

# GLOBAL DIALOGUE

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Post-Revolutionary  
Egypt

Mona Abaza

Questioning Reality

Luc Boltanski

An Extraordinary  
Institute

Sarah Mosoetsa

Representing African-  
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Singapore  
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Vineeta Sinha,  
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Struggles over  
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## Special Columns

- > ISA Junior Sociologists Network
- > Translating *Global Dialogue* into Indonesian
- > Introducing the Indonesian Editorial Team

MAGAZINE



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**GD**



# > Editorial

## What's Next?

**F**or all our sophisticated survey research very few predicted the election of Donald Trump. This suggests US sociologists have a limited knowledge of their own country. While there are notable studies of right-wing movements – and we published one by Arlie Hochschild two issues ago ([GD6.3](#)) – they are vastly outnumbered by studies of leftist-oriented movements. No different from others, sociologists gravitate toward people who think and act like themselves, studying movements opposing discrimination, inequality, and xenophobia. To better understand others is not a matter of suppressing our values and commitments – or pretending we have none – but of becoming more conscious of them. And it will also require immersing ourselves in alien communities.

The importance of such work is amply clear from articles, in this issue and the last issue, that examine struggles over abortion rights. Agnieszka Graff and Elżbieta Korolczuk examine the politics that drive the anti-gender movement in Poland and how it is connected to broader anti-globalization sentiments. Julia Kubisa describes the remarkable umbrella movement – the anti-government protest – that swarmed into the streets of Poland. The streets can be a site of protest but also of militarization, which is the topic of Mona Abaza's tracing of the events that led from the Egyptian January 25th Revolution to the counter-revolution led by General El-Sisi.

In this issue we also publish an interview with the renowned French sociologist, Luc Boltanski. He offers a pithy summary of his sociology of critique, stemming from the gap between institutional reality and experiences of the concrete world. Collisions and disruptions have intensified as national institutions increasingly clash with our globalized worlds. This is also the theme of the five articles on Singapore's sociology. They explore the trajectory of this small nation as well as of its distinctive sociology, following the death of its first Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew. The essays underline the divergence between ruling ideology and lived reality in such areas as social mobility, ethnicity, religion, and politics.

From Asia we turn to Africa, specifically South Africa where, over the last two years, universities have been the scene of much political turbulence. Here, however, we draw attention to a wonderful academic program initiated by the government and directed by sociologist Sarah Mosoetsa. Her institute pioneers the support of PhD students, conferences, book awards, and publications in the area of the social sciences and humanities.

We also publish an interview conducted by Labinot Kunushevci, a young sociologist from Kosovo, who talks to the famous feminist African-American sociologist, Patricia Hill Collins. This issue also contains an introduction to *Global Dialogue's* Indonesian team with a foreword that describes some of the challenges of translation. We end with Oleg Komlik's reminder of the very important work of the ISA Junior Sociologists Network. This is one of the most important projects of the ISA – supporting the next generation of sociologists.

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

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



**Mona Abaza**, leading Egyptian sociologist, author of multiple books on Islam and urban life, reflects on militarization after the January revolution.



**Luc Boltanski**, the great French theorist of the sociology of critique, talks about his latest book on detective novels and their significance for sociology.



**Sarah Mosoetsa**, the inspiring South African sociologist describes the remarkable social science and humanities institute she runs.



**Patricia Hill Collins**, leading African-American feminist shares her original ideas on intellectuals and marginality.



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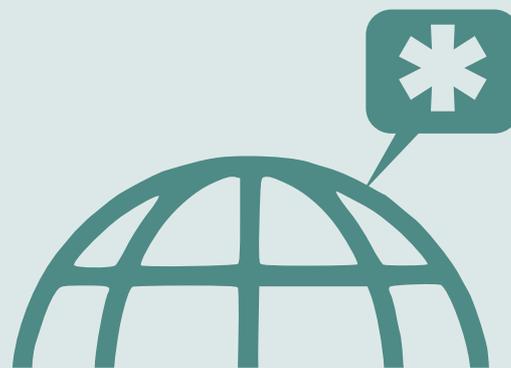
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# > The Fate of Post-Revolutionary Egypt

## An Interview with Mona Abaza



**Mona Abaza** is professor of sociology at the American University in Cairo. She is a renowned scholar of contemporary Egypt, having written many books including *Debates on Islam and Knowledge in Malaysia and Egypt: Shifting Worlds* (2002), *The Changing Consumer Culture of Modern Egypt* (2006), *The Cotton Plantation Remembered* (2013). She has held visiting positions all over the world in Sweden, Singapore, Germany, France, Malaysia, Italy, and the Netherlands. In recent years she has written on contemporary political changes in Egypt, two of them having appeared in *Global Dialogue* ([GD1.4](#) and [GD3.3](#)). Here, in an interview with **Michael Burawoy**, she reflects on the years since the January 25 Revolution of 2011.

| Mona Abaza.

**MB:** You have written a great deal, including for *Global Dialogue*, about the January 25 (2011) “revolutionary” events that ended the 30-year reign of then-President Hosni Mubarak, setting in motion a political process that led to the presidential election of Mohammed Morsi and the short-lived ascendancy of Islamic rule (2012-2013). Morsi was deposed in July 2013 in a military seizure of power and General El-Sisi took power and declared President of Egypt in 2014. How do you now assess these tumultuous six years since the January 25 revolution, and in particular the role of the military?

**MA:** There is much controversy regarding the army’s involvement since the 25th of January Revolution when the tanks took to the streets and encircled Tahrir Square before Mubarak’s ousting. They were supposedly protecting the protesters from the thugs of the Mubarak regime. Most probably Mubarak’s ousting would not have been thinkable had not the armed forces received the green light from Washington to remain neutral towards the revolution. If a form of “fraternization”<sup>1</sup> between the “people” and the army took place in the early days of January 2011, there is a myriad of readings and interpretations of the deteriorating popularity of the army as time went by.

Remember the iconic images that circulated in 2011 globally, images of the protesters sleeping under the tanks, or the insults and anti-Mubarak slogans that were written on the army tanks or the elderly women kissing soldiers in Tahrir after Mubarak’s ousting. But we shouldn’t forget that the same rather antiquated army tanks (probably completely unpractical for conducting any urban warfare) took over and encircled the television building in Maspero Street on the 28th of January. This can be interpreted as a rather symbolic reenactment of the Free Officers taking over the broadcasting station to announce the July 1952 Coup/Revolution when they overthrew King Farouk. However, after taking over the SCAF (The Supreme Council of Armed Forces), the popularity of the army kept on declining. Unfolding incidents such as the attacks on the protesters in Tahrir in March 2011, the torture and the compulsory virginity tests of female protesters, the Maspero massacre in October 2011, the Ultra’s Ahly massacre in Port Said, and then the violent incidents of Mohammed Mahmud Street in November and December 2011, all signified the army shifting over to the side of the counter-revolution.

Looking back, one has to question the interpretation that the army was really on the side of the protesters in January. The army’s intervention was perhaps less a matter of

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The Kasr al Aini wall which has since been removed and replaced by a gate. Graffiti by Alaa Awad. Photo by Mona Abaza, December 7, 2012.

supporting the aspiration for freedom and democracy, and more that Tahrir Square offered a golden opportunity to get rid of Hosni Mubarak, his putative heir Gamal Mubarak with his entourage of crony capitalists whose economic grip clashed with the army's parallel control of a significant portion of the economy. But the military ousting of Morsi in 2013 was a very different affair, as El-Sisi was now portrayed as a nationalist hero opposing the global Islamic networks promoted by the Muslim Brotherhood.

**MB: We will return to the nationalist ideology and its economic basis later, but the military was also obsessed with restoring order, was it not?**

**MA:** Indeed, the military was omnipresent after January 2011, especially visible in the remaking of cities. In the collective memory army tanks in the streets of the city center constantly appeared, disappeared and reappeared from 2011 until 2014. We witnessed the erection of concrete walls as buffer zones between protesters and police forces, the piercing and demolition of these isolating and paralyzing walls by citizens, the blockading of entire areas for security measures; the vertical control of the city through menacing helicopters, circling overhead at peak moments; the numerous and unfolding attacks, retreats, and killings by the police forces in the bustling, central streets of the city that took place between 2011 and 2013; the lethal tear gas resulting in numerous deaths and epileptic fits; the emergence of newly created paramilitary troops parading in the city. A culminating episode in these urban wars was the Rabe'a al-'Adawiyya massacre of members of the Muslim Brotherhood in August, 2013. The increasingly militarized terrorist attacks by the Islamists gave rise to a military offensive presented as a "war on terror," followed by the erection of gi-

gantic concave walls (imitating the Green Zone in Baghdad) around official buildings and embassies all over the city. We have so many vivid images of the mounting militarization of daily urban life, giving rise to a new way of life to deal with, circumvent, or resist military control.

**MB: And behind the growing militarization of urban life, what was happening to the competition for the control of the economy?**

**MA:** Zeinab Abul-Magd's crucial work<sup>2</sup> is perhaps among the first studies to have pointed to the paramount role of the army's involvement in the current economy and why their activities have been kept opaque. According to Abul-Magd, the armed forces have been financially involved for many decades, contributing an estimated 25 to 40% of Egypt's economy. This includes mega projects, large factories in the food and beverage industries, running cafeterias and gas stations. As I said, this explains why the army opted for the ousting of Mubarak and his son's clique of crony capitalists since they constituted a parallel competing elite.

But above all the military have been able to appropriate huge amounts of real estate, thanks to a law allowing them to obtain any land for commercial purposes. Most significant is the army's visible involvement in gargantuan projects in the desert where it has developed joint ventures and lucrative financial speculation. This became all the more evident with *Mada Masr* reports on the Armed Forces Land Projects Agency that, together with Sheikh Zayed of Abu Dhabi, recently took over 16,000 acres and the supervision of the building of the New Capital City.<sup>3</sup> A year earlier El-Sisi announced the military's involvement in a \$40-billion joint housing with the Arabtec Company

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The newly created concave wall, erected opposite the entrance gate to the American University in Cairo. Photo by Mona Abaza, September 21, 2015.

from the Emirates.<sup>4</sup> Then the *Cairoobserver* informs us that in 2014 the Defense Ministry signed an agreement with Emaar, the mega company based in the UAE, to construct a huge Emaar Square that would include the largest shopping center in uptown Cairo, counterposing to Tahrir Square a neo-liberal market oriented to Dubai.

This dream of a market economy is envisaged under an authoritarian military rule in which the army controls vast land markets without any transparency on its transactions.<sup>5</sup> Of course, this is not the first time a market economy with neo-liberal dreams works hand in hand with authoritarian militarism.

**MB: You have described what the ascent to power of General El-Sisi has meant for economic elites. What has it meant for the rest of the population, especially for the “streets” that became so famous in the Arab Spring and about which you have written so much?**

**MA:** After the short rule of the Islamists under Morsi, 2012-2013, for many the army’s occupation of the streets meant “restoring order,” but it seems to have also meant reinstating the political figures and financial tycoons of the ancient regime. After January 2011, the street witnessed the rule of thugs (even if these were the thugs of the ancient regime) together with an increase of criminality and violence. Thousands of street vendors conquered all imaginable and unimaginable spaces, occupied entire streets, corners under and on bridges, passages and alleys across the entire city, and, of course blocked traffic – all this symbolized for the middle classes an abhorrent “disorder.” But the public visibility of street vendors tells us much about the consequences of many years of failed neo-liberal policies that pauperized

millions, including university graduates, leaving them with street vending as their only option for survival.

El-Sisi’s restoration of the city took place with a massive campaign to “clean up” downtown, through the forcible eviction of street vendors who constitute some five million people surviving on the informal sector.

**MB: So the military have managed to reassert control over the streets, that is a negative form of power, but has El-Sisi managed to secure popular support for military rule?**

**MA:** Contrary to what some Western pundits believe, El-Sisi gained popularity with the discourse of restoring “order” and stability in the country even before he became president. How else can one interpret the regime’s successful promotion of citizen participation in purchasing shares and bonds for the Suez Canal project? In just a few weeks, some \$8.5 billion were raised from local investors. Evidently, El-Sisi’s ability to touch the cord of nationalist sentiments was highly effective.<sup>6</sup>

David Harvey reminds us how Louis Napoleon Bonaparte’s – Napoleon III who ruled from 1852 to 1870 – restoration of Paris depended on extracting surplus value through capitalist appropriation of the city.<sup>7</sup> The transformation of Paris that occurred under Napoleon went hand in hand with practicing further despotism and expropriation of rights – a striking analogy to the regime of El-Sisi. Both regimes of order were enamored with grandiose infrastructural projects. Both saw the Suez Canal as a nation-building project. Napoleon financed the digging of the Canal while El-

Sisi is currently working on enlarging it. The “restorations” bear close similarities: both recognized that infrastructure expansion is essential for appropriating the capitalist resources of the city. For example, the Egyptian army has been extremely busy constructing highways and bridges to provincial towns and all around Cairo.

