

# GLOBAL DIALOGUE

7.4

4 issues a year in 17 languages

Conversation with  
Kari Polanyi Levitt

---

The Nature of  
Trumpism

---

Defending Sociology  
in Argentina

---

Peter Evans,  
Raka Ray,  
Cristina Mora,  
Ruth Milkman,  
Dylan Riley,  
Cihan Tuğal,  
Gay Seidman

Juan Piovani,  
Fernanda Beigel,  
Alejandro Grimson,  
Agustín Salvia,  
Berenice Rubio,  
Gabriel Kessler

## Special Columns

- > Remembering Ali Shariati
- > The Chinese Edition of Global Dialogue

MAGAZINE



VOLUME 7 / ISSUE 4 / DECEMBER 2017  
<http://isa-global-dialogue.net>

GD

International  
Sociological  
Association  
**isa**



## A Short History of *Global Dialogue*

**G**lobal Dialogue began in 2010 as an eight-page newsletter. It began in four languages – English, French, Spanish and Chinese – and was produced with a simple Microsoft program, involving the work of four people. Seven years later it has become a full-fledged magazine with four issues a year, each some 40 pages long, published in seventeen languages. Each issue involves the collaboration of over 100 people across the globe. The 31 issues published so far contain some 550 articles written by authors from 69 countries. From the beginning we have tried to make articles accessible to all, both for ease of translation and as a principle of dissemination. Sociology, after all, has important messages – indeed ever-more important messages – for a world careening toward multiple disasters.

While the newfangled technologies at our disposal can accelerate those disasters, they also offer us new opportunities. Digital media made *Global Dialogue* possible but, let it be emphasized, not without the human labor of so many. Even though the ISA was only able to offer a token sum for their devotion, young sociologists, guided by senior colleagues, seized the opportunity to translate *Global Dialogue* into their languages, especially those marginalized in processes of globalization. Their enthusiastic collaboration has been one of the most exhilarating things to behold.

Early on our graphic designer, August Bagà (aka Arbu), proposed to give *Global Dialogue* an exciting visual appearance. He teamed up with Lola Busuttill, fluent in the ISA's three languages, to become the managing editors. Lola oversees the whole operation, making sure that each issue in each language follows the highest standards. Their partnership has resulted in a beautiful and meticulous magazine, made accessible to all by Gustavo Taniguti, who designed and maintained the *Global Dialogue* website.

While I was Vice-President and then President of the ISA I had the privilege of getting to know sociologists from all corners of the world. Those contacts sustained the contents of the magazine. When the task of editing the articles into accessible format was proving too much I asked Gay Seidman to help me. Before becoming a distinguished sociologist she had been a journalist and editor. She generously volunteered to undertake the often very challenging task of turning “sociologese” into simple but elegant English. She was caring in her attention to the authors,

efficient and effective in her execution, and an invaluable consultant throughout. Before Gay applied her fine art, a team of graduate students at Berkeley would translate non-English submissions into English.

There are so many others to thank, but top of the list must be Robert Rojek who, early on, spontaneously offered SAGE funding with no strings attached. From the beginning Izabela Barlinska, ISA's organizational genius and devoted caretaker, has been *Global Dialogue*'s champion. Throughout these seven years I have received the endorsement of the ISA's Executive Committee without which the whole enterprise would never have been possible. After I ceased to be president, Margaret Abraham and Vineeta Sinha enthusiastically supported the continuation of *Global Dialogue*. Now we have two fantastic new editors, Brigitte Aulenbacher and Klaus Dörre, who will carry *Global Dialogue* to new heights. Don't hesitate to write to them with new ideas and suggestions as to the contents and direction of *Global Dialogue*.

In reading the pages of *Global Dialogue* one sees the ebb and flow of global history. We began in 2010 with the fallout of the 2008 global recession, and the rise of optimistic social movements – Occupy, Arab Spring, Indignados, and *piqueteros* alongside labor, environmental, feminist and other social justice movements. But starting in 2013, clouds began to gather on the horizon and we witnessed a reactionary, anti-democratic swing. We adopted Karl Polanyi as our prophet. We relearned what Polanyi's *The Great Transformation* had taught us long ago: that the counter-movements to unleashing markets were as likely to be fascist as socialist, as likely to be authoritarian as democratic. We have still much to learn from his analysis of the contradictions between capitalism and democracy. Thus, it is especially appropriate that my last issue opens with a conversation with Kari Polanyi Levitt who relates the life and world that informed her father's genius.

Throughout these seven years I've tried to create symposia on a broad swath of national sociologies but I never dwelt on the US as such. In my last issue as editor of *Global Dialogue*, however, I've called on seven friends and colleagues to reflect upon the rise of Trumpism through the lens of their individual interests. They have put the US in the context of a historic and global swing to the right. One of the features of this reactionary era is to place sociology itself on the defensive – not just against neoliberalism but

increasingly against rising authoritarianism. Social scientists in Argentina, led by Juan Piovani, have mounted a national defense of sociology, conducting studies that demonstrate its professional, policy, critical and public dimensions. Here five articles represent their vision. The project is only in its beginning but other national sociologies should take note.

Nor, finally, should we ever forget our predecessors – sociologists who fought against authoritarianism, such as the famous Marxist and Islamic thinker, Ali Shariati, who died in 1977, just two years before the Iranian Revolution he prefigured. His ideas continue to haunt that revolution as to what it could have been, as to what it might be. We are badly in need of such prophets today who can inspire a sociology that balances determinism and utopia. *Global Dialogue* is one place where we can collectively identify and envision new possibilities as well as warn against the destruction of our little planet. ■



**Kari Polanyi Levitt** in conversation with Michael Burawoy about her famous father, Karl Polanyi.



**Peter Evans, Raka Ray, Cristina Mora, Ruth Milkman, Dylan Riley, Cihan Tuğal and Gay Seidman** discuss the origins and meaning of Trumpism.



**Global Dialogue** is made possible by a generous grant from **SAGE Publications**.

English edition: ISSN 2519-8688

- > **Global Dialogue** can be found in 17 languages at the [ISA website](#).
- > **Submissions** should be sent to [Brigitte Aulenbacher](#) and [Klaus Dörre](#).

## > Editorial Board

**Editor:** Michael Burawoy.

**Associate Editor:** Gay Seidman.

**Managing Editors:** Lola Busuttill, August Bagà.

**Consulting Editors:**

Margaret Abraham, Markus Schulz, Sari Hanafi, Vineeta Sinha, Benjamin Tejerina, Rosemary Barbaret, Izabela Barlinska, Dilek Cindoğlu, Filomin Gutierrez, John Holmwood, Guillermina Jasso, Kalpana Kannabiran, Marina Kurkchian, Simon Mapadimeng, Abdul-mumin Sa'ad, Ayse Saktanber, Celi Scalón, Sawako Shirahase, Grazyna Skapska, Evangelia Tastsoglou, Chin-Chun Yi, Elena Zdravomyslova.

**Regional Editors**

**Arab World:**

Sari Hanafi, Mounir Saidani.

**Argentina:**

Juan Ignacio Piovani, Pilar Pi Puig, Martín Urtasun.

**Bangladesh:**

Habibul Haque Khondker, Hasan Mahmud, Juwel Rana, US Rokeya Akhter, Toufika Sultana, Asif Bin Ali, Khairun Nahar, Kazi Fadia Esha, Helal Uddin, Muhaimin Chowdhury.

**Brazil:**

Gustavo Taniguti, Andreza Galli, Ângelo Martins Júnior, Lucas Amaral, Benno Alves, Julio Davies.

**India:**

Rashmi Jain, Jyoti Sidana, Pragya Sharma, Nidhi Bansal, Pankaj Bhatnagar.

**Indonesia:**

Kamanto Sunarto, Hari Nugroho, Lucia Ratih Kusumadewi, Fina Itriayati, Indera Ratna Irawati Pattinasarany, Benedictus Hari Juliawan, Mohamad Shohibuddin, Dominggus Elcid Li, Antonius Ario Seto Hardjana.

**Iran:**

Reyhaneh Javadi, Sina Bastani, Mina Azizi, Hamid Gheissari, Vahid Lenjanzadeh.

**Japan:**

Satomi Yamamoto, Masataka Eguchi, Kota Nakano, Aya Sato, Kaori Saeki, Riho Tanaka, Marie Yamamoto.

**Kazakhstan:**

Aigul Zabirowa, Bayan Smagambet, Adil Rodionov, Almash Tiespayeva, Kuanysh Tel.

**Poland:**

Jakub Barszczewski, Katarzyna Dębska, Paulina Domagalska, Adrianna Drozdowska, Łukasz Dulniak, Jan Frydrych, Krzysztof Gubański, Sara Herczyńska, Kinga Jakiela, Justyna Kościńska, Karolina Mikołajewska-Zajac, Adam Müller, Zofia Penza-Gabler, Anna Wandzel, Jacek Zych, Łukasz Żołądek.

**Romania:**

Cosima Rughiniş, Raisa-Gabriela Zamfirescu, Maria-Loredana Arsene, Timea Barabaş, Diana Alexandra Dumitrescu, Radu Dumitrescu, Iulian Gabor, Dan Gîţman, Alina Hoară, Alecsandra Irimie Ana, Alexandra Isbăşoiu, Rodica Liseanu, Cristiana Lotrea, Mădălina Manea, Anda-Olivia Marin, Bianca Mihăilă, Andreea Elena Moldoveanu, Rareş-Mihai Muşat, Oana-Elena Negrea, Mioara Paraschiv, Codruţ Pînzaru, Ion Daniel Popa, Anda Rodideal, Adriana Sohodoleanu.

**Russia:**

Elena Zdravomyslova, Elena Nikiforova, Anastasia Daur.

**Taiwan:**

Jing-Mao Ho.

**Turkey:**

Gül Çorbacıoğlu, İrmak Evren.

**Media Consultant:** Gustavo Taniguti.

## > In This Issue

Editorial: A Short History of *Global Dialogue* **2**

Shaping The Great Transformation: A Conversation with Kari Polanyi Levitt  
**by Michael Burawoy, USA** **5**

### > THE SOCIAL ORIGINS OF TRUMPISM

Behind Trump's Rhetoric of Economic Nationalism  
**by Peter Evans, USA** **11**

Trumpism and the White Male Working Class  
**by Raka Ray, USA** **14**

Immigration and Trump-Era Politics  
**by G. Cristina Mora, USA** **16**

Trump's Assault on Labor  
**by Ruth Milkman, USA** **18**

American Brumaire?  
**by Dylan Riley, USA** **21**

The Rise of the Leninist Right  
**by Cihan Tuğal, USA** **24**

Democratic Distemper in Brazil and South Africa  
**by Gay W. Seidman, USA** **27**

### > DEFENDING SOCIOLOGY IN ARGENTINA

Argentina under Scrutiny  
**by Juan Ignacio Piovani, Argentina** **30**

Mapping Argentina's Social Sciences  
**by Fernanda Beigel, Argentina** **32**

Social and Cultural Diversity in Argentina  
**by Alejandro Grimson, Argentina** **35**

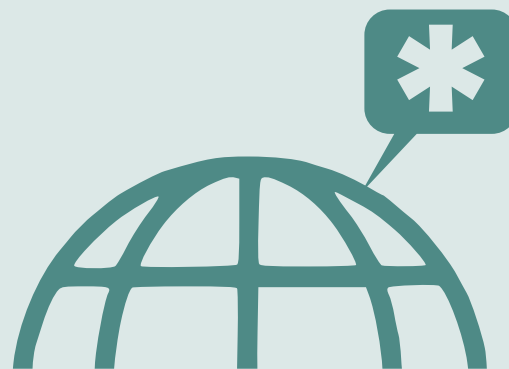
Social Inequality in Contemporary Argentina  
**by Agustín Salvia and Berenice Rubio, Argentina** **38**

Exploring Social Capital in Argentina  
**by Gabriel Kessler, Argentina** **41**

### > SPECIAL COLUMNS

Ali Shariati, Forgotten Sociologist of Islam  
**by Suheel Rasool Mir, India** **43**

The Chinese Edition of *Global Dialogue*  
**by Jing-Mao Ho, Taiwan** **45**



# > Shaping The Great Transformation

## A Conversation with Kari Polanyi Levitt



| Kari Polanyi Levitt.

