine, and Jordan house a large number of research centers relative to their population size, and even Djibouti comes ahead of wealthier countries such as Qatar and Bahrain.

Interestingly, wealthy countries such as Kuwait and Saudi Arabia show no more than moderate levels of research productivity. This finding directly contradicts recent international ranking indices that seem, from our perspective, to do a poor job in accurately reporting on the Arab knowledge scene – in part because they privilege publishing in European languages and in specific outlets. These ranking practices seem also to be driven by a fetishizing of hierarchy, rather than by any real interest in the *content* of knowledge, its relevance or its use in the society where it is produced.

Almost half of the Report is devoted to social sciences in the public sphere. Analyses of civil society organizations, newspapers, popular magazines, television programs,

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## **“Comprehensive social transformation has been a primary concern of Arab social scientists”**

and cultural periodicals show that social sciences are often conveyed in abridged formats, at varying rates, and in different forms. The Report found that all civil society organizations use and even produce social science, though in ways that are appropriate for their mission – a conclusion that suggests there is some association between the recent growth of Arab social sciences and the increased visibility of Arab civil society. Among other public sphere outlets, cultural periodicals seem open to social sciences research; about 20% of their pages are devoted to social science articles, although in ways that reflect the concerns of cultural communities rather than academic social sciences. Newspapers, popular magazines, and television programs devote less space or time to social sciences. But quantity is less important than quality as we can see from the exemplary forms of public social science to be found in the Palestinian newspaper *Al-Quds* or the Kuwaiti popular magazine *Al-Arabi*.

Comprehensive social transformation, whether in revolutionary or reformist fashion, has been a primary concern of Arab social scientists, especially in the last five years (January 2010-December 2014). During that period, our content analysis showed the “Arab Spring” at the forefront of the interests of Arab social scientists, along with related

themes such as “democracy,” “rights,” “despotism,” “participation,” “civil society,” and the like. The Report found that women’s issue were highly visible as a theme across all venues, often associated with discussions of rights, citizenship, and participation, rather than “traditional” issues like family or children. More specific avenues of social transformation, such as “youth,” “education,” or even “development”, received much less attention from researchers. Interestingly, some expected themes were virtually absent – most surprisingly “the Muslim World.” While this concept is treated in the West as a meaningful analytical category, Arab social scientists almost completely disregard it, presumably because they do not see “the Muslim World” as a cohesive analytic category – even though they do analyze “Islam” and religious politics from social science perspectives.

The Report concludes that Arab social sciences are increasingly establishing themselves as an important part of the contemporary Arab knowledge scene, despite the general sense that policy makers ignore their research. Future reports on Arab social sciences are now planned every two years, with the aim of monitoring their contribution to global social sciences as well as to the region’s future. ■

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<sup>1</sup> Editor’s note: Mohammed Bamyeh is the author of the report being discussed here.

# > New Social Science Infrastructures in the Arab Region

by **Seteney Shami**, Arab Council for the Social Sciences, Lebanon



*Second Conference organized by the Arab Council for Social Sciences, March, 2015.*

**T**he Arab region confronts mounting socio-economic, environmental, political, and security challenges.

At the same time, it lacks strong academic and research capacities that might shed light on these challenges, analyze societal changes, nurture public debates, or inform public policy. As several UN Human Development Reports have noted, the Arab

states' evident need for knowledge require stronger capacity, quality, range, reach, and influence of research – especially social research – in the region.

This growing awareness has prompted various initiatives over the past decade aimed at addressing some of these challenges. New institutions of higher education and research are being established,

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along with more fellowship opportunities for students from the region to undertake graduate studies. A number of prizes for academic achievement have been created, while the number of professional associations is slowly increasing. However, programs and opportunities focusing on the social sciences remain severely limited, and opportunities are not yet adequately available across the countries of the Arab region.