**MB: The comparison is most intriguing, but if we are looking for historical parallels closer to home then what about those between El-Sisi’s nationalist project and that of Nasser?**

**MA:** Indeed, when Morsi was ousted by the army in 2013, El-Sisi was often compared to Gamal Abdel Nasser – El-Sisi went to great pains to emphasize nationalist rhetoric, as opposed to the Muslim Brotherhood’s Islamic internationalist networks (presumably terrorist) that were portrayed as dangerous. When the recent inauguration of the enlarging of the “New Suez Canal” took place in August 2015, El-Sisi once again struck a nationalist cord in the symbolism he adopted. The flotilla that inaugurated the ceremony belonged to the former ousted royal family – the same flotilla that carried Empress Eugenie at the original inauguration of the Suez Canal in 1869. The ceremony could be interpreted as a wish to join nationalist pride in grandiose infrastructural projects by making reference to colonial/cosmopolitan culture that appeals to neo-liberal sentiments. That President François Hollande was given the lion’s share of attention among the international delegates in 2015 marked the historical continuity with France. It is interesting, too, that the 1956 nationalization of the Suez Canal under Nasser was hardly referred to.

**MB: Very good, so you point to megaprojects that seek to project nationalist sentiment, but what about nationalist orchestration of everyday life? I know you are very interested in the architecture of the city, what has changed in this realm?**

**MA:** Here too we can see changes reminiscent of past nationalisms. As we speak, the Belle Époque downtown, built in the late 19th century and early 20th century, is undergoing a face-lift through a massive whitening of the facades, for example, of the buildings surrounding Talaat Harb Square, exactly as was done under Mubarak.<sup>8</sup> The large Orabi Square has been transformed into a pedestrian zone while the authorities continue to close down almost all the popular cafés on Sherifein Street. Once again, this could be interpreted as a populist move, boosting national sentiment of grandeur and above all “order” in the street.

**MB: And here, too, are there economic interests lurking behind these populist moves?**

**MA:** Yes, here too there are vested interests in revamping the Belle Époque downtown whose historic buildings have attracted capitalists and tycoons with the intention of appropriating the center and its surplus value. The Al-Ismaelia Real Estate Company has been acquiring a significant number of historic buildings in Downtown Cairo such as

the Art Deco Gharib Morcos Building, constructed in 1916, the Kodak Buildings constructed in 1924, the Davis Bryan Buildings, the Abdel Khalek Tharwat Buildings constructed in the 1920s, and the Cinema Radio built in the 1930s.<sup>9</sup> The Kodak buildings, including the wide passages around the Jewish synagogue, have been renovated in an exceedingly sophisticated way.

**MB: So the nationalist projects hide economic interests but are there other interests playing in the shadow of El-Sisi’s populism?**

**MA:** Indeed, the discourse of the return of “order” and stability has overshadowed concerns about the violation of human rights, the massive incarcerations and disappearances of activists. All these seem to receive less attention than in previous years. However, the decisive issue remains the unresolved and acute economic crisis, the systematic corruption among official circles and the ongoing police repression as if no revolution had occurred. The growing discontent of the so far silent majority, invites the prediction of another social explosion, although the human cost of a possible rebellion against the army can be very high as it will certainly involve further violence. ■

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<sup>1</sup> See Ketchley, N. (2014) “The people and the army are one hand!” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 56(1): 155-186.

<sup>2</sup> Abul-Magd, Z. (2016) “The Army and the Economy in Egypt.” *Midan Masr*, August 7, 2016, <http://www.midanmasr.com/en/article.aspx?ArticleID=222>

<sup>3</sup> Sawaf, L. (2016) “The Armed Forces and Egypt’s Land.” *Mada Masr*, April 26, 2016, <http://www.madammasr.com/en/2016/04/26/feature/economy/the-armed-forces-and-egypts-land/>

<sup>4</sup> Saba, J. (2014) “The military and the state: The role of the armed forces in post-30 June Egypt.” September 27, 2014, <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2014/09/27/military-state-role-armed-forces-post-30-june-egypt/>

<sup>5</sup> “From Tahrir Square to Emaar Square,” *Cairoobserver*, February 23, 2014, <http://cairoobserver.com/post/77533681187/from-tahrir-square-to-emaar-square#.WHN1ptLhCM8>

<sup>6</sup> Oakford, S. (2014) “Egypt’s Expansion of the Suez Canal Could Ruin the Mediterranean Sea,” October 9, 2014, <https://news.vice.com/article/egypts-expansion-of-the-suez-canal-could-ruin-the-mediterranean-sea> (accessed December 2, 2016).

<sup>7</sup> Abaza, M. (2014) “Post January Revolution Cairo: Urban Wars and the Reshaping of Public Space.” *Theory, Culture & Society*, published online September 30, 2014.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> <http://al-ismaelia.com/buildings/>, accessed December 2, 2016.

# > Questioning Reality

## An Interview with Luc Boltanski

**Luc Boltanski** is one of today's most distinguished sociologists. A previous collaborator of Pierre Bourdieu, he is a Director of Research at the School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences (EHESS) in Paris. In the 1990s, he examined the organization of capitalism and its new forms of domination in the widely acclaimed book written with Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, published in French in 1999. His research then shifted towards the study of acts of criticism and a sociology of the state. The 2009 publication of *De la Critique* – released in English in 2011 as *On Critique* – marked a turning point in his reflection on the relationship between institutions and reality. In 2012, he published *Enigmas and Plots*, a book about the genesis and diffusion of detective novels since the 19th century.

The interviewers, **Laura Chartain** and **Marine Jeanne Boisson**, are doctoral candidates at the EHESS Paris, France. Focusing on Luc Boltanski's process in his book, *Enigmas and Plots*, they explore the tools and approaches sociologists use to question and criticize institutions. We are especially grateful to Alex Barnard, Nathalie Plouchard-Engel and Emily Murphy for their work on the translation from French into English. The discussion below is an extract from a longer interview that is published in [Global Express](#).



| Luc Boltanski.

**LC & MJB:** First off, how did you come up with the idea to work on detective novels?

**LB:** I'm not at all, or almost not at all, a reader of detective novels! Like everyone else, I tend to read them when I can't sleep, but basically, I wanted to understand why a literary genre like this which is not always particularly fascinating and which conveys a quite conservative image of society has had such an appeal, right from the start.

Indeed, it has become a key genre of narrative work, in the form of books and later movies or television series. That's truly interesting.

Having myself a career involving investigations and, moreover, on a biographical level, having a son who is a reporter, I wanted to examine different kinds of investigations. When I was writing this book, "affairs" and "political scandals" were breaking out in France under the presidency of Nicolas Sarkozy. These affairs and political scandals entailed investigations and counter-investigations. I asked myself why "the investigations" had taken on such a significant role in the twentieth-century Western world. This question led me to explore the similarities and differences between various kinds of investigations and the various ways of carrying them out.

**LC & MJB:** Did you intend to examine the genesis of the detective novel?

**LB:** It is an old Durkheimian approach as well as, in another way, a Foucauldian approach, known as "archaeology." We understand a phenomenon better when we grasp it from its origins, that is to say, before it turns into something quite different through "field effects," along lines popularized by Pierre Bourdieu. First, a new genre is created and then various producers innovate and try to distinguish themselves from one another in this field. That's how they modify the genre. For a little more than a century, there

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has been a large number of different styles of detective or spy novels. I was attempting to return to the period when this genre originally appeared. I wanted to apply a quasi-structural method to the study of the detective novel and interrogate the historical specificities of the time when this new genre appeared. But I consider this book a sketch, or rather a reservoir of problems, more than a set of answers!

**LC & MJB: In *Enigmas and Plots*, you develop the idea that every investigation can be led by social actors themselves when they notice a gap between “reality” as it is shaped by institutions and the “world” which they experience daily. This gap can then fuel disagreements, doubts, and questioning among the actors. In this book, you point out that “the enigma consists in something that manifests itself in the operation of the social order that may be able to shatter reality.”**

**LB:** Indeed, the enigma is peculiar to the detective novel as invented by Edgar Allen Poe. Gestalt psychologists also tackled this idea of enigma, which stems from something disrupting what is considered stable and seemingly self-evident. The conceptual basis of the book relies on a distinction that I developed in my previous work, *On Critique*, between *reality* and the *world*. This distinction plays a very important part in my work. In short, *reality* refers to a stabilized order shaped by institutions whereas the *world* refers to all that can unpredictably appear within the experience of social actors and that can call *reality* into question.

This distinction aims to respond to certain questions raised by the paradigm of the social construction of reality. This problem is formulated in the famous book by Ian Hacking, *The Social Construction of What?* If everything is constructed, how, from what point of view, can we grasp these constructions? Doesn't deconstruction, which results from determining that a fact is “socially constructed,” always entail a new construction? Doesn't this approach lead to a general relativism that after all would also make sociologists' work completely arbitrary? Therefore, I wanted to take really seriously this idea of a social construction of reality, tracing it to the way social institutions shape reality. By distinguishing the *world* from *reality*, we can find a reference point which allows us to distinguish the constructions of reality from experiences anchored in the world. Therefore, we must put aside theories of “common sense” – those inherited from the Scottish Enlightenment, from Moore, and in a certain way from Schütz.

It is necessary to begin with a postulate of uncertainty surrounding action. But, of course, our experiences are also in part anchored in reality! To give a very simple example, when you wait for the bus, you expect it to come every fifteen minutes; this is an experience anchored in *formats* of reality. There is a bus stop, there is the bus company and then there is the municipality that built the bus stop

and set the timetables. However, the bus may not arrive for a variety of unpredictable reasons coming from the world. Therefore, most of our experiences are also anchored in the world and are characterized by uncertainty. These experiences are much harder to make explicit.

The frames of action shaped by institutions are easy to describe and to totalize because they are already objectified in works of writing and accounting accomplished in part, but not only, by the work of the state that selects elements to be extracted from the world. The world cannot be totalized because it is uncertain, variable, and plural. We can thus describe how social actors are faced with formats of reality shaped by institutions, how they criticize them, how they argue about them, and work to elaborate new formats. Critique, to a large extent, helps to explain this genre of experiences.

Therefore, I wanted to consider how the construction of reality was linked to institutions that set up social devices which aim to reduce such uncertainty. In *Enigmas and Plots*, I view the specific project of European nation-states, especially their democratic forms in the second half of the nineteenth century, as attempts to truly structure reality or render action predictable, drawing both on the law – that is to say policing devices – and on the social and natural sciences. The idea largely stems from Foucault's notion of biopolitics.

Let me give you another example that I like a lot. I have a friend who was a committed leftist and feminist when we were young during the 70s. She was in an ultra-left movement with other women and men from minority groups. One day, the girls looked at each other and realized that it was they, the women, who stuffed the envelopes with leaflets, that it was they who made the coffee, etc. So what did they do? They expelled the guys, locked themselves in the office and talked together for twenty-four hours straight. And that was a key moment in the birth of feminism in France! Before, most of them had had experience in analysis, psychoanalysis, so it did not start from nothing. I think these movements develop through learning – through sociology, psychoanalysis, union action, it could be any type of learning – in order to capture experiences and try to share them.

**LC & MJB: How do sociologists account for actors' experiences?**

**LB:** To aim for objectivity, sociologists need to connect the instruments of description with reference points that allow us to take a critical view on this reality. This cannot be tied to particular morals, because these critical reference points should instead claim a certain universality, as I explained in *On Critique*. One way to proceed involves following actors when they criticize. These actors are realists. They take into account the situation in which they are acting so they can turn various contexts to their advantage,

saying something different in each one, for instance. So a worker can be very polite to his boss and yet be very critical at home.

I think we should follow the social construction process, the ways people themselves construct the world. Initially, each experience is particular, there are nothing but singularities in the world. People are then going to share those experiences, make them equivalent, give them a language, change them into demands, and attempt to construct proposals and claims, as well as modifications of reality and of the formats reality rests on. It is very interesting to follow as closely as possible the operations of qualification and critique as well as the way the various elements of reality are constructed and deconstructed. You follow them by reading novels, you follow them by conducting interviews, and you follow them by observing disagreements. Sociological work must follow constructions and deconstructions, and attempts to establish new formats of reality.

**LC & MJB: Do you think sociologists should go further and depart from the action plan of actors and institutions to try to analyze the framework they rest on?**

**LB:** I now think that it is impossible to do a sociology that is entirely pragmatic, entirely based on the analysis of situations. Incidentally, the actors themselves don't do that! They know their living environment depends on decisions over which they have very limited control, as individuals, and particularly, on institutions that say *what is what*, shaping the situation as it is. But they can use to their advantage the contradictions that always threaten the way institutions construct reality. Coming back to my earlier example of the bus, they can, for instance, show that, although the bus is supposed to be on time, this almost never happens in practice.