**MB: Let's start at the beginning. We are used to thinking of Karl Polanyi as Hungarian, but he was actually born in Vienna, right?**

**KPL:** Yes, that's right. Interestingly, my father and I were both born in Vienna and my mother was born in a small town not far from Vienna – which of course was the great center of intellectual life, the great metropolis of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The family, that is the mother and father of Karl Polanyi, started in Vienna. Karl's mother, Cecilia Wohl, was sent by her father from Vilna, then in Russia, to Vienna to learn a

**Karl Polanyi** has become a canonical thinker in sociology and beyond. His book *The Great Transformation*, has become a classic that touches on almost every subfield of sociology. Its influence extends far beyond sociology to economics, political science, geography and anthropology. Being a critique of the market economy for the way it destroys the fabric of society, it has gained ever more followers over the last four decades of neoliberal thought and practice. The book is simultaneously an investigation of the sources and consequences of commodification and an account of counter-movements against commodification – movements that gave rise to fascism and Stalinism as well as social democracy. Hence it has obvious relevance to our present global context. Karl Polanyi lived from 1886 to 1964. In this interview with his daughter **Kari Polanyi Levitt**, she describes the life of her father, and the influences leading to *The Great Transformation*. She also points to the special relation her father had with her mother, Iona Duczynska, herself a lifelong political activist and intellectual. Here Kari Polanyi Levitt traces the four phases of Karl Polanyi's life: the Hungarian phase, the Austrian phase, the English phase and then the North American phase. Dr. Levitt is an economist in her own right, living in Montreal, author of numerous publications, including *From the Great Transformation to the Great Financialization* (2013), and the edited collection *The Life and Work of Karl Polanyi* (1990). The following interview is a shortened version of a public conversation she had with **Michael Burawoy** at the end of the Karl Polanyi conference – one of many around the world – organized by Brigitte Aulenbacher and her collaborators at the Johannes Kepler University in Linz (Austria), January 10-13, 2017.

trade. As a result of her education she spoke Russian and German. She met Karl's father, a young Hungarian Jewish engineer – Mihaly Pollacsek – in Vienna. He spoke Hungarian and German.

So the family started as a German-speaking family. And, not that long ago, I learned from correspondence that my father never learned Hungarian until he entered the Gymnasium in Budapest.

My father's Hungarian period, which is of course very important, was also shaped by a Russian influence – that came politically through Russian socialists, very different from the social democrats of that time. It was a socialism more oriented toward the countryside, the peasantry. It had anarchist elements. Communes, of course, were very much part of that political formation.

And I would have to say that this Russian influence was balanced on his father's side, who was an anglophile. And if there were two important literary figures in the life of my father it was Shakespeare – he took a volume of his collected English writings with him to the war – and, of all the great Russian writers, I would say Dostoyevsky.

**MB: And then there was the influence of Russian émigré revolutionaries, among them a man called Klatchko.**

**KPL:** Yes, Samuel Klatchko was an extraordinary figure. He lived in Vienna. He was the unofficial emissary connecting Russian revolutionaries with international and European ones. He came from a Jewish family in Vilna and spent his youth in a Russian commune in Kansas. The commune didn't last very long. It eventually broke up, and they say that he drove 3,000 cattle to Chicago and after that he visited the International Ladies Garment Workers Union in New York. He was an activist. The Kansas commune was named after a Russian figure called Nikolai Tchaikovsky.

But when Klatchko came to Vienna he formed a close friendship with the Pollacsek family and he looked after Russian folks who came to buy Marxist literature, or whatever they came to Vienna for.

And my father told me – which I have never forgotten – that these men made a huge impression on him, and also on his cousin Irvin Szabo who played an important part in Hungarian intellectual life; he was also a kind of anarchist socialist. Some of them didn't have shoes and they had their feet tied up in newspapers. My father was immensely impressed by the heroism and the courage of these people. And altogether my father had a... I was going to say "romantic," but in any case a huge respect for these revolutionaries – and particularly for Bakunin who, I suppose, is the greatest figure of all, a man who broke out of every prison in Europe.

**MB: And the social revolutionary sympathy continued throughout his life, which explains in part the ambiguity he would have towards the Bolsheviks.**

**KPL:** Yes, it continued throughout his life. It explains the antagonistic relationship to the social democrats of Russia, who after all included what would become the Bolshevik majority faction.

**MB: Your father was already politically active when he was a student. Is that correct?**

**KPL:** Yes, he was a founding president of a student movement, known as the Galileo Circle, whose journal was *Szabad Gondolat*, meaning "Free Thought." It was against the monarchy, the aristocracy, the church, against the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It was not a socialist movement, although many of its participants were socialists. And finally it included also young people from the gymnasiums, as well as from universities. It gave, I read somewhere, up to 2,000 literacy classes a year. So its main activity was education.

**MB: And then there was World War I.**

**KPL:** He was a cavalry officer in the war, on the Russian front. The situation was horrible. It was equally horrible for the Austro-Hungarians as for the Russians. He contracted typhus, which is a terrible illness. Eventually, he told me, when his horse tripped and fell on top of him, he thought that he was going to die but he woke up in a military hospital in Budapest.

**MB: And at the end of the war there was the Hungarian Revolution.**

**KPL:** The Hungarian Revolution of 1918 ended the war, with the First Republic and Count Karolyi as the first president in the autumn of that year. Therefore it's usually called the Aster or Chrysanthemum Revolution, or after some other flower denoting autumn.

It was then followed by the short-lived Revolution of the Councils, which ended in August of 1919 when it was defeated in a counter-revolution that led Hungarian intellectuals, activists, communists, socialists, liberals into exile in Vienna. Including my father.

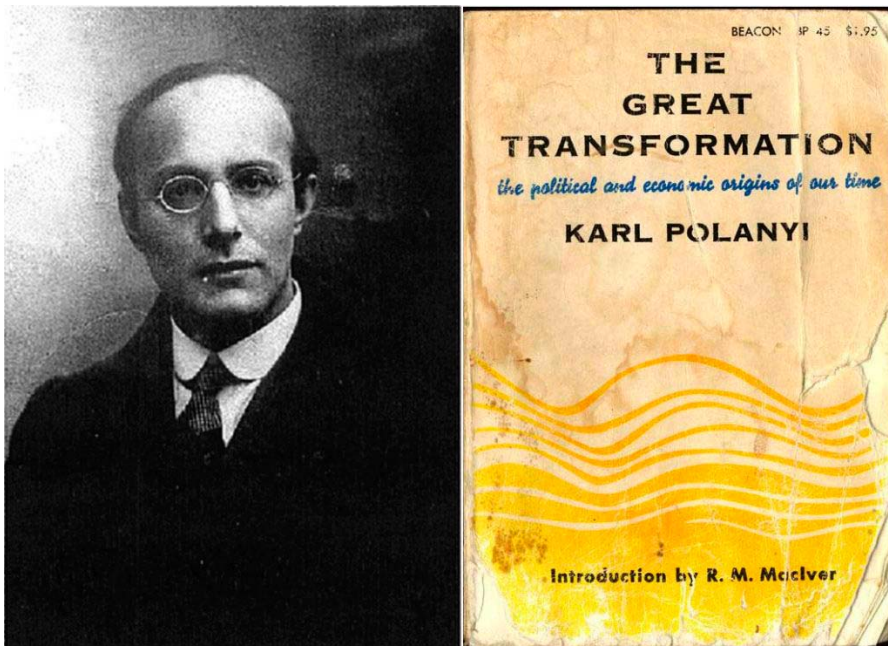
**MB: So your father left before the end of the revolution, right?**

**KPL:** Yes, he left before the end.

**MB: How did he view the Hungarian Revolution?**

**KPL:** He was ambivalent, as were many others. I think they initially welcomed the formation of the councils all over the country. But when the councils decided on a wholesale nationalization of business – of everything – I think he thought it was going to have a very bad end. Which it did, in reality.

**MB: So the leaders of the Hungarian Communist Party fled from Budapest to Vienna?**



Karl Polanyi, author of *The Great Transformation*.

**KPL:** Yes. The Communist Party in exile had two leaders, Bela Kun and George Lukács. There was a certain rivalry between the two. And here's a funny story that involved my mother who spent the year 1919 in Moscow, where she – because of her linguistic abilities and education – worked in the office with Karl Radek, organizing the meetings of the Second Communist International. Eventually, when she returned to Vienna she was given some financial assistance to deliver to the exiled Hungarian Communists there. It was in the form of a diamond, and it was put in a tube of toothpaste. But the interesting thing is that she was to deliver it to Lukács, because as the son of a banker he was perhaps thought to be more reliable than Kun.

**MB:** *But at this point your mother and father had not met. In fact they would meet in Vienna in the following year, 1920. Is that right?*

**KPL:** It was a fateful meeting – in a villa put at the disposal of Hungarian communists and leftist émigrés by a Viennese well-wisher. As the darling of this company of young men, according to my mother, no one would have expected that she would be attracted to a gentleman ten years older than her, whose life appeared to be behind him – who was depressed, and scribbling notes in the corner...

**MB:** *But they were very different characters, these two. One is more the activist and the other is more the intellectual; one spends her time in the trenches and the other in the study.*

**KPL:** Yes and no. You know, my father wherever he lived was engaged in whatever was going on. He wrote articles for the general public, for whomever would read what he had to say – published by whoever would publish whatever it was. In Hungary it was like that. In Vienna it was like that. In England too. So he was really engaged with the present. He was an intellectual, yes. But he was not an intellectual with an *idée fixe*, an obsession which they nurture, and who, wherever

they go – from one place to another – take the same idea with them. No, no. Not at all.

My mother had really started her activities with a very high-profile participation as a remarkable young woman in the Hungarian Revolution: in a way, there was nothing she could do for the rest of her life that quite equaled that. And there was a certain sadness about her. You know, when you achieve at a very early age what you really aspire to do – which is to play an obviously important role in history, in this case, in the communist socialist movement – whatever you do for the rest of your life never quite lives up to that.

**MB:** *So they both had their sad experiences but then in 1923, something very special happened. You were born! And your parents were rejuvenated.*

**KPL:** Yes, according to his own account, my birth helped to pull my father out of depression, which was, like all such things, a private experience. Nevertheless, he wrote a lot about it. He wrote about what he felt was the responsibility of his generation for all the awful things that had happened, particularly the terrible, meaningless, stupid war. He wrote a lot about the First World War – how it really changed very little. It was never very clear – according to him – what it was really about. It was just a terrible massacre. A human disaster. And he felt the responsibility of his generation.

And that sense of responsibility – social responsibility for the state of the world, the state of the country – I wonder whether it was an attribute of that generation, and whether that sense of responsibility has passed. Do we still have people – including intellectuals – who bear a sense of responsibility for our society, in the way he and many others of his generation did?

**MB:** *This was a very special generation, indeed, and for many reasons. But one of the reasons was Red*



**Vienna – the socialist reconstruction of Vienna from 1918 to 1933, overlapping the years that your father was also in Vienna.**

**KPL:** Yes, Red Vienna was an amazing episode in history – a remarkable experiment in municipal socialism. It was really a situation in which workers were privileged, and were privileged socially – in terms of the services, in terms of the wonderful collective tenements that were built; Karl-Marx-Hof, of course, being the outstanding example.

But not only that. The atmosphere and the cultural level were very unusual, marked by the fact that somebody like Karl Polanyi, who had no status and was not employed by any university, gave public lectures on socialism and other matters. He could challenge the market-oriented thinking of Ludwig van Mises in an established financial journal. Mises would reply, and my father would respond. There was an intellectual life outside the university, in the community.

**MB: What do you remember of this period?**

**KPL:** I was only a child, but I do remember the wonderful summer camps in the most desirable lakes in Salzburg that were all organized by the socialist movement. And the people came from all over the world to look at Red Vienna, as an example of modern urbanism at its best.

Although neither of my parents had great affection for social democracy, both of them conceded later in life that those years in Vienna – so-called Red Vienna – were remarkable, and laudable. It was the only time I ever heard my mother say anything laudable about social democrats. My father, as a matter of fact, was no big enthusiast either.

**MB: In 1922 your father wrote his famous article on socialist calculation, which is a sort of celebration of another vision of socialism – Guild Socialism – that was also influenced by Vienna’s municipal socialism.**

**KPL:** Well, look. At that time there was no country in the world that had a socialist economy, right? Russia was emerging out of a brutal civil war. So there was an intellectual debate on the possibility of organizing a socialist national economy. And Mises fired the first shot. He was the one who wrote the article to say that this was impossible – because without price making markets, there was no rational way of allocating resources. I’m sure most of you who study economics are familiar with this argument. And then Polanyi challenged this with a model of associational cooperative socialism, based partly on Otto Bauer, and partly on G.D.H. Cole.

**MB: What was your father’s view of the Russian Revolution of 1917, when he was in Vienna?**

**KPL:** Well, first of all, the first Russian Revolution in 1917 – the February Revolution – was the one that ended the

war. His view was that this was wonderful, because like just about everyone in Hungary he wanted the war to end. The war was extremely unpopular. Then the war finished. The initial Russian Revolution was welcomed, I think.

**MB: What about the October Revolution?**

**KPL:** For Polanyi both the February and October Revolutions were bourgeois revolutions. They were the last wave that followed the French Revolution and had crossed Europe – and had finally reached the most backward country in Europe, which was Russia. So that’s how he put it.