In this context, the Arab Council for the Social Sciences was conceived and developed by concerned Arab social scientists, who first met in 2006 to discuss ways of addressing the problems confronting the social sciences and social research in the region. As the planning process came to an end, the region was rocked by the Arab uprisings starting in 2010. These events, among other things, helped open public spaces and debates, giving rise to a sense of hope and new opportunities for change. In this, the importance of questioning the status quo and the urgency of developing new visions for society – as well as new ways of representing the past, present, and future – became manifest. The case for the importance of the social sciences was being made in the streets.

The unfolding aftermath has involved renewed authoritarianism, growing insecurity and violence, as well as wars in several states in the region. However, the seeds that were sown continue to germinate, even if the roots they spawn twist and turn to protect themselves from surveillance and repression. The institutional landscape is expanding and interesting initiatives provide exciting new possibilities for institutional partnerships in the research-activism nexus, the research-public sphere nexus, and also for developing new educational opportunities in the social sciences (e.g. online courses, reading collectives, or “teach-ins” at NGOs). Generating and protecting spaces of free inquiry and discussion is vital for the future of the region.

## > The ACSS

The Arab Council for the Social Sciences (ACSS) is a non-profit, membership organization headquartered in Beirut, Lebanon, which works to promote the social sciences (broadly conceived) across the region and globally. Now completing its fourth year of operations, the ACSS now has seven full-time and two part-time staff members. It has established a Focal Point in Palestine with one part-time senior consultant as well as part-time administrative and financial staff. A second Focal Point in Algeria, with a similar arrangement, is being planned. The ACSS has launched four funding programs offering research grants, a biennial conference, a biennial research forum (for grantees), an annual lecture series and active website and social media outreach. It has funded more than 130 grantees, has over 270 members, and provides mobility grants as well as training and networking opportunities for members, grantees, and social scientists generally.

Despite the radical changes in the Arab region, the original ACSS mission, vision, and values, as formulated and ratified in its first 2008 conference, remain valid and important (see <http://www.theacss.org/pages/mission>). The principles of the ACSS are to promote the *quality, inclusivity, flexibility* and *independence* of social research and thought in the region. Thus the ACSS focuses on evaluating needs, and providing opportunities for the region’s social science communities, with a special focus on young scholars at the PhD or postdoctoral stage.

One of the ACSS’ signature projects is the Arab Social Science Monitor (ASSM) project which analyzes the state of the social sciences in the region. The first Report, “Social Sciences in the Arab Region: Forms of Presence” by Dr. Mohammed Bamyeh, analyzes the institutional and substantive landscape across the region (<http://www.theacss.org/uploads/English-ASSR-2016.pdf>),

describing substantial regional growth in social science departments and research centers. However, the report also highlights the lack of MA and PhD programs, journals, professional associations and other infrastructure necessary for the production of robust, and critical scholarship. On the more positive side, the report also describes the fairly substantial presence of the social sciences and scholarship in the public sphere, including literary works, newspapers, popular journals, television, and other media.

## > Arab Social Sciences: Marginal or Emergent?

The official neglect of the social sciences in the Arab region reflect notions of development and modernity that have long governed educational and philanthropic planning, along with a shift over the past few decades from the traditional focus on the sciences, medicine, and engineering towards finance, management, and private sector diversification. The state and the status of the social sciences both epitomize shortcomings of the region’s educational systems, particularly highlighting deficiencies in institutions of higher learning, where increasing enrolment has come at the cost of quality. The growth of private higher education has led to marked discrepancies between educational institutions as well as to further marginalization of the social sciences. At the same time, the academic voice in public policy debates has diminished, as policy makers accuse social scientists of pursuing research questions that are irrelevant to policy, and social scientists complain that policy makers ignore research findings.

The fact that educational policies, concepts of development, and restrictions on the public sphere remain largely unchallenged speaks to the weaknesses of the region’s social science community, and to an inability to engage in three essential functions of an autonomous intellectual domain: the ability to articulate evidence-based alternatives to

hegemonic and ideological agendas, the ability to impact public discussion and policy-making, and the ability to protect and promote professional interests. Equally important, because of institutional weaknesses, Arab social scientists have not been able to fully participate in regional or global knowledge networks. The Arab social science community remains largely excluded from key international fora and vibrant research networks, and does not contribute effectively to global knowledge production.