To criticize the creation of formats of reality, sociologists don't rely on a particular moral claim but on the work of social actors who question them and who attempt to establish fairer formats. But sociologists may try to go further than following the actors in their attempts to establish new formats of reality. They should use totalization tools that objectify what the stabilization of the actors' experiences relies on. They should undertake an almost impossible operation, consisting in connecting the description of this type of work with a normative judgment. In my book

*On Critique*, I describe how such operations have been carried out in various ways throughout the history of sociology. My thesis is not quite a "hypothesis" insofar as it is very difficult to demonstrate it empirically. I consider that the project of stabilization of reality is very unlikely to succeed within the framework of the nation-state for it is constantly disrupted by flows associated with the development of capitalism. These flows threaten the efforts aiming to homogenize reality within a territory and a population. Many studies, in particular by Gérard Noiriel – who works on the reinforcement of borders, on identity papers, and on linguistic unification – analyze the state's efforts to homogenize territories and populations. In France, an outstanding study by Jacques Revel, Dominique Julia, and Michel de Certeau focused on this topic 30 years ago. This study refers partly to Deleuze's opposition between territories and flows, since the project of the nation-state is constantly destabilized by flows that are due to the functioning of capitalism. In the social contexts where detective or spy novels were born, it is above all the nation-state that is able to, and aims to, construct reality.

**LC & MJB: Does this require sociologists to go beyond the context of the nation-state to invent new modalities of totalization, capable of grasping the creation and the destabilization of this framework?**

**LB:** Yes, indeed. Why am I interested in the history of detective novels in relation to the formation of the nation-state? Why was I able to do this? I think that I was able to do this because this framework is now very much in crisis. At the same time, we can observe this framework from the outside, even if it is difficult to describe this exteriority. With a thought experiment, we can at least go beyond the national and state framework. I think a central problem for sociologists today is that the architecture of sociology, particularly in France, but not only in France, depends largely on the nation-state established at the end of the nineteenth century. That is why we have an English sociology, a German sociology, a French sociology... Given that we experience nowadays a significant decline and transformation of this framework, many tools of sociology don't work anymore and must be reconstructed in order to grasp the ways in which new frameworks of reality's stabilization and critiques appear regardless of national borders. To those of you who enter this sociological craft, that is what you are going to have to do! ■

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# > An Extraordinary Institute in South Africa

## An Interview with Sarah Mosoetsa



| Sarah Mosoetsa.

South African universities have faced enormous challenges in overcoming the legacies of apartheid. We witnessed just how deep and complex are those legacies in recent student movements – #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall – but they should not detract from novel experiments taking place in South African higher education. Among these the National Institute of the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIHSS) stands out as especially successful. In its scope and ambition NIHSS is unique in the whole of Africa. Funded by the Department of Higher Education and Training, it has been busy cultivating the next generation of university faculty by sponsoring hundreds of PhD students, disseminating important scholarship to wider publics, and promoting dialogue about South Africa's past and future. The Institute is directed and inspired by **Sarah Mosoetsa**, a Professor of Sociology at the University of Witwatersrand. She is the author of the widely acclaimed *Eating from One Pot* (2012) – an account of family survival strategies in the face of plant closures. Here, she is interviewed by **Michelle Williams**, her colleague at the University of Witwatersrand, on the challenges and accomplishments of NIHSS.

**MW:** Tell us about the origins of NIHSS.

**SM:** Perhaps let me start with the historical context. In 2010 I was approached by Professor Ari Sitas and Dr. Bonginkosi Nzimande, the Minister of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), to form part of a two-person task team to investigate the state of the humanities and social sciences (HSS) in our higher education system. The Minister was concerned that the humanities and social sciences had been relegated in favor of the STEM [science, technology, engineering, and mathematics] disciplines. The impression was that the humanities and social sciences were not at the forefront of national transformation. The task team's mandate was broad and it involved a fact-finding mission based on conversations with academics around the country. Professor Sitas was the Director, and I served as his deputy. As the Ministerial task team, we visited all universities and

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engaged with academics, deans, heads of schools and departments about the humanities and social sciences. What we learned was revealing. While the natural sciences are important, their growth took place at the expense of the humanities and social sciences. It became clear that higher education was split in two. But we also learned fascinating stories about successes in the humanities and social sciences.

**MW: So this was the origin of the Institute?**

**SM:** Yes. The task team produced a report, “Charter for Humanities and Social Sciences,” which outlined the challenges, and importantly how humanities and social sciences could be re-ignited and given new energy. The Charter recommended setting up the National Institute of the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIHSS). The Minister adopted the Charter, and we immediately began work on setting up the NIHSS, which was formally established in December, 2013. Following the appointment of the Board, I was asked to be the acting CEO in May 2014. So then, together with the Board, I began planning the Institute, deciding on the core programs and so on.

**MW: I know the NIHSS has a variety of programs. Can you tell us about them?**

**SM:** There are actually seven main programs. Let me start with the *Doctoral Scholarship Program*, which is at the core of the Institute. Each year we award 150 three-year scholarships to South African nationals registered for a PhD. In awarding scholarships we work closely with the Humanities’ Deans at all South African public universities. Deans make recommendations for scholarships by providing us with a list of students they would like to be funded (based on their own internal adjudication processes), and, using its own criteria, NIHSS funds students from the Deans’ lists. It is a transparent process starting with an annual call for proposals to students at all universities. The recipients are 80% black South Africans and 60% women. By the end of 2016, 451 PhD scholarships had been awarded. In addition, there were 111 scholarships for non-South African nationals from the African continent.

**MW: That’s interesting. So you are also funding students from other parts of Africa?**

**SM:** Yes, we have a special *African Pathways Programme* (APP), based on the recognition that South Africa accepts a lot of PhD students from across the continent. Through APP we offer annually 37 three-year scholarships. The idea is to look to the rest of our continent for inspiration, while working together to grow and energize the NIHSS. We specifically wanted to move beyond historical legacies and promote more collaboration with our continental counterparts.

**MW: Can you say more about this collaboration?**

**SM:** As a young Institute, we needed to work with other entities on the continent, most of whom had never experimented with something like NIHSS. So we identified the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) as a partner to help select students and to develop collaborative work on the continent. The partnership is flourishing.

NIHSS also initiated the *African Pathways Mobility*. It is inspired by the European Erasmus Mundus model, but with a South African flavor. This initiative encourages staff and students to explore the continent in order to find new ideas and areas of research on the continent. We fund research trips to help develop new contacts, establish research networks, as well as pursue teaching and research collaboration.

**MW: To return to South Africa, was there a problem finding so many PhD students?**

**SM:** That’s a good question. Indeed, for our first two years (2013-5), we had to show there were students to be funded and that we could actually get them into the funding system. Now our focus is to ensure the quality of the students we sponsor and that they actually finish their degrees. In South Africa we have an attrition rate similar to our students in international programs, where only about 50% get a PhD. So we developed a Mentorship Program to try to ensure better throughput.

**MW: That sounds very important, can you tell us more about this mentorship program?**

**SM:** Twenty-one current and retired professors have been appointed to work with students in different provinces. For example, in the Western Cape we have created a regional doctoral school with two mentors. The mentors engage students regularly, providing guidance and a sense of community. They offer workshops that are broad and holistic and cover issues of methodology, theory and writing. Mentors are the anchors and they share their wealth of experience, but students also learn from each other. We view peer learning as vital. Doing a PhD is a very lonely process, this program helps create a cohort and sense of solidarity among students. The mentors have been incredibly generous and give a great deal of themselves to help the transformation process in our universities. We have been able to tap the skills and experience of Emeriti Professors, thereby also giving them the opportunity to be part of the transformation process.

**MW: Does the NIHSS promote research beyond support for PhD students?**

**SM:** Yes, indeed, we have what we call the *Catalytic Research Program* that funds innovative and cutting-edge

research, encouraging scholars to go beyond the same old research questions/projects and to explore new ways of thinking, new methodologies and new networks. Such projects may not ordinarily receive funding from traditional funders, whereas NIHSS supports research that falls outside the box. We also recognize that scholars in the humanities and social sciences write books, but mainstream funders prefer journal projects. Through our catalytic programs, we also support research by Honors and Masters students.

**MW: Such research that's conducted "outside the box," may have difficulty in finding publishing outlets. Are you able to help out in this regard too?**

**SM:** As I've said, we fund, initiate and collaborate on projects that aren't just about research and PhD scholarships. We realize that some great work doesn't get published because publishers find the work very good, but "not financially viable." The Institute does not tell publishers what to publish, but we do support manuscript publication that resonates with our mandate. It still has to go through the publishers' rigorous peer-review processes, but we subsidize the publishing costs either by guaranteeing to buy a number of books or directly contributing to the funding of the production process. We also fund publications that derive from conferences.

One of the initiatives I'm most proud of is the national book and creativity award for the humanities and social sciences, which had its first awards in March 2016. We gave six awards for a variety of works: the best non-fiction and fiction books, edited volumes, digital media as well as art. The awards are only open to academics based in South African universities. The first awards were for books published in 2013 and 2014 and we were overwhelmed with the number of submissions, demonstrating that our humanities and social sciences are, indeed, flourishing. We will have another set of awards in March 2017.

**MW: South Africa has had a long history of academics engaged in public affairs. Have you any plans for encouraging scholars to take their ideas and research into the public sphere?**

**SM:** Actually, we have something called the *Humanities Hub Program*, which sponsors research outside of normal academic spaces and cultivates unconventional places for generating knowledge. We are piloting it at Liliesleaf Farm, which is rich with history, having been the location for the underground liberation movement in the 1960s and where the Rivonia trialists were caught. It is a sad reality that many academics and students don't know about this space. This project turns such heritage sites into repositories of knowledge and ways of thinking differently about historical events. As part of this, Liliesleaf Farm hosts a colloquium centered on the Freedom Charter, offering a platform for different perspectives on history and promot-

ing conversations among academics, practitioners, and others. As you say, we know from the liberation movement that great ideas can spring from the engagement of academics with lay intellectuals.

**MW: Can you give us some examples of these ventures into the public sphere?**

**SM:** Our "humanities hubs" aim to get school children interested in the humanities and social sciences. For example, high-school kids were bussed to Liliesleaf Farm to expose them to the history on display there. This is a new way of teaching and of exposing students to our history. But not everyone can come to Liliesleaf Farm, so we developed a mobile exhibition taking a "mini Liliesleaf" to other sites such as the University of South Africa, University of Venda, and University of Limpopo.

This is a novel way to tell the story of the humanities and social sciences to ourselves as well as to the rest of world. It allows different dialogues around history, about ourselves, and about the Freedom Charter. We developed a Freedom Charter table with a suggestion box. We ask people two things: i) If you were to rewrite the Freedom Charter what would you include? And ii) Which clause of the Freedom Charter do you hold most dear? People have been writing amazing things. And many issues are coming up, ones around unemployment, poverty, and so on. Liliesleaf was a pilot project and we are planning to roll out similar "humanities hubs" in other places.

**MW: Does your institute have any international programs?**

**SM:** Through our South-South network we have initiated and are funding an India-South Africa research program in partnership with the Indian Council for Social Sciences Research (ICSSR). We are exploring similar research partnerships with Brazil and other countries.

We also coordinate the South African think tank for BRICS – the association of the five major emerging economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. There are different divisions – business, academic, civil society – and we organize the academic division, which includes coordinating academic forums with the five countries, followed by the annual BRICS Council and Summit. This year the academic forum is hosted in China, and in 2018 South Africa will host it. This initiative focuses on policy work and advising government. The main themes for the academic forum vary (e.g., social security, health, education, energy) and are determined by the host country. The forums inform the BRICS summit and provide policy advice to the heads of states in the five countries. We see this as an important area that creates a close interface between academics and policy making.

**MW: I find it amazing how much you have accomplished in such a short time. What have been some of your biggest challenges?**

**SM:** I think we have come a long way. The Institute is only three years old and already we have accomplished a great deal. It has been fully funded by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), but working within a government department was an enormous challenge. All along we relied on key champions in DHET who pushed things through the bureaucracy. Without their support we couldn't have achieved anything. It's also been a very collective process, working closely with the NIHSS Board.

In the beginning we faced opposition from some academics and universities, who feared that we would replace existing entities, divert funds from universities, and that it would give the Minister of Higher Education control over the humanities and social sciences. All of these concerns were acknowledged and addressed, and many of our early critics are now our biggest supporters. NIHSS is a legal entity accountable to an independent Board. We were very clear that the Institute would not compete with existing entities, but rather would complement their work.

Some of the day-to-day challenges relate to the simple functioning of our programs. We are still setting up internal systems. For instance, we are experimenting with a new app for the mentorship program to facilitate communication among mentors and students. We have learned a lot

as a young organization. I think it takes three to five years to really set up and get systems in place. We are pleased by what we have already accomplished.