**MB: So the true revolution comes later with the move toward collectivization and five-year plans?**

**KPL:** Yes. I think he would say that socialism came only with the Five-Year Plan, after 1928 or 1929. Prior to that, Russia was a predominately peasant country, an agricultural country. We now have an interesting article written in Bennington in 1940, which has recently come to light. There he talks about Russia’s internal dilemma. To put it simply: the working class, which was the basis of the Communist Party, controlled the cities and was dependent on the peasantry, who controlled food supply in the rural areas. But then there was an external dilemma: it was not possible for Russian peasants to export their grain because international markets had collapsed in the Great Depression, grain being the principal export commodity of Russia at the time.

This contributed to the decision to undertake the accelerated industrialization of Europe’s most backward country – and to undertake it as a socialist project of nationalization – not only of industry, but also of agriculture.

**MB: So this is already paradoxical, right? Because of course hitherto we hear him endorsing the social revolutionaries and the idea of a participatory democracy, but now it seems he endorsed Stalinism.**

**KPL:** Yes. But as has been pointed out by other people, also regarding my father’s life, it was very contextual. And precisely what is so attractive about his thinking – but also makes it sometimes contradictory – is that it does not proceed from a single principle, so to speak. It proceeds from situations, and their possibilities.

This is the first polarity: reality, and freedom – what is the real situation and what are the possibilities for Russia at that time? You have a revolution that is led by a proletarian party. You have a peasantry that did not want to be nationalized – they wanted to own the land. And they did. And they had a lot of power, controlling the food supply.

And then you had an international situation. Shortly after, you had fascism in the 1930s. Only in England, does my father really become a strong supporter of the Soviet Union, and it was in the context of the impending conflict with German expansionism and Nazism.

>>





**MB: So your father leaves Vienna in 1933.**

**KPL:** Yes, he left Vienna because of the impending fascism. A decision was made by the editorial committee of the famous economic journal *Der Österreichische Volkswirt*, where he was then a leading editorial figure, that Polanyi should go to England because the political situation was tenuous. His English was excellent. He had contacts. So he went to England in 1933. He continued to contribute articles from England until the journal ceased publication in 1938.

We didn't go as a family. My father went in 1933. I was sent to England in 1934, and went to live with very close English friends, Donald and Irene Grant, whom we had known well in Vienna. They were Christian socialists working for the Student Christian Movement of Britain, handing out relief to impoverished postwar Austrians. And that is how we met them. And I lived with them. My mother came in 1936, two years later.

**MB: Let's go back to your father, now in England. What did he do there?**

**KPL:** When he first arrived in 1933 he had no fixed employment. His support system there was Betty and John MacMurray and the Grant family who belonged to something called the Christian Left. They were Christian socialists. There were also communists and there were religious leaders, mostly Protestant.

He wrote an important essay on the essence of fascism, which he considered to be an affront to Christian values, that would be included in a book he co-edited, *Christianity and the Social Revolution*. My father also led a study group of his English Christian friends, on the two volumes of Marx's early writings, including *The German Ideology* and the famous *Paris Manuscripts*, which had just been published in 1932. He read to them from these writings, translating into English as he went along.

He was very excited about these works. I remember the sense of his agreement with them. I call Marx's early writings the common starting point of Marx and Polanyi.

**MB: He says as much in *The Great Transformation*. So what did his teaching involve? How did England influence his thinking?**

**KPL:** It was not until 1937 that Karl obtained employment with the Workers Education Association (WEA), a very large and very old adult education movement. In England it is connected to Ruskin College that enables working-class people, who were not able to go to university, to obtain further education.

My father got the chance to teach in English provincial towns in Kent and Sussex. He stayed overnight with the families. He got to know more intimately the life of working-class families, and he was shocked at the conditions he found and, to be honest, the low cultural level. By comparison with working-class people in Vienna they were culturally poorer, even though Austria was a far poorer country in monetary terms than Britain.

The subject that he was required to teach was English social and economic history, about which he did not know anything. It was a period of self-study for him. If you look at the back of the book – *The Great Transformation* – you will see the enormous range of the studies he undertook. It is very similar to Marx's *Grundrisse* that interestingly enough relies on similar authors – Ricardo, Malthus and others – writing on the early industrial revolution.

So my mother wrote – and it is written in the foreword to the book called *The Livelihood of Man*, which was published posthumously – that it was in England that Karl put down the roots of a sacred hate of market society, which divested people of their humanity. That is how she put it.

Then, of course, he discovered the class system in England. It consisted of differences of speech. And he described the class system as similar to caste in India, and race in the United States.

**MB: In 1940 Karl Polanyi is invited to give lectures at Bennington College in the US.**

**KPL:** Yes, in Bennington he received a two-year fellow-

>>

**“To allow the market mechanism to be the sole director of the fate of human beings and their natural environment would result in the demolition of society”**

Karl Polanyi

ship from the Rockefeller Foundation to write *The Great Transformation*. He had good support from the president of Bennington, but he had to report to the Rockefeller Foundation. Whatever he gave them to read, they did not like it. They had very serious doubts about his suitability to be in a university.

They wrote that he really was more interested – and listen to this, as a put-down – in “Hungarian law, and college lecturing, and philosophy.” To say he was interested in philosophy is a total put-down. However, they renewed the grant. And at the end of the two years – we’re now in 1943 – my father was very keen to return to England. He did not want to stay in the United States. He wanted to participate in the postwar planning of England.

By this time the Battle of Stalingrad had turned the tide of the war; it was very clear that the allies were going to win. And he left the two penultimate chapters of *The Great Transformation* unfinished. And if you look, those chapters have traces of being unfinished. Not the last chapter, but the two chapters before the last one.

If he had stayed to finish the book, I think that the draft outline of a proposed book, “Common Man’s Masterplan” is really what he might have included in those last two chapters. Something of that. He left it with colleagues. There was a lot of contention and quarrel about these two penultimate chapters.

**MB: But eventually he would return to the US to take a job at Columbia University, but your mother was prohibited from living in the US, so they ended up living in Canada.**

**KPL:** The other option would have been to stay in England, where my father could have continued working for the

WEA. But it was also clear that really, he had something to say. He had a book to write. And he had work to do. And he was not going to get any appointment at any university in England. That was very clear. So in 1947 came the offer from Columbia. It was based on *The Great Transformation*. The book had a foreword by Robert Maclver of Columbia University which is known in schools of economics for its institutionalism, and matched – in a sense – Polanyi’s approach.

Then, in London, Ilona was told that she was prohibited from entering the United States. It was a big problem. My father was very, very upset. He wanted her to persuade the Americans to change their mind. And she said no way. That is not possible.

So he conceived the idea that perhaps they might make a home in Canada, and eventually he persuaded her that this was a feasible solution. And she made a beautiful home for them on the outskirts of Toronto, in a rural setting – a tiny little house. And that was in 1950. He commuted like a student, from New York. He came for Christmas and Easter, and summer vacations.

And when he finally retired from teaching in 1953 he spent more time in Canada. His students came to visit him constantly. And many other people came.

**MB: And his research turned in a new direction. He became more interested in anthropological studies. But that I’m afraid is a story for another conversation. Thank you very much for this wonderful account of Karl Polanyi’s life. You have delved into the extraordinary prehistory of *The Great Transformation*. I think we now understand far better how it was the product of very different historical experiences in the twentieth century and why it remains so important today. ■**

# > Behind Trump's Rhetoric of Economic Nationalism

by **Peter Evans**, University of California, Berkeley, USA and member of ISA Research Committees on Economy and Society (RC02), Futures Research (RC07), Labour Movements (RC44), Social Classes and Social Movements (RC47) and Historical Sociology (RC56)



| *President Trump's rhetoric of America First.*

“**E**conomic nationalism” has a venerable history. From Alexander Hamilton to Friedrich List, to their twentieth-century successors in Latin America, Africa and Asia, economic nationalism has been an intellectual and ideological tool for poor countries trying to “catch up” with rich ones. Does Trump’s “America First” rhetoric and the Brexit rejection of Britain’s  
>>

global economic ties indicate a new “rise of economic nationalism”? A closer look suggests this formulation is seriously misleading.

Donald Trump’s version of “economic nationalism” combines ineffectual bullying with ribbon-cutting rhetoric. “America First” is Donald Trump’s favorite slogan, but while his version of “economic nationalism” owes its popularity to the failures of global neoliberal capitalism, it offers no threat to global capitalism. An extra shovelful of dirt on the grave of the defunct Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) may have provided a gleeful moment, but substantive changes in existing trade agreements seem a quixotic project. Exhortations urging American corporations not to move jobs abroad are excellent theatrics, but there is no evidence that these pleas will actually disrupt global production networks.

So why did Steve Bannon – who was, unfortunately, the closest thing to a “big picture” strategist in Trump’s coterie – claim that “economic nationalism” is the second of the administration’s three key pillars? Like Trump, Bannon understands that “economic nationalism” is a meme that can be deployed to exploit accumulated resentment, complementing and expanding on racist and xenophobic appeals while simultaneously undercutting the existing political establishment.

Since the post-World War II “golden age of capitalism” ended over four decades ago, life under neoliberal capitalism has not been kind to most Americans. Stagnant wages have combined with a distressing and demeaning reality, as income and privilege have shifted ever more brutally to the top 0.001% (most recently chronicled by [Piketty](#), [Saez and Zucman](#)). By the turn of the millennium, distress had translated into a new epidemic of addiction, and a historically unprecedented fall in life expectancies for less-educated white men.

The conventional American political establishment found itself in a box. Unwilling to risk popular mobilization to confront the power of capital, but unable to change the trajectory of declining well-being and rising popular anger, establishment politicians had already been through decades of failed bipartisan efforts to convince ordinary Americans that only a global regime based on “free trade” could improve their lives.

Trump’s aggressive rhetorical embrace of “economic nationalism” separated him from the vulnerable globalist legacy of this timid establishment. Reducing the structurally-driven negative effects of capitalism to weakness in bargaining with foreign leaders – weakness which could be reversed by a belligerent nationalist negotiator – economic nationalism distracted attention from the actual hallmarks of his economic policy: allowing capital to claim even more of the collective surplus, and removing regulations that offer some protection from predatory economic behavior.

Enabling this political sleight of hand makes economic nationalism the “second pillar” of Trump’s agenda. Trump remains one of the least popular US presidents in modern political history, but economic nationalism remains one of his most effective ideological tools. Without it, appeals to racism and xenophobia would be his only ideological weapons.

Brexit provides a complementary perspective on the political bankruptcy of the argument that “global free markets bring prosperity to all” mantra. David Cameron may have assumed that ordinary Britons would share his enthusiasm for the City of London’s bankers, whose profits are based on a privileged position in global financial markets, but his hubris gave the British people a chance to vote directly on a specific feature of economic globalization – something that no American politician, from Clinton to Obama, has dared allow. The British establishment is still shocked at the rejection of globalism.

Trump and Brexit do not threaten global capital’s ability to extract profit, but they may signal (or perhaps ratify) an upheaval of global neoliberalism’s political infrastructure. In the global North, political elites can no longer take for granted Lenin’s dictum that “a democratic republic is the best possible political shell for capitalism.” For elites, allowing ordinary citizens to vote on issues relating to global capitalism suddenly seems risky. Electorates reciprocate elite distrust, doubtful that selecting political leadership from the normally available rosters will lead to better lives. Elite and mass both question whether liberal democratic processes will serve their interest, raising the possibility, as Wolfgang Streeck puts it, that “capitalism’s shotgun marriage with democracy is breaking up.”

In the global South, the issue presents itself even more starkly. Politicians in the global South understand that they must maneuver within the political space afforded by power of global capital and the rules it has imposed. Xi Jinping is careful not to sound like an economic nationalist when he speaks at Davos. Even the surprising victories of Brazil, China and India in the WTO (World Trade Organization) were fought on the discursive turf of neoliberal trade rules. Instead of proclaiming the legitimacy of nationalist ends, the strategy was to club the North with its hypocritical refusal to abide by its own “free trade” rules. Yet, this is no longer the world that David Harvey described a decade ago in which the ideological ascendance of neoliberalism might be taken for granted. The glorious putative effects of markets may have entranced Deng Xiaoping, but Xi Jinping is not a true believer. Chile’s Pinochet is dead and loyalty to neoliberalism comparable to South Africa’s Thabo Mbeki’s at the turn of the millennium is now hard to find.

Even with evaporating faith in neoliberal formulas, leaders in the global South are still vulnerable to the power of global capitalism, and rarely have the option of posturing as economic nationalists à la Trump. Lacking the econom-

ic nationalism card, the uglier tools of racism, xenophobia and repression are too often what leaders turn to when neoliberal strategies fail.

The evolution of Erdoğan's Turkey, described by Cihan Tuğal in [Global Dialogue 6.3](#) (September 2016), is a cautionary case in point. Starting with a nation that had been "the most secular and democratic country in the Middle East," Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party first embraced neoliberal capitalism. Then, discovering that neoliberal capitalism could not provide a material basis for political hegemony within conventional democratic rules, the regime moved toward what Tuğal considers "hard totalitarianism" relying on "mass mobilization and fanaticism."