These are all issues that the ACSS aims to address, despite the fact that it has been operating in an increasingly difficult environment since its founding. Along with escalating conflicts in Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Yemen,

the research environment is becoming ever tenser in places like Egypt, with increased surveillance and intimidation of scholars and activists. This has affected the ACSS' regional reach, limiting its ability to hold activities and events in different countries. In addition, ACSS grantees in certain countries have been forced to change plans and sometimes reduce their projects' fieldwork components. Finally, travel is becoming more difficult, with the imposition of new visa requirements and travel bans.

But despite these difficulties – or, because of them – it is more important than ever that the ACSS continues to offer support and opportunities to the region's researchers, and to build and thicken networks. We are

pleased to note grantees' resilience, and their determination to continue pursuing research projects. The numbers of program applicants and event participants have not dwindled, and interest in the ACSS continues to rise. Lebanon remains a location that generally facilitates regional interaction and affords academic freedom. The ACSS is vigilant in adapting to the changing environment and innovative in its programming and activities, while remaining committed to its foundational objectives and values. We look forward to increased regional and global collaborations and networking, and to becoming a medium for the promotion of a revitalized Arab social science. ■

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# > Arab Social Sciences Before and Beyond the Spring

by **Idriss Jebari**, American University in Beirut, Lebanon



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| *What difference has the Arab Spring made for social sciences?*

**I**n the first report on the state of the social sciences in the Arab world, Sociology Professor Mohammed Bamyeh tackles the conundrum of Arab social sciences today: a seemingly-historically weak field of knowledge that exists alongside richly tumultuous and complex social realities. Five years on from the Arab Spring, there is enough critical distance to ask how the field of knowledge has digested these transformations. How does the report depict the challenges faced by Arab social sciences? What lessons regarding public engagement should young Arab social scientists take away from it?

## > **The Challenges of Arab Social Sciences**

The underperforming state of Arab knowledge production is well documented by scholars, practitioners, and students.

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In this report, Bamyeh steers clear of the usual generalizations such as the lack of global integration or political instability, focusing instead on the institutional structures that have shaped the field. Rather than choosing isolation, he argues, Arab social scientists suffer from “poor networking capacity” and “the erosion of connections [with] their formative heritage.” In general, the aims of Arab social scientists are not necessarily to seek visibility on the global stage, but to explain their objects of research and influence policies; the most pressing questions today revolve around the discipline’s estrangement from society and market forces that question its value and uses.

This institutional focus locates the object of the social sciences in the Arab region in terms of the tension between universalism and specificity. Bamyeh seems to lean toward the former, while acknowledging that these disciplines have grown up through interactions with Western social sciences, following a specific tradition that he retraces through founding texts and topical orientations in the past decades. Bamyeh sidesteps the issue of the “specificity” of Arab social sciences and its impact on research methods, especially because they continue to pose theoretical conundrums for Arab social scientists (for example, the continuous tension between supporters of Gellner and his framework of tribes, against those who prefer Bourdieu’s class-centered sociology). Yet, these choices continue to shape the region’s social science research today: Arab social scientists gain visibility thanks to foreign publications, which in turn shapes their research orientation, be they thematic or methodological.

Bamyeh’s own approach in this report raises the methodological issue of the “unit of analysis”: does it make sense to study social phenomena in abstraction or for the Arab region as a whole, and then confront one’s conclusions with national and local contexts in order to produce complete and generalizable conclusions? Thus, he invokes the “Islamization” of social sciences in the 1980s across the region, then turns to a detailed discussion of Saudi Arabia, where these logics are particularly visible, before going on to comment on the prevalence of family and criminology research – rather than research on social conflict or expatriate labor, despite their importance in the country. Similarly, Bamyeh discusses Mokhtar El-Harrach’s background study on the content of Arab journals, which includes a cross-national comparison to understand how Arab cultural journals function, and finds that theoretical studies make up as much as 68% of the journals’ content. Yet in a passing comment, he notes that these journals tend to deal significantly more with the immediate region rather than adopting a broad Arab focus, without providing a sufficient explanation of what shapes these different outcomes. Similarly, the term “research density” (the number of research centers divided by a country’s population) is used to classify the Arab world, but “the general atmosphere nurturing them” is offered as an explanatory factor of “interest for social science” in different contexts. The author acknowledges the broad picture

is shaped by mechanisms, incentives, and pressures on the academic field, but the subtle and specific elements are not discussed in detail.