**MW: What is the future of NIHSS?**

**SM:** I think it's amazing that in such a short period of time we have managed to make NIHSS something real. The Minister has been an important part of this, but he is not the only one. The Minister's support made it possible for the Institute to flourish. He actually reads our documents, engages us, challenges, and supports us. This has been a huge boon for the NIHSS. Some have wondered what will happen if the Minister goes. Politics are fluid everywhere and this is a concern, but we are working hard to establish ourselves and prove our enduring worth by doing a great job. We have secure funding through 2019/20. In this time we hope to graduate at least 300 doctoral students, host at least four award cycles, and financially support the publication of at least 40 books. If this is accomplished, then we've done our job. We will have done more than any other entity in such a short space of time.

I am pleased, humbled, and excited about how humanities and social sciences in South Africa have embraced the Institute. I have been pleasantly surprised by the responses of academics to our many requests for reviewing proposals, to act as judges, to mentor doctoral students, etc. Not one person has turned us down. The academic community sees us as a major asset. ■

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# > The Representation of African-American Women

## An Interview with Patricia Hill Collins



| Patricia Hill Collins.

**Patricia Hill Collins** is a Distinguished Professor of Sociology at the University of Maryland and former President of the American Sociological Association. A leading US social theorist, she is famous for developing the related ideas of “multiple oppressions,” “intersectionality,” and the “outsider within” first in her now classic *Black Feminist Thought* (1990) and then in *Fighting Words* (1998) and *Black Sexual Politics* (2006). Here we present an extract from a longer interview conducted by **Labinot Kunushevc**, an MA student at the University of Prishtina, Kosovo.

**LK:** *From your perspective, what is the most appropriate theoretical and empirical methodology for research into the study of social inequality?*

**PHC:** For me, I start with the study of the “dominant discourse” and the dominant discourse in the West consists of a constellation of knowledge projects that together constitute a seemingly hegemonic set of ideas and practices. This dominant discourse sets the terms of debate – what counts as important questions, what counts as evidence, as well as what can be ignored as secondary. In the United States, the dominant discourse is shaped by intersections of race, class, gender, sexuality, and nation as systems of power. In my work, I have investigated how racism, sexism, class exploitation, and heterosexism operate to shape the lived experiences of different social groups. Black women’s experiences were the point of entry into these larger

questions of power and knowledge, but African-American women’s experiences are not the endpoint.

I approach African-American women as facing a set of social problems that are constructed at the intersection of multiple systems of power. Take violence, for example. Gendered domestic violence against Black women by their boyfriends, husbands, and fathers occurs in a context of state-sanctioned racial violence against Black people that is part of the legacy of slavery and racial discrimination. These two forms of violence gain meaning from one another – they are interconnected. My work on Black feminism examines how Black women intellectuals and activists such as Angela Davis, June Jordan, and Kimberlé Crenshaw, have consistently pointed out that the social problems faced by Black women could never be solved by looking to only one system of oppression alone. Us-

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ing the particularities of African-American women's experiences, Black feminist intellectuals raised the question of the simultaneity of oppressions, which in turn opened up a vibrant area of scholarship and politics that we now call *intersectionality*.

The combination of systems of power that shape a given society's dominant discourse may vary. For example, the intersecting systems of power that I examine in the US – of race, class, gender, sexuality, and citizenship (nationality) – reflect the specific history of the US. My sense is that a very new nation such as your own that is just coming into being carries with it different intersections, for example, ethnicity, class, and religion, that have special salience in light of Kosovo's history. It is important to remember that, regardless of different histories that reflect varying constellations of power relations, elite groups control both the overarching dominant discourse as well as the terms of knowledge that ensue. Groups may vary from one society to the next, but power relations of social inequality mean that not everyone has access to shaping the dominant discourse, although everyone in a society is influenced by it in some fashion.

The question of the most appropriate theoretical and empirical methodology reflects where one is located within the power relations of knowledge production generally, and which specific bodies of knowledge you wish to engage. In my case, I chose to engage in theoretical work, arguing that when you pay attention to the epistemological underpinnings of scholarship, you get closer to the heart of power. My theoretical work investigates varying dimensions of intersecting power relations, with special attention to how they shape knowledge. In this regard, the framework of intersectionality has been a useful analytic tool for examining social inequality, both within academic discourse as well as in politics.

**LK: What is the role of media representation in women's oppression and liberation, and how does it affect women's participation in the public and political spheres?**

**PHC:** All women experience media representations that present social scripts for how to be feminine. Yet because

societies differ dramatically, the images of ideal women vary accordingly. In the United States and similar multicultural societies, media representations of women differ depending on varying combinations of race, gender identity, ethnicity, class and citizenship status. The white middle-class heterosexual woman holding US citizenship is held up as an ideal type for women from other groups. This is an ideal, a representation, a social construction and not an actual category of people. Traditionally, this feminine ideal was presented in the image of the stay-at-home mother, but more recently the image has been updated to include working women in high-powered jobs. Within a multicultural society, the closer other groups of women came to meeting that ideal, the more favorably they were judged.

In *Black Feminist Thought*, I examine how African-American women confront four main stereotypes: (1) the mule, the woman who works like an animal without complaint; (2) the jezebel, the highly sexualized woman who is often depicted as a prostitute; (3) the mammy, the Black woman domestic worker whose loyalty to her employer is beyond reproach; and (4) the Black lady, the educated Black woman who has given up family life in exchange for a career. But these representations are not simply benign stereotypes, anachronisms of past practices of racism, sexism, and class exploitation. Instead, these are controlling images because they provide social scripts for how people are expected to view and treat Black women. More importantly, they are the social scripts that Black women are expected to internalize.

Feminism and more broadly movements for women's rights have aimed to disrupt both these representations and the power relations that they represent. When women reject the representations of themselves as idle housewives or as mules who should put up with low pay and no job security, or as loyal servants to male and female bosses across lines of race and ethnicity, they enter the public sphere with a greatly changed consciousness. In this sense, ideas and activism are intimately linked. Changing representations can change behavior, and changed behavior in turn fosters different beliefs about women in the public sphere. ■

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# > After Lee Kuan Yew

by **Vineeta Sinha**, National University of Singapore and ISA Vice-President for Publications, 2014-2018



Chinese devotees of the Guanyin Temple offering joss sticks at the neighboring Sri Krishnan Temple. Photo by Daniel Goh.

**T**he looming figure of the late Lee Kuan Yew, the first Prime Minister of independent Singapore, appears to have defined the very existence and identity of this island nation-state. The Singapore style of governance associated with, and indeed extending from, the persona of Lee Kuan Yew, has been christened “pragmatic authoritarianism,” “soft-style authoritarianism,” “enlightened despotism” and even “benevolent dictatorship.” The state’s narrative upholds the principles of meritocracy, multiculturalism, and rule of law as having delivered clean government, efficient bureaucracy, modernization, economic development and prosperity, and one of the world’s highest per capita incomes. Invoking an ideology that accepts socio-cultural differences amongst its constituent ethnic groups and accords “equality” to all (see Noorman Abdullah’s essay, “After Multiracialism” in this issue), this narrative speaks not to numerical equivalence but to equality of opportunity, rejecting official and institutionalized-based ethnic discrimination by privileging merit.

But this powerful credo has made it challenging, if not impossible, to even articulate a discourse on racial differences and racism; it has rendered invisible the politics and contradictions of a calibrated meritocracy (see Youyenn Teo’s essay, “After Meritocracy” in this issue).

Singapore’s managerial and administrative style of politics has prioritized planning, efficiency, control, and regulation. The day-to-day functioning of Singaporean society is framed by a bureaucracy viewed as devoid of corrupt and dishonest practices – and one that operates efficiently, perhaps too efficiently. Inherited from the British, this “infrastructure” has been honed and meticulously reproduced by the Singapore leadership to reinforce scrupulous adherence to rule-governed behavior – something that would both impress and disturb Max Weber. Its guiding principles of centralized governance and close engagement with all societal domains have required an expansive state machinery with a supporting network of bureaucratic organizations. It is pre-

cisely through these mediating institutions that the state aspires to enforce policies that impact everyday lives of its citizens, inevitably enacted under a canopy of pervasive authoritarian and pragmatic ideologies. Describing Singapore’s “culture of control,” Carl Trocki argued that the postcolonial state exercised greater levels of authority and “took responsibility for [...] complete management and surveillance of society.” Chua Beng Huat and Kwok Kian Woon also note that in post-independence Singapore, the “expansion in state intervention and [...] a concentration of power in the state machinery” have further reduced autonomy in several areas of everyday life.

Academic and lay discourses alike link Singapore intimately and inextricably with Lee Kuan Yew and his brand of uncompromising, authoritarian politics. Singapore’s citizenry have been typically described as conservative, fearful, docile, and passive. However, Singaporeans have long been critical of a top-down, “using a sledge hammer to break open a walnut” approach to governance – an integral and sometimes tiresome part of public discourse in Singapore.

And what of the relationship between political structures and social science? Singapore’s sociology has also been persistently viewed through the lens of Lee Kuan Yew. Postcolonial Singapore’s leaders prioritized economic growth – reflecting the needs of a newly-independent country where economic development and calculated social change seemed urgent. Social science research (funded largely

by the government) was expected to be “relevant,” feeding into the nation-building project if not contributing directly to the modernizing process. From 1970 through the 1990s, social science knowledge production was geared towards generating information about the Singapore’s rapid sociocultural, economic, and political changes, reflecting the priorities of a nation-state managing a multi-ethnic, multi-religious population.

Recently, however, this alignment between university-based social scientists and national interests – never absolute – has become more tenuous. Singapore’s sociologists have problematized the state’s narrative on multiculturalism, meritocracy, family, neo-liberalism, globalization, Singapore’s history, multi-religiosity and religious harmony, absence of poverty and inequalities, etc. In another twist, the Singaporean state is now building independent research capacity in its various ministries, a move that could reduce reliance on university-based research.

Not surprisingly, the passing of Lee Kuan Yew in 2015 triggered visceral responses for many Singaporeans, as the nation mourned the loss of modern Singapore’s architect and rudder. But interestingly, this has also been a liberating moment of sorts, with a sense of being unbound from restrictions and hyper-regulation, and of movement towards freedoms, including political ones.

But this almost euphoric tone needs to be tempered with a good dose of sociological imagination. As an ethnographer practicing my craft in Singapore, my research on religions in practice is grounded in the primacy and efficacy of everyday life. Given the broader organization of social and political life, the island’s sacred domains are similarly embedded within a highly rationalized mentality, framed by bureaucratic, administrative, and legislative boundaries. The uniqueness of Singapore’s religious landscape, especially its culture of bureaucracy and

its impact on expressions of religiosity, needs elaboration (see Francis Lim’s essay, “After Secularism” in this issue).

That the Singaporean state is interventionist has been the starting point of my work, which maps the “messiness” of Singapore’s religious landscape, revealing the world of “jungle temples” (sacred sites located in sheltered spaces to escape the authorities’ gaze), and the realm of religious festivals and places of worship – making visible the entwined everyday religious lives of lay Singaporeans as Hindus, Taoists, Buddhists, and Catholics. As religious practitioners recreate sacred geographies and consciousness in highly circumscribed terrains, the topography of urban Singapore demonstrates the “disarray” and “disorderliness” of its religious realm: religious processions have even been enacted in sports stadiums and religious festivals held in swimming pools. The “disregard” for carefully-drawn boundaries of “sacred/secular” and “private/public” typified Singapore’s religious domain, throughout Lee Kuan Yew’s authoritarian reign. These alternative readings of the religious sphere and its engagement within the political confront dominant views of Singapore city as sanitized, sterile, and overly regulated.

What then can be said of the everyday capacity to negotiate official structures? Despite the firm presence of bureaucratic structures and an interventionist stance, a strong desire for religious experimentation defines Singapore’s religious domain. While such interventions do reconfigure the religious sphere, they do not eliminate religious innovation and creativity. Regulating religion has unintentionally opened up new spaces for religious freedom. In practice, this labyrinth of officialdom leaves room for negotiation, as practitioners make strategic use of regulations to achieve desired everyday outcomes.

My ethnography of the complex socio-political and religious landscape of Singapore, has encouraged me to

query stereotypical characterizations of jaded, passive, oppressed citizens facing a highly authoritarian government, especially *during* Lee Kuan Yew’s tenure. My narrative is indeed at odds with the typical account of Singapore’s religious domains, and is set against the hegemonic discourse of a controlling Singapore state that has functioned to over-determine individuals’ lives, leading at best to docile, predictable behavior, and at worst, to paralysis and lack of agency.

With the lens of an authoritarian state firmly in place, academic (and lay) narratives are often defined by a bullish certainty either that the Singapore story is already well known, or that what might be revealed would be predictably dull and uninspiring. Singapore Studies in general continue to confront readings of Singapore’s sociocultural and political life mediated by a rather dated view of Singapore’s politics. Indeed, in presenting alternate visions of Singapore society, I have sometimes been read either as an apologist for an authoritarian state, or as naively content with describing “micro,” everyday victories of the subjugated citizen/non-actor, without recognizing that the macro, political apparatus remains firmly hegemonic.