Narendra Modi's regime in India is a variation on the same theme. The most extreme forms of religious bigotry have been unleashed in a polity where secular electoral democracy (albeit highly imperfect) had survived against all odds for 70 years. At the turn of the millennium, India's embrace of neoliberal capitalism left most of the country's populace behind, but Modi's BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) distracted attention from its tight connection to big capital by moving to an openly Hindu chauvinist strategy, terrorizing Muslims, along with other "outsiders" and "disloyal" Hindus.

Whether the focus is on Trump or the global South, whatever benefits might accrue from global trade and production networks are not threatened by the "rise of economic nationalism." The real threat to the well-being of ordinary people and communities is the rise of reactionary political strategies aimed at maintaining the power of elites who lack the political will and capacity to challenge the punishing effects of global neoliberal capitalism.

Donald Trump is a global threat, not because he is an economic nationalist, but because he is commander in chief of the world's most dangerous military apparatus. Judged by actual policies enacted so far, he is not so much an economic nationalist as a politician who has discovered that economic nationalist tropes are useful in distracting his constituents from his devotion to the most retrograde features of capitalist domination. Other leaders, who must live with capitalism's failures but are prevented by global capital's power over their national economies from playing the economic nationalism card, are prone to using even more vicious strategies to maintain power.

No "inexorable" logic forces us to accept either the current failure of capitalism to deliver improved well-being, or the abhorrent strategies used by political leaders to preserve their power. Unless they are jarred by the shock of progressive mobilization from below, political establishments will always assume that economic constraints preclude transformation; but the politically unexpected can create unanticipated possibilities as well as discouraging reversals.

While Trump's efforts to disguise a return to a more reactionary version of capitalism by invoking pseudo economic nationalism have not allowed him to escape record levels of disapproval from the American people, the US politician currently enjoying the highest approval ratings is Bernie Sanders, who made a credible attempt at doing something unprecedented in the history of the United States – becoming the presidential candidate of one of the two major parties while running as a socialist. ■

Direct all correspondence to Peter Evans <[pevans@berkeley.edu](mailto:pevans@berkeley.edu)>

# > Trumpism and the White Male Working Class

by **Raka Ray**, University of California, Berkeley, USA



*The heart of Trump supporters – the white working class.*

**I**t has become commonplace in both media and scholarly writing to describe many of the people who voted for Trump, and who show up in large numbers for right-wing protests like that in Charlottesville, Virginia, as “angry white men.” *The Washington Post* asks, “Why are so many white men so angry?” Sociologist Michael Kimmel suggests that “aggrieved entitlement” unites them. When all the votes after the last US elections were counted and analyzed, a very particular constituency became obvious: 71% of white men without college degrees voted for Trump, while more than half of white men with college degrees (53%) also voted for Trump.

While much has been made of what both the left and the right often term the “Angry White Male” vote, I suggest that we need to closely examine each element of this. This group of voters is simultaneously white and male and working-class; thus race, and class, and gender must be analyzed, and understood, together.

In the US, the decline of Fordism and the corresponding decline of “good” jobs were not simply an issue of

class. Between the beginning and the end of the twentieth century in the United States, Fordism provided good jobs involving assembly line manufacturing of standardized goods, afforded higher wages so that workers could afford to buy the products they made, and promised relatively continuous employment. But Fordism, in reality, meant more than that. Premised as it was on large-scale industrial production and domestic consumerism, Fordism was never just a feature of the capitalist economy. It simultaneously reflected patriarchy: the ideology of Fordism subsumed within it the family wage – the idea that one income alone can support the entire family. The family wage, in turn, assumed a division of labor in which men took care of production, while women took care of consumption (and also subsidized the nourishment and social reproduction of workers). That men rather than women would work the good jobs stemmed from gendered assumptions about the right place for men and women, and also from the fact that (in the absence of any provision for equal pay between men and women) it made sense that women, whose earning capacity was far lower, should be the ones to stay at home. Indeed, at the very heart of many men’s

>>

understanding of themselves as men, lies their capacity to provide for their families.

Excluded from the family wage compact were men whose wages were not high enough: blacks and immigrants. Fordism thus privileged white, skilled blue-collar male workers. Also excluded were women who were not attached to men, and women whose men would never earn enough to support their families by themselves. This being also an era when state investments were made in healthcare, education, and old age, a good life was imaginable and well within the grasp of white working-class men.

The decline of Fordism coincided with waves of social movements by women and people of color demanding equality, equal wages, reproductive rights, rights of free speech, against war, and for sexual freedom. Simultaneous with the decline of Fordism and the decline of the family wage, came the rise of dual-earner families and a shaking up of the very ideology of the family wage. Within the present regime of globalized and financialized capitalism manufacturing has been relocated to low-wage regions of the world, and many jobs have simply disappeared because of automation. The new regime has both recruited women into the paid workforce, and promoted state and corporate disinvestment from social welfare.

For over 40 years, white men's median income, adjusted for inflation, has remained virtually stagnant, while that of white women nearly doubled. Median incomes of black women more than doubled, and black men's median incomes have gone up somewhat. Even with the Great Recession and modest economic growth, white women, black men and black women have made some progress. But any increases in white men's incomes have gone mainly to the wealthy.

Because Fordism was simultaneously about class and race and gender, the reaction to decline has been premised on all three: when white working-class men lost their jobs, they lost their sense of masculinity, their control over women, and their previous advantage over people of color. They lost who they thought they were. While the term "aggrieved entitlement" may seem appropriate, it is, I believe, inadequate.

Philosopher Nancy Fraser's description of two sorts of recent political struggles in the US – struggles over redistribution and struggles over recognition – provides a useful way to think about the politics stemming from these losses. Fraser defines struggles over redistribution as struggles over mate-

rial inequality – income and property ownership, access to paid work, education, and health care. Redistribution, then, refers to socio-economic injustice. Struggles over recognition, on the other hand, refers to symbolic injustice such as cultural domination, non-recognition, and disrespect, as marginalized groups – those who are gay, or Trans, or black or women – struggle for respect and inclusion.

While Fraser analytically separates struggles over redistribution and recognition, however, in practice, in people's lives, these things are usually intertwined. White men without college degrees voted in 2016 for recognition and redistribution: they wanted to be recognized as men who could no longer be the breadwinners in their family and who therefore feared they were being denied the right to be men. Many in this category felt their whiteness was being mocked, their people considered bigoted, women gaining power, and the state apparently favoring people of color through affirmative action policies.

The right wing in the US has been more adept at understanding this dynamic than the left, and has been able to capitalize on and promote available American cultural narratives such as:

- The Deserving versus the Undeserving poor (the idea that some have become poor because their jobs have been taken away from them, versus those who simply do not want to work);
  - Nativism (an anxiety that immigrants are not just taking away jobs from the Deserving, but also, through their numbers, turning America into a less white place); and
  - Men should be breadwinners (implying that women who try to lead or compete should be put back in their place).
- This successful deployment of discourses of recognition and redistribution creates and sustains a politics of resentment that marks white working-class men.

With few exceptions, left-wing American discussions involve a greater disconnection between the politics of redistribution and recognition. The politics of economic justice, the politics of cultural justice (for example, trans-friendly bathrooms) and the politics of the environment are put forward by movements which are often hostile to each other. Groups such as Black Lives Matter, which do combine the politics of recognition and redistribution, have not resonated as yet with a wide audience. While it is always harder to unite the left – for many reasons, both discursive and material – this concatenation of factors brought the right to power and caused working-class white men to become absorbed in its promises. ■

Direct all correspondence to Raka Ray <[rakaray@berkeley.edu](mailto:rakaray@berkeley.edu)>

# > Immigration and Trump-Era Politics

by **G. Cristina Mora**, University of California, Berkeley, USA



President Trump is flouting the first principle of US history – that America is a land of immigrants.

**T**he run-up to November 2016 included much rhetoric about who made America great, and who would bring about its moral and economic downfall. At the center of this debate were immigrants: claims about “bad hombres” and “criminals” from Mexico and elsewhere peppered then-candidate Trump’s speeches and campaign bombast. Equating immigrants and criminals, along with continuous talk of job displacement, fueled a nationalist, anti-immigrant chorus that reached its crescendo during the Republican National Convention, as Trump stood against a backdrop of the US/Mexico Border, with crowds chanting “Build A Wall.”

For many immigration scholars, the hype seemed dangerously misplaced, for three reasons. First, immigration has been at a net-zero for the last decade. As many immigrants leave each year as arrive, and the most recent data suggests that more Mexicans are leaving than moving into the US. The era of mass migration to the US has ended, despite political clamoring about a sudden “illegal” invasion or an immigration surge. Secondly, much research, including research from the Congressional Budget Office, indicates that immigrants provide an overall net economic gain to the nation. Immigrants, even unauthorized ones, pay taxes, and second-generation immigrants form one of the most entrepreneurial groups in the country. Moreover, immigrants are less likely than the native-born to enroll in public assistance programs, a fact that is often lost on pol-

iticians and blogs who warn of the Latina “welfare queen.” Last, immigrants *want* to integrate. Far from being a cultural threat to the nation, the vast majority of immigrants, and especially their children, learn English. And for what it’s worth, most immigrants are also religious; in fact, the vast majority of Mexican “bad hombres” in the US profess some Christian faith – a fact which once led Ronald Reagan to declare Latinos were Republican, they just didn’t know it yet.

But despite volumes of this type of research finding, hype about the dangers of immigration continues to win out the day. But is this due only to right-wing politics? Not quite. Centrist media and mainstream Democrats have also added fuel to this fire. While not as explicit as conservative media, outlets like *The New York Times*, for example, often comment more on immigration’s costs and crimes, than on its benefits to society. And despite the eventual passage of DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals)<sup>1</sup>, the Obama administration carried out the same deportation policies put in place during the Bush administration, eventually deporting more immigrants than his previous two predecessors combined, a record that earned him the title of “Deporter in Chief.” To his credit, his administration put more weight on deporting newly-arrived immigrants rather than established ones – but this does little to soften the blow for immigrant rights advocates who expected comprehensive immigration reform and were swept up by his “Yes We Can” campaign pronouncements.

And yet, the idea that the Democrats could champion immigrant rights seemed promising in the months leading up to November 2016. Tim Kaine, the Democratic vice-presidential candidate, peppered his Democratic National Convention speech with Spanish phrases, promising immigrants that the Democratic Party would prioritize comprehensive immigration reform. Clinton held mass rallies in Texas and Florida, continuously promising that she would follow through on immigration and would do what the Obama administration had not. Hispanic/Latino lobby groups gripped tight to these promises, unleashing a massive get-out-the-vote campaign which eventually helped keep several Southwestern states Democratic and propelled the first Latina to the US Senate.



Asian lobby groups were not far behind. Although less numerous than their Latino counterparts, Asian organizations make up a significant part of the immigration rights movement. In the months before the election, Asian lobbies contended that Asian voters would make the difference in toss-up states like Virginia and Nevada. They also rolled out impressive voter registration campaigns, warning that Democrats would be wise to make immigration reform a central part of their platform.

But despite these impressive efforts, Latinos and Asians could not change electoral outcomes. The fate of the nation was decided in small town communities in Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Ohio – not in coastal immigrant gateways. Indeed, the mid-western Rustbelt states had witnessed a doubling of the immigrant population since the early 1990s, as immigrants took positions not only in agricultural fields, but also in factories. Their “outsider” looks and culture likely made them a target for right-wing political figures who needed a way to rally their base. It was easier for politicians to blame job loss and economic woes on immigrants than to speak more comprehensively about the mechanics of global capitalism and rising inequality.

So where does this leave the cause of immigrant rights – especially if immigration facts fall on deaf political ears in Washington? The answer is not clear, except to say that states will be the immediate target of immigration advocacy. California, for example, provides health coverage and drivers licenses to undocumented immigrants, ensuring some comfort and sense of legal integration. Cities there and elsewhere have proclaimed themselves “sanctuaries,” a symbolic move that nonetheless communicates resistance to the Trump administration.

Still the road is bleak. Trump controls the same intricate deportation regime refined by Obama, and in his first year he has continued to link immigration with crime. His Muslim Travel Ban, for instance, re-ignited a national conversation linking Muslims to terrorism. His pardon of Joe Arpaio, the Arizona Sheriff who violated a court order by detaining immigrants simply because they were unauthorized, once again communicated his “bad hombres” message. Moreover, Trump intends to end DACA, even though the program is targeted towards childhood arrivals who have not been convicted of a serious crime and do not pose a threat to public safety.

Is protest the answer? In 2006, hundreds of thousands of immigration rights activists took to the streets, chanting,



*President Trump is threatening to rescind the protections under Obama’s Executive Order known as DACA (“Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals”) for those who came to the US illegally when they were minors. They are known as Dreamers.*

“Today we march, tomorrow we vote,” and “Immigration rights are human rights.” More than a decade has passed, but neither promise has come to fruition. Without amnesty, immigrants have not become voting citizens. And activists’ appeals to “human rights,” or to the hope that Americans will see immigrants as part of a communal global citizenry, seem woefully inadequate in our current era of Trump-style American nationalism. And today, activists fear that future protests could spark a backlash: the number of local anti-immigrant ordinances spiked soon after the 2006 protests.