By the author’s own admission, the report’s “survey” of the current situation was designed as a prelude to subsequent publications, which will elaborate different aspects, cover more than the 2010-15 period, and will provide research bibliographies. While the report is somewhat hampered by these limitations, it succeeds in depicting the field and identifying the forces that shape it.

### > **Social Sciences and Arab Social Transformations**

Bamyeh’s survey of social science institutional structures is one of the report’s strongest contributions, particularly as it raises crucial questions for practitioners facing the challenge of navigating a changing public sphere.

His data depicts Arab universities as the “natural home” of social sciences (48% of universities house social science programs and degrees). A balanced distribution of disciplines – Economics, Sociology, Psychology, Political Science, and History – are supported by a wide network of at least 436 research centers, professional societies in most countries, and 217 academic journals. His data also highlights interesting trends: Arab social scientists master several languages and are increasingly connected globally; and Algeria and Egypt represent the region’s lion share in terms of universities and research centers.

These figures highlight another reality: Arab social scientists face a tension between the imperative of production and accumulation of knowledge, and the pressure to disseminate, engage, and advocate social change. Bamyeh discusses the increasing importance of “non-traditional actors,” such as civil society, drawing on another fascinating background paper which highlights how NGOs “not only employ but actually produce social sciences [...] calibrated to their objectives.” Similarly, those familiar with the Arab context understand the importance of pan-Arab institutes such as Beirut’s Centre for Arab Unity Studies or Doha’s Arab Centre for Research and Policy Studies, whose visibility and reach have surpassed that of universities. These institutional transformations give urgency to the debate about this evolution’s impact on the production of knowledge content. If it is true, as the author suggests, that these centers cannot offer a substitute for academic research, do these “non-conventional” spaces and actors illustrate a crisis of “formal” social sciences?

Bamyeh’s comments on the role of civil society and social sciences show that the author recognizes their contribution for practical purposes, establishment of documentary data, and even in epistemic considerations, but clearly prefers what he calls “academic communities” over

“quasi-academic communities.” The “scholars and intellectuals [who] fulfill [their] tasks,” in his view, are those who engage in analytical rigorous methodologies, reaching progressive conclusions, and gaining scientific credibility – usually “from a certain distance [...] rather than sinking into the vagaries of daily struggles and merely reproducing political stances that give us nothing that is not already known.” Similarly, in his study of journals and newspapers, his criteria for deciding which items are worthy of the social science label include “depth” – understood as “complexity” or “learned content”; Bamyeh, leading by example, takes care to justify his methodological choices, in a style more reminiscent of academic research than a policy-oriented report.

These preferences illustrate the author’s vision of a revolutionary epistemological transformation, especially in light of the debate on historical transformations involving the Arab Spring, and the field of social sciences in the Arab world. We can object that the author is swimming against the tide with this classical view of what constitutes a “revolution,” and especially his insufficient consideration of the transformative impact of the Arab Spring on a new generation of Arab social scientists, the “Arab Spring generation,” whose social embeddedness shaped their engagement and aspirations for change.

Nor has Bamyeh’s ideal of the distant, isolated, and objective Arab social scientist represented a chosen posture in the past. What the Arab Spring, as an epistemological revolution, could bring is a shift away from viewing reality

as a distractive messy place requiring distance, towards a renewed groundedness with organic connections, which brings measured aspirations into research, rather than trying to discipline social science investigation through rigorous, often ill-fitting, frameworks.