Thus, Singapore’s sociology has its hands full. It has to not only produce alternative readings of official, hegemonic narratives and accounts of Singaporean society, but also to address persistently cynical interpretations of both Singapore’s society and its sociological sense-making. Moving beyond these clichéd, formulaic discourses towards plural, alternative imaginings of Singaporean social and political life needs to be embraced both as a challenge and an ambition. Social structures are not crafted by individuals; neither do they disappear overnight. The real question may well be: What of Singapore’s political landscape after current Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong? ■

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# > After Multiracialism

by **Noorman Abdullah**, National University of Singapore, and member of ISA Thematic Group on Senses and Society (TG07)



Sculpture of Malay and Indian traders at the Telok Ayer historical site in present-day Chinatown district of Singapore. Photo by Daniel Goh.

**S**peaking at a National Day rally in August 2016, Prime Minister of Singapore Lee Hsien Loong discussed race relations in Singapore and the call for minority representation at the highest levels of political office. Minority representation in this context pertained exclusively to race – not gender, not sexuality, or any other socially meaningful and intersectional categories. Interestingly, back in 1989, Lee’s father, former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, insisted that Singapore was not ready for a non-Chinese Prime Minister; as late as 2008, the younger Lee said such an outcome was “possible but not soon” (*The Straits Times*, November 9, 2008). Ironically, two weeks after the 2016 rally, Singapore’s main English daily, *The Straits Times*, published an entire page titled “Who Will Lead Singapore Next?”, offering profiles of potential candidates to succeed Lee (September 4, 2016) – all ethnic-majority Chinese cabinet ministers.

Lee’s speeches reveal the sustained racialization of Singapore society. Far from being downplayed, the salience and visibility of race has been accentuated and heightened through social, political, and cultural policy, and remains significant in Singapore’s everyday life. Such hegemonic expressions of organizing social and political life stems from Singapore’s model of multiracialism; the categories “Chinese,” “Malay,” “Indian” and “Others” – officially condensed as CMIO – assign each racial category its own culture and language.

Built on legacies of British colonialism, CMIO multiracialism and meritocracy together constitute key defining ideological tenets of the accidental state that was formed by Singapore’s 1965 discharge from Malaysia – an expulsion that was itself the result of bitter communal disputes between Malaysia and Singapore over the preservation of rights for ethnic Chinese and other minorities. This framework became part of nation-building imperatives in post-independent Singapore: in its efforts to protect and legitimize Singapore’s survival as a small city-state, the government has emphasized conferring and guaranteeing equal status, treatment, opportunities, and respect to the different ethnic and religious groups. Such engagements with race ubiquitously translate into a range of educational and language policies, self-help groups, public housing allocation, population control, and political representation.

Given Singapore’s claim to an ostensibly race-neutral approach, the state is rendered as an equal and disinterested protector of race relations within the boundaries of national interests. At the same time, an arsenal of policies allows the state to reproduce specific racial proportions of the population. This racial arithmetic paradoxically ensures and maintains an ethnic Chinese majority and dominance, despite an emphasis on equality. Then-Deputy Prime Minister and later elected President Ong Teng Cheong further claimed that preferential treatment to certain groups did not go against the letter and spirit of the Constitution. In fact, a discourse of multiculturalism that accords equality to all cultures implicitly allows some cultures to become more equal than others.

More crucially however, as a prescriptive means of social organization to manage cultural difference, CMIO multiracialism tends to obscure and elide socially meaningful ethnic, regional, linguistic, religious, and cultural differences within these officially sanctioned categories. It also entrenches and heightens racial boundaries through the recognition, celebration, and involution of differences between CMIO racial groups. Race, and by extension culture, are considered political and administrative categories, and have been treated, classified, and institutionalized in essentialist, bounded, and internally homogeneous terms.

Furthermore, critical discussions about cultural practices are often circumscribed in the interest of maintaining racial tolerance and harmony. Tolerance is sustained through detachment and entails putting up with what may

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be construed as inconveniences. On the other hand, there is minimal emphasis on intercultural dialogue, reciprocal respect, collaborative pursuits, and the multiculturalist interest and curiosity that extend to the deep understanding, knowledge, appreciation, and acceptance of the worth and value of differences. The outcome is a racial harmony that does not venture beyond the cultural differences described in official campaigns.

Yet at the same time, alternative possibilities and imaginations in everyday life, and more complex engagements with race, difference, and multiculturalism in post-independence Singapore, suggest there is much potential to move beyond state interventions and other top-down initiatives. These everyday intercultural practices emerge organically, without intervention, disruption, and interference from the outside, with cultural crossing of boundaries and permeable group boundaries. As cultural producers, people involved in ordinary exchanges grapple, negotiate, and interact with cultural difference and change.

The rich texture of everyday life is testament to cultural practices that go against and beyond the grain of institutionally recognized racial and cultural categories without much need for top-down state intervention. In the field of religion, the negotiation of such boundaries has been understood through processes that include “syncretism,” “hybridization and transfiguration,” and “mixing and matching.” Hinduism mingles with Taoism in the realm of beliefs, practices, space, and ritual objects; temples may not be easily classified as either Taoist or Hindu, while Hindu households may include representations of Krishna, Murugan, and Ganesh, alongside Jesus Christ, Mary, the Goddess Guan Yin, and the Laughing Buddha in their altars. Such mixing-and-matching reveal practitioners actively selecting from different named religions in their performance of everyday religiosity. Ethnic Malay-Muslims and Chinese may seek the guidance of spiritual practitioners from both sides in the event of a spiritual affliction.

Similarly, iconic ethnic food in Singapore – *laksa*, chicken rice, *rojak*, *mee goreng* and others – exhibits culinary bor-

rowing and hybridization, though food has often been officially “misrecognized” with dishes considered “representative” of different CMIO “racial” groups<sup>1</sup>.

In the realm of language, the organic emergence and everyday use of Singlish disrupt a simplified conflation of CMIO race categories and language. As a colloquial English-based creole and patois incorporating Chinese dialects, Malay, Tamil and other local languages, the state’s ambivalence toward Singlish is obvious in its “Speak Good English” campaigns.

Sociologists and anthropologists have explored the engagements, encounters, and experiences which transpire at different interfaces throughout Singapore. These take the shape of everyday living religions, food and foodways, language, senses, and films and plays. Such cultural practices disrupt the essentialist and mutually-exclusive boundaries established in officially sanctioned racial categories. A critical engagement with the question of race, CMIO multiracialism, and the privileges that come with power and dominance reflect the possibilities of imagining Singapore beyond state-centered discourses and appropriations.

Today, Singapore confronts an intensified migrant influx, alongside engagements with cosmopolitan identities and new aspirations in an increasingly unequal world. Instead of pursuing a utopian ideal vision of racial harmony, or a liberal disbanding of race as a category altogether, sociologists and anthropologists should encourage different groups in Singapore society to undertake candid and reflexive self-critique and awareness of the conditions, limits, and alternatives of race, difference, and multiculturalism. Through these endeavors, individuals and communities might be encouraged to think about, debate, imagine, envisage, and construct characteristically meaningful Singapore’s identities that are *both* shared and different at the same time. These visions require weaving *both* recognition and action, *both* respect and doubt, and *both* consensus and struggle to hone a more critically-informed, creative, and multiculturalist citizenry. ■

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<sup>1</sup> Chua Beng Huat and Ananda Rajah (2001). “Hybridity, Ethnicity and Food in Singapore” pp. 161-197 in David Y.H. Wu and Tan Chee-Beng (eds.) *Changing Chinese Foodways in Asia*, Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press; Low, Kelvin E.Y. (2015). “Tasting Memories, Cooking Heritage: A Sensuous Invitation to Remember” pp. 61-82 in Lily Kong and Vineeta Sinha (eds.) *Food, Foodways and Foodscapes: Culture, Community, and Consumption in Post-Colonial Singapore*, Singapore: World Scientific Publishing.

# > After Meritocracy

by **Youyenn Teo**, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore



In contemporary Singapore, “enrichment” and “tuition” centers are an increasingly common sight. Photo by Youyenn Teo.

**W**alk into any mall in Singapore and you will see “enrichment” and “tuition” centers, advertising help for kids who want to “succeed in school and in life” and training for students in the “Art of Learning How To Learn.” Some teach subjects aligned to school curricula – English, Mandarin, Mathematics, Science, Physics, Economics – while others are more hobby-centered, focusing on subjects such as chess and robotics. Directly academic or otherwise, they aim, as one center puts it, to get students “exam-ready.”

The ubiquity of these centers reflects key features of Singapore’s education system, and the way its early stratification and search for precocity compels parents to seek “enrichment” for children as young as three years old. Regular stratification keeps the pressure on throughout children’s schooling, and enrichment/tuition centers thus cater to all ages and levels. Schools rely on standard-

ized examinations, so all kinds of activities are funneled through and sold on “exam readiness.” Finally, stakes are high and competition is intense, so centers appeal not just to students who are failing but to students who want to come out top. In contemporary Singapore, common sense views extra-curricular tuition/enrichment as “necessities” for keeping up or doing well.

The most common critique of meritocracy in Singapore is that it is not working as it should. Parents express agony over too much homework and too many exams. Critics concerned about inequality point to a need to ensure that children from lower-income homes have opportunities too. But few point to extra-curricular training as logical outcomes rather than aberrations of meritocracy.

In the sociological literature, meritocracy is widely recognized as a system that sorts, differentially rewards, and then legitimizes victors. It relies on narrow notions of what is worth rewarding and what is not, and it works well when there is what Pierre Bourdieu termed “misrecognition” – where the public believes the system is based on one set of principles, but it really works on the basis of another. In this case, Singapore’s system rewards economic and cultural capital passed on from parents to children, rather than merely individual hard work. With misrecognition of stratification’s real principles and mechanisms, meritocracy legitimizes the victors, casting them as individuals who have succeeded on their own hard work and intelligence rather than through inherited unfair advantages. And meritocracy tells us a specific story about failures, attributing those, too, to individual attributes rather than systemic disadvantages.

Sociologically, the Singapore education system works exactly as engineered. In addition to promoting a narrow set of traits and sorting students into precise categories, the general public sincerely believes that the traits that are rewarded are reflections of individual capacities and effort. Persons who are adequately credentialed, advance through the right “streams” and “good” schools to emerge with the formal qualifications, secure jobs in professions, academia, civil service, or government, and are widely seen as deserving the status and salaries they command. Enrichment and tuition centers apparently do little to shake people’s faith in the general logic of the system. The bar is perceived as high, sometimes overly so, but the rewards are not perceived as arbitrary.

Critical sociological insights about education and meritocracy have a difficult time gaining traction. To understand why, we must explore two features of Singapore society: the institutionalization of individualism and the salience of teleological narratives.

The logic that underpins meritocracy is woven into everyday life, through multiple state institutions and complex policies which shape options and influence pathways of marriage, childbearing and rearing, household management, and care of the elderly or the ill. The logic, laid bare, is this: individuals must take care of themselves and their own families. The Singapore state, although highly interventionist in shepherding Singaporeans toward specific ways of organizing their lives, is resolutely opposed to universal welfare provisions. Individuals' acquisitions of skills and credentials, continuous employment, and heterosexual partnership, are preconditions to public goods and wellbeing – housing, healthcare, childcare, elderly care, retirement support. Failure to attain the preconditions – credentials, job, marriage, offspring (who reproduce the cycle) – means exclusion from security, wellbeing, and social membership. Acquiring individual “merit” is thus a crucial aspect of deserving opportunity, while the nuclear family remains a basic socioeconomic unit of policy-making and governance – with cross-generational inter-dependencies. Thus, families' investments in the acquisition of the sanctioned merit are sensible, even necessary.

Second, meritocracy is supported by a powerful teleological narrative of nation and of specific selves. Singapore's meritocracy is contrasted to the ethno-racial favoritism and discrimination in Malaysia, its closest neighbor. Meritocracy – rational, systematic, and impersonal – has been credited as the source of Singapore's phenomenal economic success, its near-miraculous survival as a nation. The narrative of the nation's progress finds its corollary in the biographical narratives of Singaporeans who have “made it.” As in Pierre Bourdieu's France, the “state nobility” – those anointed as “meritorious” by the world's top universities – sit in positions from which they can speak and be heard. From the offices of the political elite and policy makers, the desks of journalists and university professors, individuals view the system through the lenses of their limited biographical narratives: as a system that may not be working perfectly, but has clearly worked, because, after all, they/we are there, at or near the top. Those considered to have failed are silenced, isolated, and docile in the narrative of individual failures. Meritocracy is held up as a good system, importantly, because those who could speak against it, stop

short of critiquing a system which legitimizes their own social positions and senses of worth.