Immigration reform is a political pawn used by both sides. The fight to reunite families and to give immigrants a chance to fulfill their American dream is certainly worthy – and immigrant rights activists work tirelessly towards this cause. No parents should be torn away from their US-born children, and no individual should be denied safety, shelter and other opportunities simply because they were born on the wrong side of a wall. At the same time, we should recognize large-scale changes to US immigration policy will likely never develop, because the system delivers precisely what it is supposed to. As designed and operated, it provides a captive labor force that subsidizes our global markets and enables exploitation. No temporary relief, minor policy changes, or short-term amnesty programs can change this larger dynamic. ■

<sup>1</sup> The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) was an Obama Executive Order that allowed individuals who entered the country as minors, and had either entered or remained in the country illegally, to receive a renewable two-year period of deferred action from deportation and to be eligible for a work permit.

Direct all correspondence to G. Cristina Mora <[cmora@berkeley.edu](mailto:cmora@berkeley.edu)>

# > Trump's Assault on Labor

by **Ruth Milkman**, City University of New York, USA and member of ISA Research Committee on Labour Movements (RC44)



*After Presidential candidate Donald Trump successfully appealed to the union rank and file, union leaders began lining up behind the President. Here President Trump is flanked by union leaders in the White House.*

Obituaries for the US labor movement were a well-worn staple of left-wing political discourse long before Donald Trump's unexpected ascension to the presidency. For decades now, both the unionized share of the workforce and the incidence of strikes have steadily declined – trends which accelerated rapidly after the 1980 election of Ronald Reagan, whose populist appeal to the Rust Belt's white working class prefigured Trump's campaign 36 years later. Reagan won a slightly greater share of voters from union households (45%) in 1980 than Trump did last year (43%), a fact that has been obliterated from public memory.

Of course, labor's meltdown in the intervening years had sharply reduced the denominator of union household voters. By 2016, only 10.7% of employed US workers, and 6.4% in the private sector, were union members, down

>>

from a peak of about 35% in the mid-1950s. Strike rates also fell precipitously starting in the early 1980s, and the strikes that did occur were often employer-provoked efforts to bludgeon unions into surrendering previous gains. “Right to work” laws (which prohibit union shops in the private sector) had spread to 27 states by the end of 2016 (up from 20 states in 1975), including former union strongholds like Michigan and Wisconsin; this past February, a 28th state (Missouri) joined their ranks. And as everyone knows, the demobilization of once-powerful unions has gone hand in hand with the skyrocketing growth in inequality over the past 40 years.

The one bright spot for organized labor in recent years has been the public sector, where unionization rates are much higher and relatively stable. But in the aftermath of the Great Recession, that too began to change, as a wave of new legislation limiting public-sector collective bargaining rights gathered force in Republican-controlled states. The poster child was Wisconsin, which in 1959 was the first state to legalize public-sector collective bargaining. In 2011, newly-elected Republican Governor Scott Walker pushed through a bill radically restricting public-sector union rights. Despite massive public protests, this measure passed, and Walker proudly signed it into law.

The results were devastating: the unionized share of Wisconsin’s public-sector workers plummeted from 50.3% in 2011 to 22.7% in 2016. And as Gordon Lafer shows in his 2017 book, *The One Percent Solution*, Wisconsin was just the opening round in a systematic right-wing campaign to undermine public-sector unions across the country – not least because unions remain a major source of political funding for Democratic political candidates. Nationally, the public-sector unionization rate has fallen only slightly, from 36.8% in 2008 to 34.4% in 2016. But that will change as more Red (Republican) states follow Wisconsin’s lead.

During Reagan’s first year in office, the white working class was brutally betrayed by a candidate so many of its members had embraced – himself a former trade unionist. Reagan famously fired thousands of air traffic controllers after they launched a strike in 1981 – an event remembered ever since as a pivotal moment in US labor’s downward trajectory. Adding to the pathos, the air controllers’ union had endorsed Reagan in the presidential campaign the year before. Although federal workers are legally prohibited from striking, they have periodically done so anyway; Reagan’s draconian response to the air controllers’ walkout was without precedent in the postwar era. Crushing their union was the iconic labor drama of the Reagan era, but his administration also took many other steps to weaken unions – even briefly eliminating the federal collection of data on union membership (a move that was soon reversed in the face of business protests).

Trump’s campaign speeches regularly paid homage to the “forgotten man,” invoking physical images of masculinity embodied in manual labor, especially in the construction industry where he made his own fortune. At the same time, he heaped scorn on the college-educated employed at desks or in cubicles rather than in factories or building sites. Trump’s rhetorical empathy for the white working class, and his anti-elitist posturing on behalf of those Clinton famously dismissed as “deplorables,” reprises Reagan’s appeals to what were then called “Reagan Democrats.” Even the slogan “Make America Great Again,” is a retread, first created for Reagan in 1980.

But if his rhetoric is replete with such echoes, Trump’s actual labor policies are – at least so far – much less overt than Reagan’s high-profile anti-union attacks. Even as the public is riveted by Trump’s steady stream of bombastic tweets and rants on other topics and by the unending turmoil inside the White House, an anti-worker agenda long nurtured by the right is quietly marching forward just under the radar. In keeping with campaign rhetoric lambasting “job-killing” regulations, Trump’s administration has taken steps to dismantle various labor regulations promulgated in the Obama years, most notably seeking to eliminate the pending increase in the salary threshold (unchanged since 1975) for automatic eligibility for overtime pay. And although it is seldom framed as a “labor” issue, repealing “Obamacare” (Obama’s health insurance program) would disproportionately hurt the white working class.

Trump’s nominations to the five-member National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), the body that governs US private-sector collective bargaining, have been notoriously anti-union, in yet another echo of the Reagan years. Two Trump-appointed NLRB members are already in place, and a third will join them when an incumbent’s term expires this December. At that point Trump appointees will effectively control the Board; starting in 2018, a long series of labor-friendly NLRB decisions issued in the Obama years will almost certainly be reversed. Trump’s initial nominee to head the US Labor Department, fast-food mogul Andrew Puzder, was forced to withdraw, but this was due to his history of alleged domestic violence and his having employed an undocumented immigrant, not because of his vocal opposition to labor regulations.

The single most significant Trump appointment for US unions, however, is that of Neil Gorsuch to the Supreme Court. Virtually all observers expect Gorsuch’s vote to be decisive in the case *Janus v. AFSCME*, currently on the docket. The case, brought by a small group of Illinois public employees with support from the National Right to Work Foundation and the conservative Liberty Justice Center, threatens to eliminate “fair share” or “agency” fees paid by non-members covered by public-sector collective bargaining agreements. Most state laws require public-sector unions to represent all workers in their bargaining units,

not only those who sign up as members; fair-share fees are meant to cover the costs of that representation and to prevent “free riders.” A few states (including Wisconsin and Iowa) already prohibit such fees; *Janus* would extend the ban throughout the nation. This will be a devastating blow to public sector unions, in Democratic- and Republican-controlled states alike.

It’s not a foregone conclusion that this heavy-handed approach will extend to all of organized labor, however. To date, Trump’s relations with trade unionists have followed a classic “divide and conquer” strategy, along lines sharply demarcated by race and gender. The very first day he began work after his inauguration, Trump invited a group of building trades unionists to the White House; later, he held similar meetings with police union officials. These labor leaders represent a membership that is overwhelmingly male and largely white. Another element in the effort to peel off the most reactionary sectors of organized labor is Trump’s courtship of the union representing border control agents, whose ranks he has already taken steps to expand. His declared opposition to NAFTA (North American

Free Trade Agreement) and other free trade agreements has also resonated with some union leaders in what remains of the manufacturing sector, although others have questioned his “fake news” claims about keeping factory jobs in the United States.

Such friendly overtures are conspicuously absent, however, when it comes to service sector and public sector unions, comprised mostly of women and people of color – and in some cases also including the immigrant workers who Trump’s xenophobic rhetoric regularly excoriates. His unrelenting efforts to turn US-born workers – the vast majority of whom are *not* unionized – against immigrant workers is another, even more ominous divide-and-conquer strategy. Here Trump deviates sharply from Reagan, who presided over the last major immigration reform (the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act) and granted amnesty to millions of undocumented immigrants. But with this important exception, Trump’s approach to labor and unions is eerily similar to that of the “Great Communicator.” If there ever was a textbook case of history repeating itself, the first time as tragedy, the second as farce, this is it. ■

Direct all correspondence to Ruth Milkman <[rmilkman@gmail.com](mailto:rmilkman@gmail.com)>

# > American Brumaire?

by **Dylan Riley**, University of California, Berkeley, USA

*Napoleon Bonaparte III, President of France 1848-52, Karl Marx's prototype of a charismatic leader who appears, like President Trump, when the capitalist class has lost hegemony.*



**D**oes Trump's victory mark a fundamental shift in US politics? Yes, but perhaps not in the way you might expect. Far from reflecting an incipient fascism, Trump's presidency

represents a tendency towards "neo-Bonapartism": it substitutes a charismatic leader for a hegemonic project. Like the French nineteenth-century version, this latter-day Bonapartism is linked to a crisis of hegemony stem-

>>

ming from an erosion of the material base that has allowed America's capitalist class to pursue its own interests, while claiming to represent those of society in general. This crisis has fragmented and weakened the party system in the context of a pre-modern state and a profoundly depoliticized populace. Any adequate political response to Trump must address the underlying economic and political institutional features that made his election possible.

### > Hegemony and crisis

From the 1930s to the 1970s – a period book-ended by economic crisis – the capitalist class in the US maintained a Fordist hegemony, based on high wages, healthy profits and (relatively) full employment. The long post-war boom allowed both Democratic and Republican administrations to deliver significant gains to the working class. But from 1973, the slowdown of the American economy undermined this regime. For business elites, rapid productivity growth and rising profits made an expanding welfare state tolerable. But as competition from Germany, Japan, the Asian Tiger economies, and finally China, drove down profit rates, the rules of the game changed. Capital went on the offensive from the mid-1970s, and the two parties rapidly adjusted. Retrenchment of the US welfare state began under Carter, and continued through to the Obama years. The new hegemonic formula was neoliberalism, which promised freedom and self-determination through the market to workers reimagined as consumers. In place of wage hikes and social programs, tax cuts were viewed as the material basis of consent.

The crisis of this neoliberal formula dates to October 3, 2008, when the \$700 billion Troubled Assets Relief Program (TARP), which bailed out the banks, revealed the hypocrisy of the free-market ideology. Neoliberal elements persisted during the Obama administration, combined with (relatively costless) concessions on the

environment and LGBTQ issues. Yet Obama's administration could not be described as straightforwardly neoliberal. Obama pushed support for finance capital and wealthy asset-owners farther than Bush had done, particularly with the Affordable Care Act's (Obama's program for health insurance, often referred to as Obamacare) massive handouts to the insurance industry. During the Obama years, the relationship between private owners and the state was reorganized, as sectors of the capitalist economy became increasingly state-dependent.

Trump was able to effectively politicize the collapse of neoliberalism. Although his economic program has been panned across the spectrum of respectable opinion – the *New York Times* columnist (and Nobel-winning economist) Paul Krugman condemned Trump's inauguration speech for evoking "a dystopia of social and economic collapse that bears little relationship to American reality" – the basic problems Trump points to are demonstrably real. In 1980, manufacturing still provided 22% of employment, rising to 30% in most counties east of the Mississippi, north and south; in southern California and the Pacific Northwest, aerospace jobs add to those figures. By 2015, manufacturing employment had collapsed to a mere 10%, affecting not only the famed "Rust Belt" of the upper Midwest but also – and crucially – the southern and far-western states. Deindustrialization has had real social consequences, leading to poverty, drug abuse, and the like.

While America's manufacturing base has been hollowed out and median wages have stagnated, CEO pay has skyrocketed. The interests of the US capitalist class are thus increasingly untethered from the wider society. This is the specific sense in which Trump's election is an expression of a crisis of ruling-class leadership. The US social elite no longer can make a plausible claim that its particular interests coincide with those of the majority of the population.

### > 2016: a wildcard election?

In one sense, the 2016 election was a historical wild card. But three powerful structural factors made it possible: the hollowing out of the party system which allowed both the Trump and Sanders revolts, the pre-modern character of the US state, and finally, widespread political apathy. The first point is too obvious to require much discussion, but the second two are equally important.

The pre-modern institutional peculiarities of the US state played a huge role in Trump's victory. Designed to protect the interests of a slaveholding oligarchy by distorting the vote, the American system shares features with the Wilhelmine Kaiserreich or the Italian Parliament of Giolitti's day: limited suffrage, first-past-the-post, high bars on ballot access, and the state-based Electoral College. Trump won the Presidency despite losing the popular vote by a margin of almost three million. Indeed, the *ancien-régime* deformation of the US political system has become ever more apparent as urbanization continues.