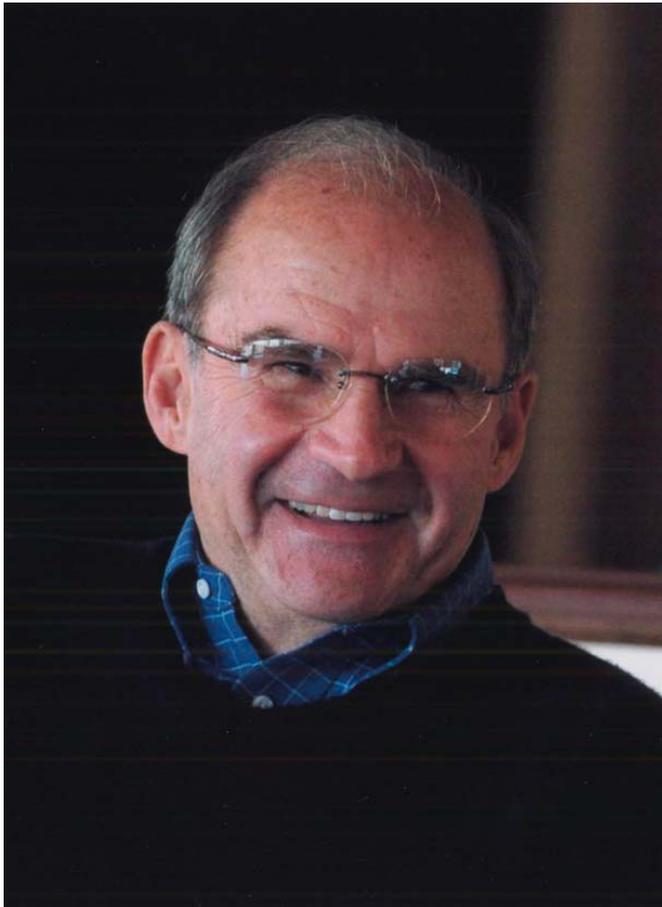
### > Conclusion

Mohammed Bamyeh’s point of arrival differs from my own. Bamyeh sets out to survey a large field, looking back and forth from the Arab Spring, yet the report simply notes growth and challenges rather than offering recommendations. In his conclusion, he calls for further transformation before Arab social sciences can “proclaim they have securely housed social sciences and utilized them in all their diverse appearances” – an end goal that is quite circular, revealing that the Arab social sciences have yet to figure out what they mean in light of the current social upheavals.

Instead of focusing on the “presence” of social science, perhaps we should ask more dynamic questions relating to “permanence,” “resilience,” “coherence,” or “subsistence.” Speaking from the standpoint of the “Arab Spring generation” rather than the topics, institutional settings, and methods, it is the critical conjuncture in which they find themselves that makes the social sciences in the Arab world distinctive. As Arab social sciences search for an identity, we have an opportunity to express the aspirations of many as we design rigorous research agendas. Perhaps this report will set us on the path toward an active dialogue that the situation demands. ■

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# > George Ritzer on McDonalidization and Prosumption



George Ritzer.

**George Ritzer** is one of the foremost interpreters of globalization, and Distinguished Professor of Sociology at the University of Maryland, USA. **Labinot Kunushevc**i, an MA student in sociology at the University of Prishtina, Kosovo, conducted the interview as part of a project on influential social theory. We are publishing an extract from the interview.

**LK:** Professor Ritzer, you are famous for the concept of “McDonalidization”: do you see this as a form of cultural imperialism or simply the result of free competition in the market place?

**GR:** Much of my work since about 1990 has dealt directly and indirectly with cultural imperialism. *The McDonalidization of Society* (first published in 1993) sees “McDonalidization” as such a force, with its principles (efficiency, predictability, calculability, and control, as well as the irrationalities associated with these rational systems) being exported from their American base to many countries in the world. These take the form of McDonald’s and the globalization of other American businesses, but even more importantly the principles of McDonalidization find their way into innumerable local businesses and many other organizations (e.g. educational and religious institutions).