The price of meritocracy is high. Low-income parents, who cannot give their children the resources to gain the qualities legible as merit, pay a high price in material and symbolic worth(lessness). As inequality across society intensifies, people higher on the income spectrum may also pay a price, through their fear that even a little downward mobility would mean real costs. The massive and costly shadow education business, depression and anxiety among youth, the stress experienced by parents and the time wasted supervising homework, and the entrenchment of inequality through what amounts to uneven gaming of the system – these are costs borne by society.

What are sociologists to do? We need both a research program and an activist agenda.

On the research front, it is increasingly apparent that the sociology of education cannot be separated from studies of the family, welfare, state-society relations, and politics. To explore meritocracy, we need all the analytical tools in our toolkit, including a deeper appreciation for the ways in which what appears irrational from one side (e.g. costly private investments in education) makes perfect sense when we understand the dynamics of another (e.g. familialist anti-welfare regime). We need to approach these questions not simply in terms of education, but as a broad agenda for interrogating inequality and its multiple intertwining sites of reproduction.

Beyond this, if sociological tools are to gain traction in public conversations about meritocracy, we need to disrupt the dominant narrative. Disrupting the dominant narrative requires, as a precondition, self-reflexivity. Scholars must be willing to go beyond thinking about meritocracy and inequality as problems faced only by their research subjects, but also to scrutinize our own privileges and the ways we perpetuate inequality through everyday practices and discourse. Disrupting the dominant narrative also requires engagement with audiences well beyond academia. If, as a discipline, we already have critical tools for understanding the reproduction of privilege and marginality, we must do a better job of spreading these ideas beyond academics – through writings disseminated among various publics, through talks and discussions with varied audiences, and through strategic engagements with civil society, educators, policy makers, and parents. ■

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# > After Secularism

by **Francis Khek Gee Lim**, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore



Devotees worshipping at a home temple in a public housing flat. Photo by Francis Lim.

In many ways, to be a Singaporean entails a constant negotiation with a state-imposed system of social classification, in both public and private life. Of course, all modern nation-states engage in defining, circumscribing, and hence governing the different social and cultural groupings they encompass; these are after all the essential tools of governance and modern nation-building. Being a Singaporean involves constant engagement with the state's inscription of three key identity markers. Race, language and religion are essential narrative themes in the nation's founding myth as well as important governance tools through which the state seeks to exercise social and political control.

When every school student recites daily Singapore's "Pledge" to be one united nation, "regardless of language, race, and religion"; when each citizen must declare their "race" on their national identity card; when the Presidential Council for Minority Rights and the Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act (1991) are key to Singaporean multiculturalism; when some Christians have been convicted for sedition for over-zealous proselytism, while some "self-radicalized" Muslims have been detained under the Internal Security Act for their alleged terrorist plots; it is easy to see that in Singapore, issues of race, language and religion are deeply intertwined and politically charged.

For the Singaporean government, secularism is considered essential for the peaceful coexistence of the country's diverse religious and ethnic groups. Any sociological research on issues related to ethnicity and religion must grapple with the fact that Singapore is a multi-religious society with an officially secular state. Singapore's religious

plurality is largely the consequence of contingent, historical factors, including its former status as an important trading colony that attracted diverse communities from the Asian region and beyond. The promotion of secularism, however, stems from the state's conscious ideological work since the nation's founding – a persistent effort, inextricably bound up with the circumstances under which Singapore separated from the Federation of Malaysia in 1965, and with efforts by its political leaders and citizens to carve out a national identity that stands in contrast to the strong Islamic cultures of neighboring Malaysia and Indonesia.

For an avowedly secular state, it is striking that Singapore has a Minister-in-charge of Muslim Affairs. On the Eid al-Adha (the Feast of Sacrifice) in 2016, the minister warned Singaporeans to reject ideas that might undermine integration, and reminded them that the religious occasion was "also a good time to reflect on religious and racial integration in Singapore." In the country's public political discourse, Islam is often portrayed as the Other – both in relation to Singapore's self-perception as a secular nation-state, and as a potential threat to social harmony linked to a perceived global spread of "extremist" ideologies.

In a context where a strong state actively slots peoples into neat categories, where "races" are defined through cultural difference such as language and religion, sociological research touching on ethnicity and religion tends to adopt two different approaches. One approach, in the more positivist sociological tradition, treats "race" and "religion" as independent variables. A second approach critically examines how power shapes boundary-making, exploring how the boundaries of both ethnicity and religion

may shift and blur on the ground, producing ambiguous, mixed, or multiple identities that defy neat classification. Thus, research on religious pluralism in Singapore finds that many participants in popular Hinduism and Daoism (from “Indian” and “Chinese” communities, respectively) worship deities such as Muneeswaran, Tua Pek Kong, Tai Seng, Lord Krishna, and Hanuman, hailing from two religious traditions. Some of these deities are even housed in the same temple grounds.

Critical studies of secularism suggest that secularism may help legitimate Singapore’s multiracialism in pursuit of social harmony, but they also emphasize secularism’s role in efforts to instill “objective” and “rational” deliberations in the political and policymaking process. Singaporean-style secularism is not the anti-theistic, militant version that can be found in some Communist countries; rather, Singaporean secularism recognizes the importance of religion in people’s lives, and, in principle, accords equal treatment to all religions. Quite apart from the constitutional guarantee of freedom of religion, the state encourages various religious groups to contribute to societal needs, especially in the provision of social welfare services and in promoting moral and cultural values.

Singaporean secularism involves two essential aspects. On the one hand, the state insists on keeping religion out of politics, most notably by prohibiting religious organizations from mobilizing their members for political activism. On the other hand, the state aims to control and manage religious communities by installing government representatives as “advisors” to religious organizations such as the Singapore Islamic Council (MUIS), temples, mosques, or faith-based voluntary welfare groups. These “advisors” act as checks on the ground, shaping religious discourses so that they converge with the state’s agenda.

Like many modern states, Singapore legally certifies places of worship for various religious groups, deploying a functional conception of territoriality underpinned by the ideology of development and modernization. As a city-

state facing land scarcity, the authorities embrace a highly utilitarian and interventionist urban planning approach. When the Singapore Land Authority acquires land previously occupied by a religious organization, religious groups have been forced to move, shut down, or even combine congregations. For example, Chinese temples previously located at different sites have been brought together to form “combined temples,” with different altars from the formerly separate temples now housed in a single building. Recently, the government has proposed constructing multi-story buildings where various religious groups would rent spaces for their activities.

Many researchers on religion in Singapore have examined state strategies for managing and regulating religion, but there has been less research on how some religious groups find innovative ways to circumvent secularist policies. For example, Terence Chong, Daniel Goh and Mathew Mathews have investigated how some evangelical Christians seek to subtly shape policymaking and political discourse by co-opting political leaders, and expressing support for the government’s conservative policies on matters relating to sexuality and the family. Studies of popular Hinduism, including Vineeta Sinha’s work on Muneeswaran worship, describe ritual activities conducted in forested areas, out of the authorities’ sight. My own research examines how the Yiguan Dao, a transnational “salvation religion” of Chinese origin, has converted public housing apartments (officially “secular” sites) into temples. Similarly, Christians have organized “cell group” meetings in their homes, while Chinese spirit mediums and Daoist priests have established “house temples.”

These cases suggest a possible limit to Singapore’s state management of religion, resulting from the secularist distinction between “private” and “public” religious domains – a distinction which may create both a limitation on the state’s ability to completely control religion, and the space for certain religious groups to operate outside the official purview of the state. ■

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# > After Globalization

by **Daniel P.S. Goh**, National University of Singapore



Rehearsals for the National Day Parade at the Marina Bay floating platform. Photo by Daniel Goh.

**T**here are two founding stories told about the national museums and history textbooks in Singapore. The first and long-standing one told since independence in 1965 is the founding of the British settlement on the island in 1819 by Sir Stamford Raffles of the East India Company. In this story, the genius of Raffles was said to be his recognition of the strategic geographical location of Singapore, sitting at the tip of the Malay Peninsula, right at the junction of trade winds between the Indian Ocean and East Asia. With good governance and open immigration, the settlement grew from a Malay fishing village into a modern multiracial metropolis. The second story, more recently accepted, is about the earliest known settlement on the island, Temasek. Based on archaeological finds and records of early Asian explorers, Temasek was a fortified city and cosmopolitan trading port established in the fourteenth century by a prince of the declining Srivijaya Empire. It then came under the control of the Sultanate of Malacca in the fifteenth century. After Malacca fell to the Portuguese in 1511, the city was abandoned and the place reverted to the Sanskrit name of the island: Singapura.

The shared ending point in both founding stories is the genius of the People's Action Party, Singapore's ruling party since 1959, when universal suffrage and self-government was first established for the British colony, thereby recognizing the features of the city that would make for its success. The common thread in both stories is that *globalization* was not only integral to Singapore's success, but also crucial for its survival. Globalization is Singapore. Thus, even when compelled into forging an imagined national community in 1965, after Singapore was involuntarily separated from the Federation of Malaysia, the ruling party ideologue S. Rajaratnam, who was central to the

young country's nation-building efforts, spoke of Singapore as a Global City in 1972. It is now hailed as a prescient speech, as Singapore is lauded today for its successful transformation from a mercantilist economy and then industrial economy into a post-industrial global city acting as a key financial and services hub in globalizing Asia.

But Rajaratnam's insight was not a perfunctory argument about the political economic need for Singapore to become a global city. Drawing from Arnold Toynbee, Rajaratnam was making a point steeped in post-Hegelian Enlightenment that *Singapore is a global city*. Singapore must remain and develop as a global city to be true to its essence and to fulfill its destiny in history. Nation-building and national industrialization must not proceed in manner antithetical to Singapore's continued development as a global city. Therefore, the decisions to keep the economy attractive to multinational corporations and society open to immigration were not mere pragmatic imperatives for economic survival, but in keeping to Singapore's essential character as a global city.

The Department of Sociology at the National University of Singapore was established in 1965 as part of the modernization efforts. For the past 50 years, especially in the early decades, anthropologists and sociologists at the Department, most of whom received post-graduate training from the best universities in the West, were involved in the designing, and sometimes implementation, of government social policies. These included helping the vast majority of the population adjust to public housing, the management of ethnic and religious pluralism, tackling marriage and fertility issues, and other issues associated with the government's intensive social engineering campaigns to modernize behavior and worldview in one generation.

Critical scholars today might see this as the complicity of sociologists in the making of the hegemonic ideology and autocratic domination of the ruling party. But this is a far too easy accusation to make in hindsight. In the immediate years after independence, any Singaporean or foreign resident sympathetic to the postcolonial aspirations of a newly independent people would have rallied behind the compelling vision of the ruling party, especially when the vision was articulated with depth by ideologues and thinkers such as Rajaratnam. This was even more so when there was a lack of alternative narratives and discourses as to how Singapore could be true to its cosmopolitan and worldly nature, after the defeat of the Left during decolonization and after the selective appropriation of socialist ideas and policies, shorn of elements linked to international communism, by the ruling party.

The important shift in Singapore sociology came in the 1990s. The turning point was arguably the publication of

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Chua Beng Huat's *Communitarian Ideology and Democracy in Singapore* in 1995, when he broke down the dominant ideology of the ruling party and gave it a name. This was followed by Chua's book on public housing published in 1997, in which he argued public housing, where more than four-fifths of Singaporeans live, was the materialization of the communitarian ideology that made every citizen a stakeholder in the political economic system held together by the ruling party. It was not autocracy that sustained the ruling party's continued dominance, but, in the vein of Gramscian theory, the hegemony of its ideas materialized in the everyday life of the people that naturalized single-party rule. A new generation of Singaporean anthropologists and sociologists responded to this revelation by seeking out alternative narratives and practices to document and study, as the preceding four essays in this dialogue series have pointed to.

Crucially, this shift in Singapore's sociology came at a time where Rajaratnam's Global City was fast becoming what would come to look like Saskia Sassen's global city. The government was embracing neoliberal globalization and remolding the economy to exploit the acceleration of capital, commodity, and migratory flows. A new vocabulary emerged that came to be marked by a dichotomy held together by the conjunction "and." Citizens were called to be a "cosmopolitan" and a "heartlander," to confidently traverse the world and to be comfortably rooted in the "local" lifeworlds of public housing. The country was said to be a nation and a global city, no longer the nation that is the global city. The diversity to be enhanced by quickened immigration was to be both multiracial and multicultural. In 1989, the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies published the landmark *Management of Success: The Moulding of Modern Singapore*, edited by two geographers, comprising articles by many of Singapore's first-generation social scientists that commemorated Singapore's successful entry into the global capitalist system as an Asian Tiger. In 2010, the same Institute published *Management of Success: Singapore Revisited*, edited by sociologist Terence Chong, this time with articles seeking to understand the tensions brought on by neoliberal globalization.