Massive political apathy also played a crucial role. Barely 55% of the voting-age population participated in the election. As always, turnout was skewed towards wealthier and better-educated voters. Democratic voters seem to have been more likely to stay away from the polls than Republicans: according to one survey, 46% of registered Republicans voted, but only 42% of registered Democrats, with people of color disproportionately represented among non-voters. Even a slightly higher turnout among Democratic base voters would have stopped Trump in his tracks.

### > Consent eroded

What solution does Trump propose? In the light of his inability to pass legislation this seems to come down to tearing up "unnecessary" safety and environmental regulations to reduce costs for manufacturers,

builders and consumers, boosting demand. High import tariffs and a crackdown on immigration would help maximize native manufacturing employment. But the notion that “regulation” is a major constraint on US investment is bizarre.

Is a geo-political reconfiguration on the cards? Although hopelessly inept at generating the atmospherics that normally surround US foreign policy (withdrawal from the toothless Paris accord, rejection of pious bromides about “human rights” and “democracy”), no major changes seem in the offing: NATO and Japan will be backed to the hilt; and the Bush and Obama wars will be extended indefinitely.

### > The future

What will be the new patterns of political struggle? In international relations, Trump plans a “state-capitalist” infrastructure-driven boom, coupled with a no-holds-barred ne-

gotiating strategy abroad. But the project seems fundamentally incoherent. How can the US run up huge deficits while taking a confrontational stance towards China, whose savings would presumably be used to underwrite this spending spree? We should anticipate hard-fought struggles, between fractions of the dominant class with varying degrees of access to the federal state’s resources.

Trump is not a fascist because he lacks a party organization, a militia, and an ideology; his foreign policy is “isolationist” rather than expansionist in the classical fascist sense. Berlusconi might seem an obvious parallel, but there are two major differences. First of all, the Italian tycoon was far more of an establishment creature than Trump: with a vast media empire at his disposal, he had a direct and intimate link to the country’s political class that Trump lacks. More importantly, perhaps, Berlusconi’s role model was Ronald

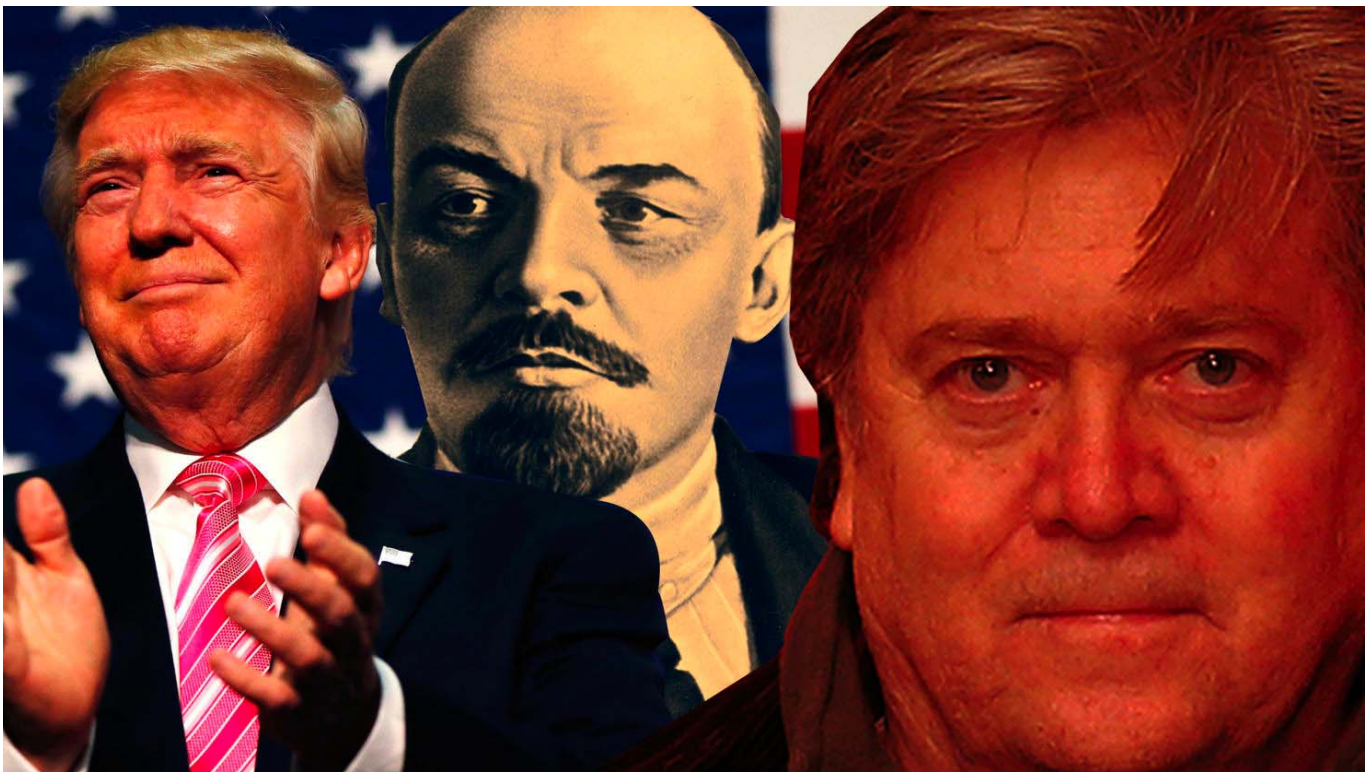
Reagan, and he appealed to Italians’ desire for a US-style normality. In short, Berlusconi was a late-period neoliberal – a mold that Trump is clearly breaking. Putin or Orbán might be more useful analogies. From this perspective, Trump can be seen as a “neo-patrimonial” figure, who will establish an informal court of followers and reward them with state largesse.

A “Trump-Keynesian” economic program – an increasingly doubtful prospect – could channel federal resources to the upper Midwest in the hope of cementing a permanent electoral coalition. But the project of kick-starting growth in the US economy through a seemingly anachronistic form of state-led capitalism seems highly unlikely. We can expect therefore continued drift and decline. On the other hand, the profound fracturing of the elite that Trump’s victory embodies may open up possibilities for progressive change in the US. ■

Direct all correspondence to Dylan Riley  
<[riley@berkeley.edu](mailto:riley@berkeley.edu)>

# > The Rise of the Leninist Right

by **Cihan Tuğal**, University of California, Berkeley, USA



*Steve Bannon, intellectual architect of the alt-right, explicitly draws on Lenin's call to destroy the state.*

**T**he victory of right-wing populism in America took half of the nation by surprise. If contextualized in a world-historical manner, however, it is far from shocking. In a nutshell, the boom-and-bust cycles of the neoliberal era have exhausted themselves. Economic crisis does not directly translate into a broader political problem, but the (post-1970s) ideological attack against all forms of collectivism have deprived humanity of centrist and left-tinged ways of fixing capitalism. Neoliberal devolution and persistent anti-collectivism are global trends, and I will say less about them

here. In America, these have been aggravated, over the past several decades, by a historical migration of populist language and politics from the left to the right. As a result, the left cannot even mount a proper populist challenge (let alone save capitalism or overthrow it), while the right-wing challenge is full of energy, spirit, and promises – if not real solutions.

## > **The liberalization of the left**

The left can no longer convincingly speak in a populist tone. It doesn't know how. In any case, most of its



ideologues don't want to. In order to understand the meagerness of populist overtones within the American left, we need to look at the pre-history of our era's anti-populism.

I trace this devolution, paradoxically, to what seemed on paper to be the most democratic revolt of the 20th century: 1968 (as it was experienced in the West). Alongside its anti-capitalism, 1968 was a revolt against the statist and bureaucratic excesses of Stalinism, social democracy, and the New Deal. Although justified in many regards, the anti-bureaucratic mood of that moment ultimately led many to draw wrong lessons from the downfall of statism and the victory of (neo)liberalism. 1968 was a necessary mistake. The right recovered from it. The left did not.

The two major inheritors of 1968 in the West – the liberal-left and autonomist/anarchist movements – developed an incurable suspicion not only of organization, ideology, and leadership, but also of speaking in the name of majorities, “the people.” All such talk (and politics) came to be branded “totalizing” and totalitarian (by the far left) or “irresponsible” and useless (by the liberal left). Except in Southern Europe (where left populism returned to the scene, but without class, ideological, and organizational anchors) and Latin America, the right occupied the emergent gap.

Defeated on paper, the libertarian spirit of 1968 fueled neoliberalism's anti-statism. But the more poisonous result was the subsequent split of leftists, between post-modernist nihilism and left-liberalism.

What was left-liberalism's project? Although global in its causes and manifestations, left-liberalism found its purest expressions in the United States and Britain. The catchword was inclusion, which came to replace equality. Inspired by sociologists such as Anthony Giddens, the new Anglophone center (New Labor and Clintonism) focused on including more peo-

ple at the table. Over three decades, inclusion increased in terms of race, gender, and sexual orientation — but the table itself shrank. So yes, Black and Latino men and women, even Muslims, got prominent positions at institutions they could previously hardly dream of; but the Black and Latino prison population in the US increased, as did the number of Muslims bombed, embargoed and starved by the United States.

Left-liberalism spoke to (more ordinary) minorities through targeted welfare programs; but since Democratic leaders shied away from taking from the big sharks, it could only do this by further victimizing the whites pushed away from a shrinking table. Downgraded whites came to be perceived as a bunch of racists, “a basket of deplorables”; people we can no longer talk to (a reality produced by the project itself).

### > The left's self-destruction and service to the right

As a result, minorities are not mobilized and organized in sustained fashion (producing the famous “missing” black vote of the 2016 US elections); downgraded whites distrust both parties, but find liberals more abhorrent. Up until the rise of Sanders, the establishment left (both the liberal left and the progressives) was caught in this liberal game of elite-driven “diversity” and “inclusion.” These entrenched political dispositions render a New Deal scenario highly unlikely.

What of the far left? Despite a strong dislike of the liberal left, many radical intellectuals and activists share its celebration of the “end of ideology” and organized leadership (resulting in “rhizomes” on the left, and electoralism among progressive Democrats). From Seattle to Occupy, the American left did its best not only to avoid, but to undermine organized leadership. As the center collapsed, therefore, the right was far more equipped to respond. First and foremost, rightists gave up neither ideology nor organ-

ized leadership. On paper, they fought against both, but only while manufacturing ideologies, organizations, and leaders under the radar.

While the left buried whatever remained of the ideologies and organizations of 1968 (even while celebrating 1968 for its libertarian and counter-culture spirit), the American right organized as a revolt against 1968. But unlike the residues of the revolution it claimed to be fighting, the right was organized and ideological. Its success in shifting the mainstream to the far right actually built on the repressed strategies and tactics of one forgotten wing of 1968: a particular reading of Lenin's theory of revolution.

### > The American right's “21st-century Leninism”

The dismissal of Steve Bannon – leading intellectual of the US alt-right – before the first anniversary of Trump's presidency comes as false relief. In fact, Bannon's White House adventure was only one stage of a long journey – the migration of revolutionary-populist language, tactics, and strategies from the left to the right. Bannon has reportedly said: “I'm a Leninist. Lenin [...] wanted to destroy the state, and that's my goal too. I want to bring everything crashing down, and destroy all of today's establishment.” But what does this Leninism consist of? In a complex democracy, Leninism can only maintain itself as a populism of the long revolution. For decades, social science has insisted that due to entrenched institutions, no third party can succeed in the US. This very “scientific fact” has enabled a smug self-certainty among liberal leftists and autonomists/anarchists (who find therein further justification for, respectively, their subservience to neoliberalism and evasion of organized politics). The American far right has subverted this “fact.” It was as if they were following directions from a 21st-century, condensed version of Lenin's (1902) *What is to Be Done?*, starting with the sentence: “If

**“I’m a Leninist. Lenin wanted to destroy the state, and that’s my goal, too. I want to bring everything crashing down, and destroy all of today’s establishment.”**

Steve Bannon, 2014

you can’t build a party, paralyze the party; circumvent it; and take it over.” They did all three simultaneously. Our imaginary, revised *What is to Be Done?* would then continue: “Before you become the de jure leaders of the party, make sure all of its institutions are crippled.” If the Tea Party (a populist grouping among Republicans) had not already paralyzed the Republican establishment, the latter would have been able to stop Trump’s rise.

American right-wing populism is Leninism under democratic conditions. Unlike the Russian Bolsheviks who had to avoid almost all above-ground society and politics, American rightists embrace society. The revised *What is to Be Done?* would therefore say: “Organize in every cell of society. Don’t underestimate any venue of organization and politics, even if (especially if) it seems to belong to the enemy camp.” The right learned not to leave education, science, and culture to the monopoly of the left. “Appropriate the organizational terrain and ideology of your enemy, to the extent

possible. Dismantle whatever you fail to appropriate.” Starting with Andrew Breitbart himself, the founder of the “alt-right” media outlet, the right read the Frankfurt School; it made health-care a big deal; and with the rise of Trump and Bannon, it promises jobs and infrastructure.