In my book, *Expressing America: A Critique of the Global Credit Card Society* (1995) I deal with another form of cultural (and economic) imperialism: the spread of another America creation, the credit card, throughout the world. The credit card helped spread American-style debt and consumer culture, a phenomenon I deal with more directly in my book, *Enchanting a Disenchanted World: Revolutionizing the Means of Consumption* (1997). The idea of the means of consumption is an extension of Marx’s ideas of the means of production. The major site of consumption in the United States are fast-food restaurants, shopping malls, theme parks (e.g. Disney World), Las Vegas-style casinos, and cruise lines featuring mega-ships – all exported to the rest of the world as well as becoming desirable tourist destinations. Their often great size and “magical,” almost religious, quality led me to call them “cathedrals of consumption.” As they have globalized, the cathedrals of consumption have served to bring with them the kind of hyper-consumer society so characteristic of the United States.

Most important, at least to me, in this area is my book *The Globalization of Nothing*. I define “nothing” as social forms that are centrally conceived, centrally controlled and lacking in distinctive content. As usual, McDonald’s and its products (e.g. the Big Mac) are perfect examples, but “nothing” has been increasingly globalized, especially through cathedrals of consumption. Global nothingness

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has served to increasingly marginalize largely local forms of “something” (locally conceived, controlled, and rich in distinctive content). Thus, we have a developed world increasingly characterized by nothing!

**LK: You’ve extended your ideas of global consumption to the university: What can you say about the modern university?**

**GR:** I have often referred to the university of today as Mc University. That is, it has McDonaldized the educational process by focusing on efficiency, predictability, calculability, and control. This has helped to create mass educational systems, but the irrationality of the rationality of those systems is that they negatively affect the quality of the educational system and of education. In that, they resemble the effect of the fast-food restaurant on the quality of food (you can get a “Big Mac,” but not a “Delicious Mac”). This also serves to make universities more in favor of the status quo than opposing it. I think McUniversities are increasingly monopolizing knowledge as well as its dissemination. My most recent work is on “prosumption” – the integration of “production” and “consumption.” Students have always been prosumers of knowledge – they consume it and produce it in ways that are unique to each of them. Students are not passive consumers of what these systems have to offer, but are also active producers of what transpires in them and the knowledge that flows from them.

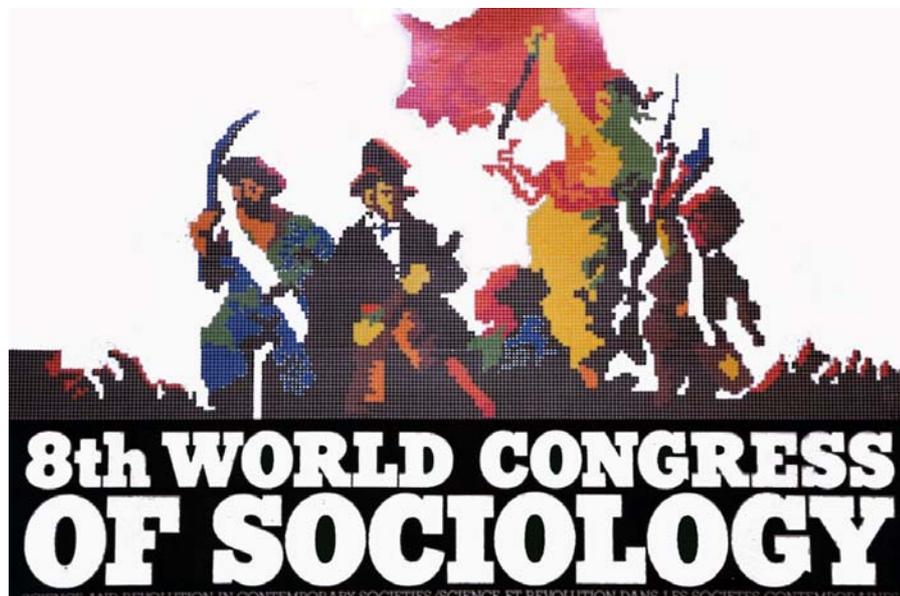
**LK: You’ve been such a prolific writer, I expect you have got lots of new and interesting projects – can you briefly tell me about them?**