If globalization is Singapore, then what makes for Singapore sociology after globalization? There are three possibilities: dystopian, utopian, and apocalyptic. In hindsight, I find my own article in the 2010 *Management of Success* as largely dystopian in approach. It examined governmental attempts to weave the new multiculturalism into the old multiracialism in order to manage the diversities brought on by immigration and resolve inter-ethnic tensions brought on by economic inequalities while maintaining political control. The tensions of neoliberal globalization are now layered into the contradictions of modernization in such a way that there is no way to resolve them except to always depend on a strong government to manage them. It was a decidedly Durkheimian frame, beginning with the problem of solidarity in a pluralist society and ending with the pessimism that dependence on the state for social integration and regulation is inevitable. The implication is that the search for alternative practices and narratives that have become prevalent in Singapore sociology is only useful because the state needs to renew its moral guardian-

ship by appropriating these alternative practices and narratives into its cultural repertoire.

The second possibility is the utopian approach and we find this in the essays here. This approach evokes the spirit of Thomas More's *Utopia* in the search for social, political, and religious customs of an ideal republic on an optimally populated island marked by democracy and equality. The emphasis is on minimal dependence on the government and the hope is for the space for individual autonomy and personal fulfillment to be enlarged vis-à-vis the state. People are found to be economically creative, socially conscious, and politically engaged. For some anthropologists and sociologists, the discovery and analysis of these spaces of hope in Singapore, sometimes coming into existence with the ironic help of neoliberal globalization, is enough. The belief is that such alternative stories would inspire students in the university classrooms, so that they would in turn go out and change the world. For some, they would go further and map, explicitly, the activism of ordinary people as well as of extraordinary people in changing the circumstances of their lifeworld. Yet, for others, as Youyenn Teo does in her essay published in this issue, they would call for self-conscious academic activism to bring such alternatives out to a broader audience so that the sociologist becomes a change agent.

Importantly, the utopian approach is neither oppositional nor radical in its politics, though it is likely to be misrecognized as such by the ruling elites jealous of their ideological dominance. The utopian approach is very much in line with Rajaratnam's Global City vision. He ended his 1972 speech urging the press correspondents in the audience to help "equip our people intellectually and spiritually to make the global city [...] into the heavenly city that prophets and seers have dreamt about from time immemorial" (*The Straits Times*, February 7, 1972). The utopian approach traces its lineage back to Augustine of Hippo through More.

The last possibility is the apocalyptic approach. It is politically untenable in conservative Singapore to write with this approach, but it is probably intellectually and even politically necessary to think through the questions that would be raised by such an approach. If globalization is Singapore, then what would happen when globalization begins to reverse, when the world system starts to de-globalize? This had already happened once in the 1920s and 1930s, and this was a tumultuous period where leftist and ethnonationalist political mobilization in British Malaya laid the political ground for the violent conflicts of decolonization after the Second World War. In turn, the conflicts led to three national entities that were unimaginable half a century before: first the Federation of Malaya, then the Federation of Malaysia and finally the Republic of Singapore. These entities transformed local societies beyond what the earlier generation thought possible. What futures are unimaginable and unthinkable today? Whither Singapore society if the unimaginable happens? What would Singapore become after globalization, when it ceases to be the Global City? ■

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# > Towards An Illiberal Future

## Anti-Genderism and Anti-Globalization

by **Agnieszka Graff**, University of Warsaw, Poland and **Elżbieta Korolczuk**, Södertörn University, Sweden, and member of ISA Research Committees on Women and Society (RC32) and Social Classes and Social Movements (RC47)



Banner at the Anti-Gender Rally, August 30, 2015. Photo by Elżbieta Korolczuk.

**G**ender matters in global politics. After the US elections, we know this better than ever: the mass appeal of Trump's blatant misogyny is just a part of the problem. Populism in the US and elsewhere feeds not only on economic instability and fear, but also on anxieties around gender relations, (homo)sexuality and reproduction. In country after country, critiques of what conservatives (especially Catholics) term "gender" or "genderism" – gender equality policies, sex

education, LGBTQ and reproductive rights – have helped to mobilize men as well as women, paving the way for populist leaders. While opposition to feminism and gender equality policies is not new, the current upsurge marks a departure from the previous neoconservative paradigm: social conservatism is now explicitly linked to hostility towards global capital.

In Poland, the 2015 electoral victory of the right-wing populist Law and Justice party was preceded, and

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arguably enabled, by a campaign against “genderism” in conservative media and religious discourse. Since 2012, Poland’s Catholic Church and conservative groups have undertaken many initiatives, opposing the use of the term “gender” in policy documents and public discourse, fighting gender-equality education and legislation (e.g. ratification of the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence), and seeking to limit sexual and reproductive rights. The campaign has included Catholic religious leaders, conservative politicians, right-wing think tanks and anti-choice groups. Other groups have joined in; for example, a parents’ grassroots mass movement *Ratujmy Maluchy!* (Save the Little Ones!), which emerged around 2009 to oppose educational reform, joined the fight against the Istanbul Convention on the grounds that measures designed to counteract domestic violence posed a threat to parental authority. Grassroots organizations and networks have helped to mobilize large numbers of people, especially concerned parents, worried about the supposed threat to their children posed by “the homosexual lobby” and sexual educators. Anti-genderists claim to protect children and family, and Polish cultural and religious values, from feminists, LGBTQ and human rights activists, allegedly supported by liberal politicians and the corrupt West. In this anti-gender discourse, the ruling party at the time, the conservative-liberal Civic Platform, was often portrayed as part of the extreme left, and was accused of seeking to destroy the “traditional” family and the Polish Nation, at the bidding of foreign institutions, such as the European Union.

In this conservative assault, “gender” is not a label used to discuss sex difference or to analyze the construction of masculinity and femininity. Rather, “gender” is consistently presented as an international conspiracy, stemming from the sexual revolution and/or communist-style enforced

gender equality. Supported by transnational bodies such as the UN and global capital, “genderists” allegedly aim to promote abortion, moral decadence and perversion, as well as rampant individualism which destroys communities and traditional families. Enforcing arbitrary sex-change on innocent children is alleged to be one of the movement’s goals; the concept of “gender” is consistently associated with the abolition of sex difference as well as chaos in the realm of human sexuality, which leads to de-population in some parts of the world.

Anti-genderism is not just a Polish peculiarity. A similar discourse can also be found elsewhere. In contemporary Russia, claims that homosexuals and promoters of gender equality threaten local traditional values have strengthened popular support for Putin’s regime; in France, mass mobilization against gay marriage clearly contributed to the popularity of the National Front. In the US, Donald Trump’s open misogyny did not prevent his victory, nor did voters seem mobilized by the possibility of electing the country’s first female president (in fact, 53% of white American women voted for Trump). What is the connection between the rise of right-wing populism and anti-genderism? These two ideologies converge not only in the promotion of a socially-conservative vision of gender relations, but also in the targeting of liberal elites as responsible for the economic and social decline of the population at large.

We have developed our analysis through participation in several collaborative projects that respond to recent anti-gender campaigns in Europe, as well as through our activist experience, which includes participation in several initiatives targeted by Poland’s anti-gender campaign. We have analyzed numerous texts: books and articles written by key voices in the anti-gender circuit; interviews and public statements by key proponents of anti-genderism (including two popes, local Catholic leaders and intellectuals); media coverage of anti-gender events;

and various materials published on the websites of movements and organizations, such as the Polish network [www.stopgender.pl](http://www.stopgender.pl) and international platforms such as [www.citizengo.org](http://www.citizengo.org) or [www.lifesitenews.com](http://www.lifesitenews.com).

All “anti-gender” texts display a sense of imminent danger from liberal elites, including feminists, who are portrayed as dangerous and powerful. Opponents of gender equality and gay rights, in contrast, claim to represent common people, who are described as hardworking and devoted to their families. Importantly, the underlying sense of victimhood has both cultural and economic dimensions: “genderists” are viewed as well-funded and well-connected to global elites; common people are viewed as paying the price of globalization. This interconnected cultural and economic dynamic is clearly reflected in anti-genderism’s preferred discursive strategy: the use of a conservative version of an anti-colonial frame. Genderism is consistently presented as a foreign imposition, equated with colonization, and compared to twentieth-century totalitarianisms and global terrorism. This argument is disconnected from debates about actual historical colonial domination by the West, but it is frequently used even in countries with no obvious colonial history, such as Poland. As in all populist narratives, this rhetoric opposes a corrupt international elite, which exploits common people and “the people” themselves, presented as local, authentic and embattled.

A telling example of this kind of anti-gender discourse came from Poland’s then-Minister of Justice Jarosław Gowin, who in 2012 forcefully opposed the ratification of the Istanbul Convention. He claimed that the Convention is a “carrier of gender ideology,” an ideological Trojan Horse whose hidden agenda was the dismantling of traditional families and local cultural values. Similarly, in January 2016, Pope Francis warned the faithful against “gender ideology”

as a dangerous imposition by wealthy Western countries, a form of ideological but also economic colonization. According to the Pope, foreign aid and education are routinely tied to gender equality policies, but “good and strong families” can overcome this threat.

In their description of “genderism,” leaders of the Catholic Church, right-wing fundamentalists and the pundits of the anti-gender movement link ideological colonization with economic power – a power crucially described as located in transnational institutions and corporations. In Poland, most activists point to the European Union; but other international bodies, foundations and associations are targeted as well, including the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, WHO, the UN or UNICEF, and the World Bank. In the Polish context, anti-genderists have also targeted civil society structures founded in the 1990s by Western donors, especially LGBTQ rights groups such as the Campaign against Homophobia (KPH). These groups are portrayed as agents of foreign corrupt elites. As the key European anti-genderist authority, Gabrielle Kuby put it in an interview for the Catholic World Report:

*This global sexual revolution is now being carried out by power elites. These include international organiza-*

*tions like the United Nations and the European Union, with their web of inscrutable sub-organizations; global corporations like Amazon, Google, and Microsoft; the big foundations like Rockefeller and Guggenheim; extremely rich individuals like Bill and Melinda Gates, Ted Turner, Georges Soros, and Warren Buffett; and non-governmental organizations like the International Planned Parenthood Federation and the International Lesbian and Gay Association.*

Despite its emphasis on “local” and “authentic” values, the anti-gender movement is strengthened by a transnational network, including organizations such as the World Congress of Families and mobilizing platforms such as CitizenGO. For example, Poland’s Ordo Iuris Institute cooperates closely with World Youth Alliance Europe, the US-based Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute, European Dignity Watch based in Brussels, and the British Society for the Protection of Unborn Children, one of the world’s oldest anti-choice organizations. Despite these transnational ties, anti-genderists routinely employ an anti-elitist discourse, referencing ordinary people’s dignity and their identity as an oppressed majority to mobilize supporters, successfully appealing to legitimate anxieties concerning the future of their families and children.

Conservative actors have managed to harness a growing sense of anxiety and economic instability caused by neoliberal ideology and policies. These sentiments are channeled into anger against decadent elites, portrayed in Poland as morally corrupted “Euro-enthusiasts” (one extreme right-wing slogan is: “Pedophiles and Pederasts, these are Euro-enthusiasts!”), or represented in the US by references to “crooked Hillary.” The new wave of anti-genderism builds on opposition towards gender equality policies and discourses dating back to the late 1970s, but it also reflects a transnational resurgence of illiberal populism and local nationalism. By presenting itself as a movement defending “authentic” local values and common people against foreign global forces and rich corrupt elites, by equating “gender” with rampant individualism and cultural and economic exploitation, this strategy paves the way for political successes of illiberal populism. Anti-genderism has become a new, conservative language of resistance to neoliberal globalization. ■

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# > Defending Reproductive Rights in Poland

by **Julia Kubisa**, University of Warsaw, Poland



Polish women in Warsaw protesting against new abortion law, October 3, 2016. Photo by Elżbieta Korolczuk.

**I**n autumn 2016, a new wave of women's protests broke out against the planned criminalization of abortion in Poland. Polish feminists have fought against Poland's anti-abortion law since draconian legislation was introduced in 1993. The Polish abortion law, one of the strictest in the European Union, allows abortion only in cases of incest or rape, threat to health and life of a woman, and fetal genetic distortion.

As Polish activists have pointed out, the legal restrictions have spawned an underground abortion network in the country, but the issue did not gain momentum until 2016. After Poland's 2015 parliamentary elections gave the right-wing Law and Justice Party a parliamentary majority, it was only a matter of time before more restrictions on reproductive rights would be proposed. In early 2016, government leaders, including Prime Minister Ms. Beata Szydło, signaled their support for a total ban on abortion, while a very conservative NGO, Ordo Iuris, started collecting signatures in support of prison sentences for both women and gynecologists, and demanding that authorities investigate to ensure that apparent miscarriages were not induced by medical abortifacients.

The outrage provoked by Ordo Iuris' new campaign quickly translated into two activist campaigns: demonstrations and pickets organized by the newly-formed *Girls for Girls*, a grassroots organization with a feminist agenda, and a legislative initiative *Save the Women*, taken up by a group of social democratic feminists who campaigned to liberalize Poland's anti-abortion law.