Today the Leninist Right cannot ignore the existence of other potentially populist forces on the social map, however meager they may be. The 21st-century *What is to Be Done?* would thus conclude with the sentence: “If certain trenches of the enemy appear to be beyond the reach of any of these tactics, provoke its occupants into immature and illegitimate action.” As the alt-right descended on the University of California, Berkeley and other pockets of residual left-wing influence in early 2017, liberals came to their defense (in the name of “free speech”) when a far left without a mass base attacked them. Liberal enthusiasm for “free speech” diminished slightly after an alt-rightist drove a truck into an anti-racist crowd

in Charlottesville, but the *Washington Post* still emphasized far left violence and the alt-right’s freedoms when the latter returned to Berkeley in September 2017. Many birds are killed with one stone: the enemy is divided; its confusion, lack of will, and weakness are exposed; its reputation is tarnished; and the far right itself is further galvanized.

Since “the state” today is more complex than any twentieth-century definition could capture, “smashing” it involves much less dramatic action than in 1917, at least for now. We still don’t know what the right holds in store for the time when the existing institutions are completely incapacitated, but we may soon find out. Right after his resignation, Steve Bannon declared “war” on his enemies, adding gleefully that he is returning to his “weapons” (meaning electronic media). A populist revolution in a land of entrenched (if decaying) liberalism is an uphill battle, and is bound to suffer setbacks. But the show is far from over. ■

Direct all correspondence to Cihan Tuğal  
<[ctugal@berkeley.edu](mailto:ctugal@berkeley.edu)>

# > Democratic Distemper in Brazil and South Africa

by **Gay W. Seidman**, University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA and member of ISA Research Committee on Labour Movements (RC44)



*President Zuma of South Africa, deeply embroiled in financial scandals, here flanked by his associates in crime, the Gupta Brothers.*

**S**ince Trump's unexpected electoral victory, much ink has been spilt on the challenges of globalization and the threat of authoritarian populism, but most of that discussion has focused on the wealthy countries of the global North. But what about the new democracies of the global South?

For the past 25 years, Brazil and South Africa have served as proud symbols of a new era: after decades of authoritarian industrialization, two of the world's most unequal societies moved steadily to build democratic constitutional societies, with popularly-elected leaders balancing inclusive social programs with consistent economic growth and global integration.

In both countries, popular movements in the 1990s united civil society, labor movements and poor communities, becoming global symbols of post-colonial possibility. In both, parties committed to progressive change came to power through democratic elections, seeking to balance economic growth and democratic citizenship.

As exporters of minerals and other primary commodities, both countries benefited from high commodity prices during the early 2000s. Popular parties seemed to have

found a pragmatic balance, keeping international investors and local citizens happy, maintaining ties to the global economy while pursuing new "pro-poor" social policies for long-excluded communities.

But today, hammered by a slump in global commodity prices, both South Africa's ANC and the Brazilian Workers' Party (PT) are in turmoil, torn apart by accusations of corruption and rapidly losing popular support. In both countries, massive corruption scandals have ensnared leading party officials. Large private companies in both countries have bribed parties and politicians to win large construction projects, subsidies for private business, and lucrative public contracts, causing widespread popular anger.

Corruption is hardly new in either society, of course. In both countries, authoritarian industrialization was historically fueled by political deals within the elite: repressive governments were closely linked to major corporations, which depended on politicians' favor and state contracts for much of their success.

But democracy has created new transparency: democratic institutions and media have revealed details that would never have been visible in the past. In both coun-

>>

tries, independent investigative units created as part of new democratic structures, along with new protections for free speech, have revealed details of extraordinary levels of corruption. In democracies, politicians and state agencies can be challenged in open courts, allowing new insights into what would once have been business as usual.

In Brazil, the Workers' Party gave independent prosecutors new powers, allowing state investigators to offer witnesses lighter sentences in return for evidence – a change that was central to prosecutors' ability to unravel the vast Lava Jato scandal and subsequent scandals, using taped conversations to implicate politicians of every political persuasion. In South Africa, a new independent investigative unit, appointed by parliament for a single term, was created in the post-apartheid constitution. In late 2016, the "Public Protector," a constitutionally-created ombudsman, reported on a web of corrupt contracts between state entities and private companies in what was called the "state capture report." Since then, massive leaks of emails between government and private companies gave South Africa's independent news outlets more details, allowing them to flesh out the public's understanding of how government contracts enrich private contractors.

Not surprisingly, such revelations have sparked popular outrage. In both countries, massive street demonstrations and protests have been widely supported by opposition parties – especially as the commodity slump has pushed both countries into recession. Importantly, pro-poor programs have been largely funded through value-added and income taxes, rather than taxes on wealth or property; as the recession has unfolded, the new urban middle classes have made their anger felt, on social media and in the street.

Disillusionment has left politics in turmoil, with once-popular politicians in disgrace, and no obvious alternatives. Brazil's right-wing media barons have supported conservative politicians in what many observers call a "soft coup": former PT President Dilma Rousseff was impeached not because of personal corruption, but because she had approved accounting maneuvers to continue social welfare spending during the downturn.

Brazil's conservative politicians moved quickly to consolidate their power. Current President Michel Temer (a right-wing politician who served as Dilma's vice-president until he led the campaign to remove her from power) has been linked through video-taped evidence to illicit bribes and suitcases full of cash, but Temer has proven adept at staying in power through the use of obscure legal mechanisms. Brazil's senate is dominated by conservative politicians – many of whom also face corruption charges; the senate has supported Temer throughout, rejecting calls for early elections, reasserting old Brazilian traditions of elite impunity and power.



*Corruption charges swirl through the leadership of the major political parties in Brazil, including President Temer as well as the popular, former President Lula.*

For poor Brazilians, the change in government means real changes in daily life and opportunities. Temer's unelected cabinet has rolled back most of Brazil's "pro-poor" policies, cutting pensions and social grants, imposing austerity on social services, repealing new labor laws and capping social spending into the future.

The scandals have left Brazil's once-formidable Workers' Party in disarray. Former President Lula da Silva, the party's most popular figure, has been sentenced to ten years in jail on corruption charges (a conviction he is currently appealing); the party's base – including Brazil's once-vaunted labor movement – has been left disillusioned and disorganized.

South Africa's political dynamics suggest surprising parallels to Brazil's distemper. As the country's commodity-based economy has fallen into recession, middle- and upper-class taxpayers have become increasingly furious over misspent government funds. The current ANC leadership is enmeshed in scandal, barely surviving a recent "no confidence" vote despite its parliamentary majority.

President Jacob Zuma's personal corruption is well-documented: millions of government dollars have been spent on his personal estate, while ongoing court cases and massive email leaks have revealed huge government contracts illegally awarded to Zuma's family and cronies – including, most notably, the Guptas, a clan of recent immigrants whose name is now synonymous with flagrant siphoning of government funds.

Importantly, politicians are not the only bad actors – in either country. Just as many of Brazil's oil companies, construction companies and agribusiness giants were caught paying huge bribes to individuals and parties, usually in exchange for lucrative government contracts, many white-owned South African businesses (as well as smaller black-owned start-ups – along with German, Chinese and British multinationals) have been found manipulating tendering processes, and paying off individuals.

Recent leaks have also drawn public attention to professionals working for global accountancy and law firms: licensed accountants and lawyers have certified crooked deals as acceptable, sometimes cleaning up bids to make them seem legitimate. Even public relations firms have been complicit: acting on behalf of the Gupta consortium, the giant British public relations firm Bell Pottinger coordinated a vicious social media campaign which (ironically enough) sought to brand Zuma's critics as agents of "white monopoly capital."

Of course, context and history matter. While Brazil's right-wing politicians have managed to roll back reforms instituted by a democratically-elected government, South Africa's black majority would never allow a return to apartheid's white supremacy. As in Brazil, democratically-elected governments brought real improvements in the daily lives of poor households, from access to electricity and running water, to cash grants and pensions.

Yet if Brazil's PT seems to have lost many of its middle-class supporters, black South Africans remain largely sympathetic to the ANC's efforts to expand welfare programs. Both countries have long histories of racial exclusion, but South Africa's explicit policies entrenching white supremacy still rankle; political loyalties still reflect the long struggle against apartheid. Moreover, many middle-class black South Africans, still largely excluded from top positions in South Africa's white-dominated private sector, obtained government jobs as teachers, nurses, policemen, bureaucrats or politicians, since the ANC took power, cementing that sense of loyalty.

Nevertheless, loyalty to the ANC may be weakening, especially in urban areas, where young voters express widespread frustration over high unemployment rates, inadequate social services, and persistent racialized inequalities in wealth and opportunity. A charismatic (and corrupt) former ANC youth leader has attracted many young voters to his new political party, the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), by offering only vague promises of change. If Zuma stays in place, the ANC could lose its parliamentary majority in the next election, and the authoritarian-populist EFF might well gain power.

What comes next? In both countries, the threat of an anti-democratic turn seems all too real – a threat clearly exacerbated by Trump's election. Since the early 1990s, citizens in both Brazil and South Africa could have counted on powerful allies, especially the United States, to support and protect still-fragile democracies. But under Trump, the silence coming from the White House exacerbates a global sense of foreboding: could democratic gains be rolled back? Even without a military takeover, Brazil's current government seems to be stripping away the social citizenship rights instituted by an elected government; South Africa is unlikely to see the return of white supremacy, but the threat of authoritarian populism seems very real. ■

Direct all correspondence to Gay Seidman <[gseidman@wisc.edu](mailto:gseidman@wisc.edu)>

# > Argentina under Scrutiny

by **Juan Ignacio Piovani**, National University of La Plata, Argentina, and member of ISA Research Committees on Futures Research (RC07) and Logic and Methodology (RC33)



CODESOC's authorities and PISAC's Director, Juan Piovani, meet the Minister of Science and Technology in 2017 to discuss the future of the Program. Photo by Ministry of Science and Technology.

**N**ot long after the Argentinian scientific community enthusiastically welcomed the newly established Ministry of Science and Technology, the Minister, a renowned chemist named Lino Barañao, granted his first in-depth interview. Speaking to the newspaper *Página 12*, Barañao spoke of how scientific research could enhance the national economy, and described his plans to support software development, nanotechnology and biotechnology. Asked about the role of the social sciences, Barañao agreed they should be included, but, comparing social sciences' knowledge to theology, he insisted that only a radical methodological shift would make the social sciences truly scientific.

Needless to say, Barañao's remark provoked bitterness among social scientists, and the Council of Deans of Faculties of Social and Human Sciences (CODESOC) immediately asked the Minister to clarify his claim. The Deans sought an explanation, even some sort of apology. At the same time, they sought a face-to-face encounter, hoping to explain what the social sciences have done – and could do – to contribute to society.

Eventually, the Minister agreed to attend CODESOC's plenary session in 2009, where he announced that he was eager to support and finance a large project to showcase the social sciences' contribution to society. This was the

starting point for Argentina's National Research Program on Contemporary Society (PISAC), which since 2012 has been carried out under the auspices of CODESOC. It involves 50 Faculties of Social Sciences of public universities, and is funded by the Ministry of Science and Technology and the Secretary of Higher Education Policies (SPU).

Designing PISAC posed huge challenges. It soon became apparent that no single project could fulfill the wide range of scientific and institutional objectives at stake. Instead, a research program seemed more appropriate, bringing together senior and young researchers from across the country around a set of shared ideas.

From PISAC's early days, we made clear that the program would have no foundational ambitions, but rather would be grounded in the rich tradition of Argentinian social sciences, which have been expanded and consolidated since 1983 when the country returned to democracy. But we also acknowledged various drawbacks: fragmentation, regional and institutional asymmetries, a tendency to "metropolitanize" research themes and the scientific explanation of social phenomena, difficulties in circulating sociological knowledge (within and outside academe), and the tendency for social research findings to remain invisible – particularly, findings that were produced in more "peripheral" regional or institutional contexts.

This critical appraisal of the development of Argentinian social science eventually led us to define three research lines, encompassing more than ten projects. PISAC was organized around three fundamental issues. Of course, the main objective was to produce a comprehensive account of contemporary society from a multidisciplinary standpoint, both theoretically informed and empirically grounded. But we also took the opportunity to examine the institutional and scientific conditions under which the country's social sciences produced knowledge, and to systematically compile the already-existing understanding of Argentinian society resulting from previous research.

Interestingly, this scheme also seemed to fit within Michael Burawoy's four types of sociological labor: critical, professional, policy and public. PISAC relates to critical

sociology insofar it seeks to examine how social research has been conducted in Argentina, to unveil its foundations and dominant theoretical and epistemological underpinnings, to determine its attachment to – or departure from – hegemonic models of knowledge production, and so on. But PISAC is also about professional sociology: it addresses empirical research questions using widely accepted methods, publishing findings in scientific papers aimed at an academic audience. At the same time PISAC is also committed to moving beyond the self-referential academic world: many of PISAC's research questions reflect policy-makers' priorities, working closely with public bodies and social movements to provide expert knowledge and influence social policies. Finally, PISAC takes advantage of its high profile to intervene in public debates, contesting common-sense interpretations of society and denouncing social stereotypes often reproduced in the media.