**GR:** Most of my work in the last decade has been on prosumption. We have always been prosumers – never simply producers or consumers (the kind of modern binary that we need to abandon). By the way, the locale today for the prosumer is the Internet where we clearly prosume in blogs, on Facebook, etc. We are also increasingly prosumers in the cathedrals of consumption where we as “consumers” do more and more “work” that was once done by paid employees (think of the work we do in fast-food restaurants, shopping malls, IKEA, etc.). I have recently begun arguing that we are living in the world of “prosumer capitalism” where capitalists have come to prefer unpaid or poorly paid prosumers to paid employees. Uber is a good example of this: taxi drivers are disappearing in the face of the rise of the prosumers who labor for Uber. When we order books on Amazon.com, we are not only consuming books (and other products), but we are also producing, for no pay, our own orders. As a result, bookstores, and those who worked in them, are disappearing. As a result, new capitalists (Mark Zuckerberg, Jeff Bezos) have arisen and become multi-billionaires by replacing paid employees with unpaid prosumers. Not only are prosumers unpaid, but they are not employees so they require no benefits, health insurance, and the like. New technologies (e.g. robots) will enable businesses to rely increasingly on prosumers (or they will prosume on their own as “prosuming machines”). ■

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# > 40+ Years with International Sociology

by **Edward A. Tiryakian**, Duke University, USA, and member of ISA Research Committees on History of Sociology (RC08), Sociological Theory (RC16) and Sociology of Religion (RC22)



Poster for the 1974 Congress of the ISA in Toronto, Canada – the first Congress Edward Tiryakian attended.

**I**t is a pleasure to respond to an invitation to share some recollections of my rather long association with the International Sociological Association. As a caveat, my remembrance of the past is neither complete nor immune to the tarnish of time; readers will undoubtedly benefit from Jennifer Platt's superb account in her [A Brief History of the ISA, 1948-1997](#).

The international field has always appealed to me, as a vital component of my equally strong interest in sociological theory. As a faculty affiliate of the American Sociological Association (ASA), I served on the ASA's Committee on Worldwide Cooperation, becoming its chair when the previous chair, Reuben Hill, became ISA President (1970-74). Reuben, who very much hoped American sociology would venture outside the United States, invited me to join the ISA. My first opportunity came in 1974, where Reuben had invited Russian sociologists for the ISA Eighth World Congress in Toronto. Immediately following the ISA meet-

ings, delegates were invited to the ASA meetings held in Montreal.

In both settings, our Worldwide Cooperation Committee provided a link with overseas visitors. I especially remember meeting with Russian sociologists; the strains of the Cold War disappeared quickly, as the reception's jovial atmosphere approached collective effervescence. For both Reuben Hill and ASA president Peter Blau, the joint meetings proved to be a triumph of sociological diplomacy.

Following this, I took life membership in the ISA – one of the best investments I have ever made. At the Ninth Congress in Uppsala, I remember how spread out the meetings were, but also how Sweden was both very expensive and very modern. And perhaps because Uppsala (unlike Toronto or Stockholm) is a university town rather than a metropolis, the site offered few distractions but gave many occasions for meeting scholars from various

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countries – a major attraction for international gatherings of scholars.

After Uppsala, the ISA's Tenth Congress in Mexico City (1982) had a large number of sessions in Spanish, the ISA's third official language, as we were vehemently reminded by Alain Touraine to the cheers of Latin American students. Touraine, it should be said, has been a progressive champion of world sociology, both at various world congresses and in his development seminars in France.

While the 1982 ISA meetings were taking place, however, we experienced financial anomie: Mexico's Finance Minister declared the country could not meet its debt payment, prompting a major financial crisis. ISA delegates were left scrambling to get dollars at Mexican banks; but financial communication broke down, creating widespread confusion over exchange rates. Not only were the rates changing overnight, but branches of the same bank often did not know what rates had been set by Mexico's central bank. Some ISA members who could access their credit cards discovered they could upgrade their hotel rooms from standard to deluxe, as the peso plunged and the dollar rose. But not all profited, and many left Mexico on the first available flight.