In mid-2016 Ordo Iuris announced it had collected over 500,000 signatures in support of its proposal, while *Save the Women* had collected 250,000. Both proposals were submitted to the parliament. Right-wing Catholic organizations had submitted several similar proposals in previous

versions, but these had been outvoted; no pro-liberalization proposal had been submitted since the early 1990s, when a pro-liberalization petition signed by 1.2 million citizens was rejected.

This time, parliament immediately rejected the Save the Women project, instead continuing to discuss the criminalization proposal – a move that provoked demonstrations by Save the Women, and by the left-wing Razem party, which called on supporters to dress in black and join pickets or to post photos in social media, using #blackprotest as the hashtag. When one of Poland's most respected actresses suggested an all-Poland women's strike, modeled on a 1975 strike by women in Iceland, social media activists jumped on the idea, announcing that October 3 (2016) would be the date for an All-Poland Women's Black Protest Strike. The call for action was not initiated by any of the women's organizations, although many activists from feminist movements and political parties supported the initiative by offering their time and resources to the effort. In the days before the strike, many individual private employers, and local government officials expressed support for women who wanted to strike, literally telling employees to take the day off on October 3. Some university faculties called off lectures.

Despite obstacles, such as the strike's legal status, it proved to be a major success, with unprecedented levels of mobilization. Unlike the demonstrations that take place in the capital and other big cities, the Women's Strike was genuinely supported throughout Poland. Women and girls, with some supportive men, organized actions in at least 142 cities and villages all over the country, involving roughly 150,000 people – all dressed in black. The slogans referred to basic women's rights, reproductive choice, and women's dignity, which would be violated by a total ban on abortion. Because it rained heavily on the day of the strike, most participants stood and walked under umbrellas, which became an unexpected symbol of protest.

The scale and energy of the protest clearly took the ruling party and officials of the Catholic Church by surprise. The first responses were explicitly misogynist: a Catholic bishop claimed that women "cannot conceive during rape," a populist politician insisted that women are sexually promiscuous and must be controlled, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs called women completely irresponsible. Nevertheless, three days after the protest, the parliament rejected

the proposal for a total ban of abortion – one of the very few recent defeats for Poland's ruling party.

The government dropped its confrontational rhetoric, instead adopting a "soft-core" approach. The Prime Minister announced that Polish women who experience a "difficult pregnancy" – a euphemistic term, "difficult" referring to cases of incurable illness or fetal distortion discovered during pregnancy – would receive a one-time benefit of about 1,000 euros, basically a benefit for giving birth to a child that will die soon after birth. The benefit has already been introduced, despite criticism that it objectifies women.

Many of the activists involved in organizing the All-Poland Women Black Protest Strike decided to continue, so the government would still feel pressure. Two weeks later, they organized another strike action that was smaller, but which brought forward an eleven-point agenda, promoting women's dignity and freedom, opposing sexual aggression, domestic violence, and militarization of society, and calling for a more women-oriented social policy. The Black Protest inspired at least two celebrities to discuss their own abortions in public, breaking a taboo in public discourse. The Black Protest gained significant public recognition, with 58% of Poles expressing their support. It also gained wide international recognition, inspiring women in Argentina, Iceland, and South Korea to organize similar protests. Barbara Nowacka from Save the Women and Agnieszka Dziemianowicz-Bak from Razem were granted the Global Thinkers 2016 Award by *Foreign Policy* magazine as the representatives of Women's Black Protest Strike movement.

Poland's government has continued its softer approach since the strike, dropping any reference to further restrictions on abortions, and instead promoting a discourse of support for children born with disabilities – although it has taken no real steps to increase funding along these lines. But the feminist activism that produced the nation-wide strike in October continues to reverberate: recently, when the Ministry of Health lowered national standards for birth and maternal care in hospitals, and the ruling Law and Justice party revealed that it plans to reject the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, the women linked to the All-Poland Women's Strike declared they "will not fold their umbrellas." ■

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# > The ISA Junior Sociologists Network

by **Oleg Komlik**, Ben-Gurion University, Israel and Chair, ISA Junior Sociologists Network



| Illustration by Arbu.

**T**he Junior Sociologists Network (JSN) of the International Sociological Association brings together students, early-career academics and practitioners, engaged in sociology and related disciplines, across all thematic interests and scientific approaches. In profiling the JSN's task and current activities, in this essay I hope to show how this unique international community promotes its members' professional path and, more broadly, fosters sociology as a vocation.

Beginning in 2006 and encouraged by ISA Presidents and the Executive Committee, the JSN evolved out of the empowering experience of participants at the ISA Laboratories for PhD students, ISA Junior Sociologists Competition and ISA congresses. The fellows of our community are

concurrently locally rooted and globally connected – a condition that is fascinating yet challenging. Recognizing this potential, the JSN's mission is to actualize it. The goal of the JSN is thus to provide junior sociologists with a useful and supportive platform for sharing information, exchanging ideas and setting up collaborations in order to advance their careers, and to create, disseminate and apply sociological knowledge and insights.

The past two and a half years have seen exciting developments for the JSN. Following comprehensive proactive efforts to spread the word about the JSN, especially in the Global South, the network's membership has grown considerably, to include more than 2,500 MA students, PhD candidates, junior and even senior faculty. Although most participants

are academics, practitioners and activists have also asked to join the network; we welcome all those who see sociology as an anchor of their work.

The JSN activity is based on four complementary pillars. First of all, a new [JSN mailing list](#) has rapidly become a popular source of information for junior sociologists. Every two weeks, JSN newsletters provide useful, interesting and relevant updates: calls for papers, post-doc positions, grants notices, job openings, and thought-provoking articles concerning sociology and academic life.

Second, the ISA's Dissertation Abstracts is an open-access database allowing junior sociologists to present their doctoral dissertation abstracts, along with short biographies and contact details; it already includes about 650 abstracts. By helping participants discover others studying similar topics, the platform engen-

ders collaboration between researchers. Moreover, publishing houses are already learning to browse this database, sometimes contacting those who have submitted abstracts.

Third, since the JSN launched its [Facebook page](#) and [Twitter account](#) two and a half years ago, thousands of followers and visitors have been able to take advantage of the multiplying and circulating effect of social media, by accessing and posting online announcements, dissertation abstracts and interesting links.

Last but not least, the JSN proudly maintains a tradition of co-organizing the annual Slovenian Social Sciences international conference and sponsoring other academic meetings, bringing together junior scholars from different countries and regions.

I extend my gratitude to the JSN board members Dolores Modic and

Tamara B. Valic for their involvement, and to the ISA secretariat for their fast and constant assistance. I would like to take this opportunity to note that the JSN is always open to new suggestions; any initiatives and aid would be much appreciated.

Along with important projects of the ISA and its Research Committees, the JSN is helping to build a sound global community of sociologists, better equipped to unravel the mazes of socio-political morphology. As junior sociologists, paving our way uphill amidst harsh neoliberal and marketized realities and in the shadow of authoritarian and nationalistic tendencies, we keep in mind the imperative and essence of sociology as a vocation. During the course of this common journey, supported by established colleagues, we hope to advance together, bearing the precious intellectual torch of sociology. ■

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# > Translating Global Dialogue into Indonesian

by **Kamanto Sunarto**, University of Indonesia, Depok, Indonesia

**I**n April 2015 a group of Indonesian sociologists formed the Indonesian editorial team. *Dialog Global* Volume 5 Issue 3, the first Indonesian language edition of *Global Dialogue* (GD) and its 16th language at the time, was published in September 2015.

The team comprises nine sociologists attached to five different universities in four cities: University of Indonesia at Depok, Gadjah Mada University and Sanata Dharma University at Yogyakarta, Bogor Institute of Agriculture at Bogor, and Nusa Cendana University at Kupang. Four members are currently doctoral candidates at the Australian National University, the *École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales* in Paris, the University of Amsterdam, and Leiden University.

Three members constitute the editorial board in charge of peer-reviewing translated articles. Board members also take part in the translation of articles, especially during periods when the number of available translators happens to be limited, and they conduct peer reviews of each other's translations. In addition, one board member functions as the board's editor-in-chief, a second member acts as the board's liaison with team members involved in the translation of articles, while a third board member works in liaison with the GD managerial team. A college graduate assists the board in editing, designing, and composing GD in Indonesian.

One month before the ISA publishes GD, the editorial board invites each team member to translate one or two articles, depending on his or her availability. Because of the distances between the members' universities – ranging from 65 to 2,770 kilometers – all communications are conducted via e-mail or social media.

The challenges facing the Indonesian team in the translation process are more or less the same as those ex-

**“many basic concepts  
have not yet been formally  
translated”**

perienced by the Romanian editorial team as described in GD6.3 (September 2016). Besides basic structural differences between the English and Indonesian languages, many basic concepts in the social sciences, especially the most recent ones, have not yet been formally translated so many academics tend to leave basic concepts in English untranslated. Apart from browsing through dictionaries and academic as well as professional publications, and discussing specific translation issues among ourselves, board members sometimes have to consult related professionals and, on occasion, seek clarification from authors of the GD articles being translated.

After peer-reviewing all translated articles including their own and communicating with each other to solve outstanding translation issues, board members move on to the layout stage. Steps are taken to ensure that GD has been translated and composed in accordance with ISA guidelines, before the final draft is submitted to the editor of *Global Dialogue*.

Following the publication of *Global Dialogue* on the ISA website, the board sends the GD link to the Indonesian Sociological Association (ISI), the Association of Indonesian Sociology Study Programs (APSSI), various sociology departments and study programs, libraries, research centers, sociology student associations, and individual sociologists from various universities. ■

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# > Introducing the Indonesian Editorial Team



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**Hari Nugroho** is currently a doctoral student at the Institute of Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology, Leiden University, Netherlands and lecturer at the Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, University of Indonesia. He received his MA at the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS), Erasmus University in The Hague, Netherlands. His research interests are in labor, social movements, local politics, and social inequality. Hari is a member of ISA Research Committees on Labour Movements (RC44), Social Classes and Social Movements (RC47), and Social Movements, Collective Action and Social Change (RC48).



**Lucia Ratih Kusumadewi** is a doctoral student at the Centre d'Analyse et d'Intervention Sociologique (CADIS), École des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS), Paris, France. She achieved her Diplôme d'Études Approfondies (DEA) also from EHESS in 2006. She is currently a lecturer at the Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, University of Indonesia. Her main research interests are in social movements, identity, religion, youth, and education. Lucia is a member of ISA Research Committees on Sociology of Religion (RC22) and Social Classes and Social Movements (RC47).



**Fina Itriayati** is a lecturer and researcher in the Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Gadjah Mada University at Yogyakarta. She is currently pursuing her PhD at the College of Arts and Social Sciences (CASS), Australian National University. Her research project is titled *The Biosociality and Re-definition of Identity of Newly Disabled Women in Post-Earthquake Indonesia* in which she uses ethnographic methods to understand the everyday life of the women with disabilities sustained in the disaster. She is interested in gender, culture and society, embodiment, disability, disaster, and human rights issues. Fina is a member of the Indonesian Sociological Association and of ISA Research Committee on The Body in the Social Sciences (RC54).



**Indera Ratna Irawati Pattinasarany** is a lecturer at the Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, University of Indonesia. Her fields of studies are social stratification and mobility, social inequality, poverty, and the sociology of education. Indera earned her PhD in sociology from the University of Indonesia and a Master of Arts from Michigan State University, USA. She is a member of ISA Research Committees on Sociology of Education (RC04) and Social Stratification (RC28). She is also a member of the Indonesian Sociological Association.

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**Benedictus Hari Juliawan** is a lecturer in the Graduate Program of Religious and Cultural Studies, Sanata Dharma University at Yogyakarta, Indonesia. He is also a researcher in Sahabat Insan, a local NGO working on migrant worker issues. He completed his Master of Philosophy in 2007 and his PhD in Development Studies at Oxford University, United Kingdom in 2011. His main research interests are in labor movements, migrant workers, identity politics, and the informal economy.

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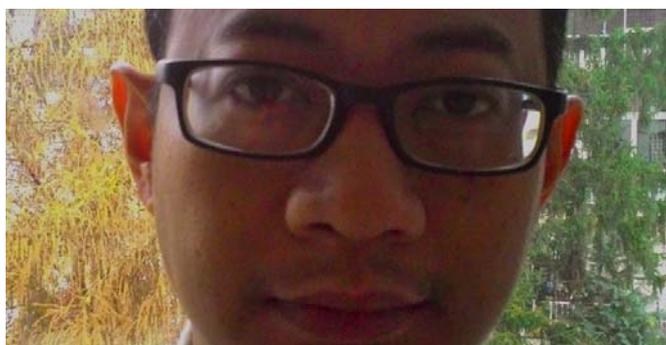
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**Antonius Ario Seto Hardjana** finished his doctoral degree from the Institute of Ethnology, Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany. He completed his MA at the University of Passau, Germany, majoring in South East Asian Studies. At present, he is a lecturer at the Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, University of Indonesia. His main research interests are in cultural studies, social media, and social networks.

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