This was the only ISA meeting that I recall taking place during such an eventful crisis. The Twelfth Congress in Madrid was fine, save for exceptional heat and the absence

of air conditioning. At the Thirteenth Congress (1994) in Bielefeld, Richard Grathoff invited a number of Polish and other Eastern European sociologists who had kept sociology alive during the repressive Soviet regime which crashed in 1991.

I had much in common with Grathoff, who placed qualitative, interpretive sociology at the center of sociological theorizing, and I was delighted when he asked me to continue on the editorial board of *International Sociology* when he took over its editorship (1991-1996). I joined the board when Martin Albrow became its first editor (1984-1990), and I greatly enjoy both being a contributor and a reviewer for a journal which gives primacy to comparative, international sociology.

Even though attending *all* ISA meetings is practically impossible (both because of the cost of travel since retirement, and because of my commitments to ASA, which often meets at about the same time as the ISA), I am pleased to have participated in a number of recent congresses: Montreal (1998), Brisbane (2002), Gothenburg (2010), Yokohama (2014), and the recent ISA Forum in Vienna (2016). Seeing old friends from around the world (unfortunately a declining number), meeting new ones, and encountering new sociological ideas in places of different cultures are still as enticing as when I first joined the International Sociological Association – and will certainly draw me to attend the 2018 19th Congress in Toronto. ■

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# > Introducing the Second Japanese Editorial Team

It is our great pleasure to introduce the second Japanese editorial team to the readers of **Global Dialogue**. Since we began our work in December of 2014, 45 undergraduate students have participated in the translation project. They all attend the National Fisheries University that was founded in 1941 as a public institution of higher education accredited by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries in Japan. The editorial board consists of the following permanent members.



**Satomi Yamamoto** is Associate Professor of English and Sociology in the Department of Fisheries Distribution and Management. She earned her M.A. in English from Japan Women's University, her M.A. in the Social Sciences from the University of Chicago, and her Ph.D in Sociology from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Her current research focuses on sociological analysis of invasive fish species in the United States.



**Fuma Sekiguchi** is a senior undergraduate student in the Department of Food Science and Technology. He was born in Yamaguchi Prefecture and grew up in Chiba Prefecture. He has taken a leave of absence from National Fisheries University and is currently studying at the California State University, Chico and Butte College in the United States. His motto is failure teaches success. He likes swimming, playing baseball, and studying English.



**Yutaro Shimokawa** is a sophomore undergraduate student in the Department of Food Science and Technology. He is currently learning the effective use, processing technology, and food components of marine products. He participates in the translation project because he wants to improve his reading ability in English. His goal is to be able to read English-written academic articles about food science.



**Masaki Yokota** is a senior undergraduate student in the Department of Fisheries Distribution and Management. He studied English in the UK between 2014 and 2015 and earned an IELTS (International English Language Testing System) score of 6.5. He likes playing badminton and watching football. His favorite football team is Chelsea Football Club in London. His dream is to go on a trip around the world.



**Takashi Kitahara** is a senior undergraduate student in the Department of Fisheries Distribution and Management. He will be joining the Graduate School of Resource Management and Food Science, National Fisheries University in April of 2017. His honor's thesis explores the development of non-feeding aquaculture business enterprises in Japan. He participates in the translation project because he enjoys learning new topics other than fisheries.



**Yuki Nakano** is a sophomore undergraduate student in the Department of Applied Aquabiology. She decided to go to National Fisheries University since she has liked animals and fish since her childhood. Her future career is undecided, but she wishes to find a job that closely relates to her major. She is sometimes overwhelmed with the challenges of translating English into natural Japanese, but she still enjoys being part of the translation project because the project helps her to improve her English proficiency and to gain a better command of the Japanese language.