Because we are also concerned with the conditions of knowledge production, we turned our attention to the national social science system, focusing on issues such as the geographical distribution of scientific and higher education institutions, researchers' academic trajectories, research agendas, scientific publications, and so forth. [Fernanda Beigel's](#) article in this issue of *Global Dialogue* reflects this project, analyzing contrasting styles of knowledge production (and knowledge circulation) in Argentina, highlighting the gap between scientists that conform to dominant international scientific rules and those linked to more endogenous agendas.

As for systematizing previous research findings, we decided to focus on six broad topics: social structure; life conditions; state, government and public administration; citizenship, social mobilization and social conflict; social and cultural diversity; cultural consumption and practices. Each topic was addressed by a multi-institutional team which analyzed and systematized relevant academic publications, producing a kind of "literature review"; these reports are now available, and an open-access version can be downloaded from CLACSO's virtual library at [www.clacso.org.ar/libreria-latinoamericana](http://www.clacso.org.ar/libreria-latinoamericana) and from PISAC's website at <http://pisac.mincyt.gob.ar>. [Alejandro Grimson's](#) article in this issue of *Global Dialogue* shows how research findings have challenged the "official" portrait of Argentina as socially and culturally homogeneous. As he shows, social research has played an important role in developing a more accurate image of our diverse society, and to make visible the struggles of various social minorities.

Finally, in order to advance a more comprehensive account of contemporary Argentina, we decided to conduct three national surveys, with fieldwork in 339 towns with more than 2,000 inhabitants. One study focused on social

structure and life conditions; a second addressed social relations; and a third one focused on values, attitudes and representations. We chose this methodological approach for several reasons. On the one hand, research funding has prioritized micro-grants scattered across the various institutions and research teams, discouraging large-scale projects. On the other hand, an overwhelming inclination towards qualitative approaches has meant the country's social scientists have nearly abandoned quantitative and structural analysis. Since our (underfunded) qualitative research has studied very limited social settings, usually in major urban areas, current depictions of Argentinian society – until now – have tended to overlook the evident territorial (and other) heterogeneities.

In this issue of *Global Dialogue*, [Agustín Salvia and Berenice Rubio](#) discuss the first survey, with an emphasis on Argentina's structures of inequality and mobility, and the life conditions of specific social groups. [Gabriel Kessler](#) discusses the rationale and scientific objectives of the survey on social relations, which covers issues such as social capital, sociability, self-identification and social barriers, conflictive social relations, participation and collective action – topics largely unexamined at the national societal level.

Now that PISAC's results are beginning to be published, Argentina's social sciences face two new challenges. On the one hand, we are in the midst of a new political cycle marked by a (re)turn to neoliberal policies. As in many other nations, this has already produced cuts in research funding. So far, the new authorities have backed the initiatives linked to PISAC, and have provided fresh funds – though there remains concern about whether PISAC will be institutionalized within the Ministry of Science and Technology, and whether it will continue to foster large-scale social research.

On the other hand, we are witnessing the rise of post-truth discourses, especially in social media, that dismiss social sciences as ideological, useless and therefore unworthy of public funding. Similarly, when high-ranking government officials repeatedly speak in favor of "applied" research and "useful" or "instrumental" knowledge, the cause of (critical) social sciences is not helped.

However, PISAC's preliminary results are receiving strong support from a wide spectrum of social and institutional actors: social scientists, universities, public organizations, social movements, journalists, politicians, and policy-makers. Despite all the setbacks, the enthusiastic welcome given to PISAC's results makes us reasonably optimistic about the future of sociological research in Argentina. ■

Direct all correspondence to Juan Ignacio Piovani  
<[juan.piovani@presi.unlp.edu.ar](mailto:juan.piovani@presi.unlp.edu.ar)>

# > Mapping Argentina's Social Sciences

by **Fernanda Beigel**, National University of Cuyo, Argentina, and member of ISA Research Committee on the History of Sociology (RC08)



*The Ministry of Science and Technology and the National Scientific and Technical Research Council in Buenos Aires.  
Photo by Juan Ignacio Piovani.*

Over the past 40 years, the geography of science has been re-mapped, through a publication system which progressively established a “universal” language and writing style, and through a mainstream circuit which built prestige for a handful of centers of excellence and certain disciplines, relegating to the periphery entire scientific communities whose work did not appear in journals linked to the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI, now Clarivate Analytics/Web of Science).

However, increasing attention is being paid to the creation of alternative academic networks, including the open access movement, and regional circuits such as Latin American scientific publications. Since the 1960s, Latin American social sciences have undergone “regionalization” of prestige-building – with the intervention of regional centers – and the “nationalization” of scientific policies.

Outside these international circuits, local circuits include many non-indexed journals which appear exclusively in print format. These journals have limited circulation, but they reflect the persistence of non-internationalized academic spaces. What are the dynamics of these peripheral scientific fields? I have argued that these different intellectual circuits create polarized orientations, resulting in a “two-faced” academic elite, one looking outwards, and the other looking inwards.

The increasingly close connection between evaluation and academic publishing has promoted diverse principles of legitimation, as different *circuits of recognition* (all valid, but with different rewards) have crossed national fields. The growing segmentation of intellectual circuits in the world academic system – and their impact on the position of scientists from the periphery – is not simply the result of the supremacy of the English language; these circuits are fueled by competing evaluative cultures and structural

>>



asymmetries. A threefold hierarchical principle – based on publication language, institutional affiliation, and discipline – shapes academic inequalities.

Argentina is an interesting case for analyzing production styles and circulation. In recent years, there has been a hefty increase in public funding, the consolidation of various PhD programs, and a visibly “nationalist” emphasis in Argentina’s fellowship schemes and research appointments. The number of full-time researchers has tripled in the past decade, rising from 3,694 in 2003 to 9,236 in 2015. During this period, however, the gap between Argentinian scientists versed in the dominant production styles of the world academic system and those with a more endogenous agenda has widened.

The indexing of publications defines different rewards in terms of recognition. At the national research agency, CONICET, publications in international (mainstream) journals, indexed in the Web of Science or Scopus, are highly valued. However, the Social Sciences and Humanities and the Agrarian Sciences at CONICET value publications in Latin American journals, indexed in SciELO or Latindex. In this evaluative culture, the assessment of quality and originality has been shifted in favor of indexation, impact factor or h-index – all bibliometric data whose link to quality is subject to debate.

Publications in national or local, non-indexed journals, are generally regarded as career-building for those teaching at non-metropolitan universities. In Argentina’s higher education system, long marked by a strong tradition of university autonomy and politicization, the local circuit of recognition remains a very dynamic space, with hundreds of locally-edited journals mainly printed on paper, where local scholars publish their works, far from international standards. Are these works of bad quality? Given that these extensive local circuits have not yet been studied, we cannot presume their scientific worth, but this local orientation clearly still prevails in many institutions, especially in the social sciences.

With these diverse (even opposing) evaluative cultures, Argentinian social scientists with a local orientation and those pursuing an international agenda coexist uneasily, with two different paths for national research careers (one at CONICET, another at the national universities), along with divergent regulations for faculty tenure across the country’s 50 national universities.

**> The five “career-best publications”**

Among social scientists who are researchers at CONICET, where international standards are dominant, what are the characteristics of publication? We examined a sample of 4,842 individuals (out of 7,906) who had applied for promotion and were asked to choose their “five career-best

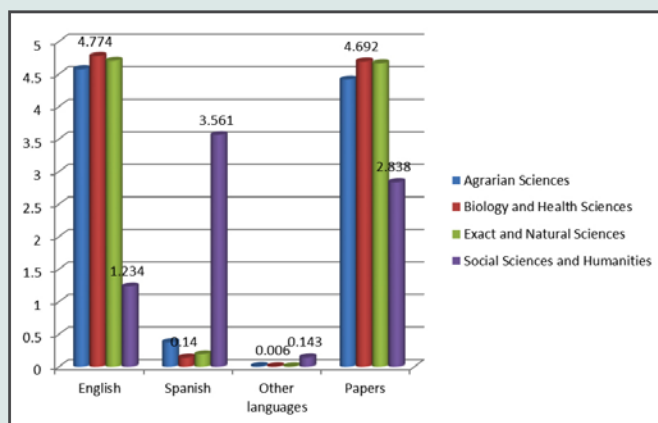
publications.” This sample includes more than half of all active CONICET researchers by 2015, and it is balanced in terms of discipline, age and hierarchy, including assistant, adjunct, independent, principal and superior faculty members. The institution accepts applications for promotions once a year, and applications are voluntary.

Importantly, applicants select the five “career-best” publications, based on what they believe most likely to impress evaluation committees. Thus, their choices provide insight into the consensus on evaluation criteria within the institution. In many cases, particularly in the Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH), these selected publications do not reflect the rest of the publications listed on the researcher’s CV.

The database of the publications submitted by the sample under scrutiny includes 23,852 items, listing title, type (book, book chapter, article, conference paper, technical report), and language. The language of the five “career-best” publications is highly homogeneous: works in English average about 4.02 out of 5 (4.13 among men and 3.91 among women). That average is slightly lower for the oldest generation (aged 65-85) but the difference is minimal, suggesting that writing in English dates back several decades in Argentina. In terms of language predominance, the observation by areas shows that the overwhelming majority of publications in English are in the “hard” sciences (average 4.77), while in the SSH the average is 1.23 out of 5.

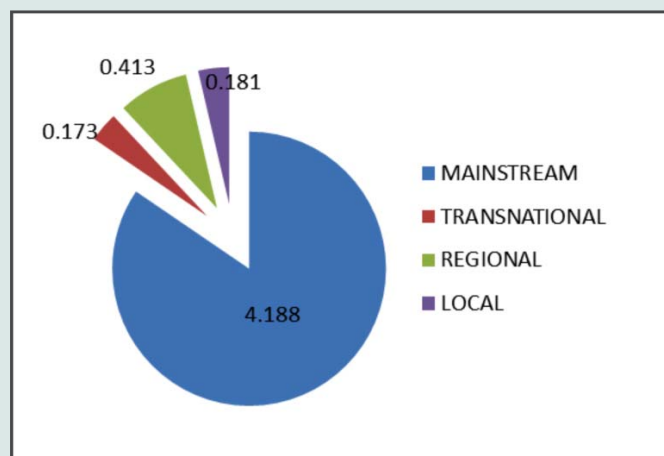
The type of publication reveals a bit more variation, with books and book chapters more prevalent among older scholars, and among social scientists. Among the youngest cohort (aged 31-44), however, 4.4 out of 5 of the “career-best” published works are articles, evidence that the “paper” is becoming increasingly dominant in all scientific fields. The average number of articles for SSH researchers stands at 2.8 out of 5. Unfortunately, there are no regional or national studies on the publication of academic books.

**Figure 1: Five Career-Best Publications by Scientific Area in 2015 (n=23,852). Averages by Language and Type of Production (Out of 5)<sup>1</sup>**



Interestingly, most of the 941 SSH researchers included in the sample work at a national university or at joint centers where CONICET collaborates with national universities such as the University of Buenos Aires (UBA). In terms of their education, 33.7% earned their doctorate at UBA, a bit higher than the sample average, and 43.5% also received their bachelor's from UBA, a good deal higher than the sample average. As for gender, 56% of SSH researchers are women, and, on average, 1.14 out of 5 of their "career-best" publications are in English. For men, the average number of works in English is slightly higher, at 1.35 out of 5. Comparing disciplines that are considered "feminized," there is a lot of variation in the language used, so gender is not a decisive factor here either. Thus, for example, publications in Literature appear largely in Spanish whereas publications in Psychology appear largely in English.

**Figure 2: Average Five Career-best Publications by Circuit in 2015 (n=7,071)**



What can we learn about the circulation of the "career-best" publications listed by these researchers? As can be seen in Figure 2, 83% of the publications circulate on the mainstream circuit. The other 17%, outside the dominant circuit, corresponds to SSH researchers (76%) or are papers presented at international conferences and intellectual property records (24%).

The social sciences at CONICET fit the general pattern of evaluating the quality of articles based on indexation rather than originality. Although this area presents fewer publications on the mainstream circuit, the priority given to regional indexation is noticeable. SciELO, Latindex and transnational systems like DOAJ and Dialnet are the repositories where most of the publications of the SSH are indexed. Publications in Argentina represent under 7% of the total, and a great number of these correspond to the SSH. The dominant trend in these disciplines is to publish in Spanish or Portuguese in Latin American journals indexed mainly in Latindex.

In their complete CVs, most SSH researchers show significantly more local publications than international ones, but this study of their "career-best" publications provides insight into a growing consensus at CONICET about what scientific and prestigious work implies – though this study does not suggest that these beliefs determine completely the trajectories of these scholars' careers. CONICET has expanded enormously throughout the country, and thus the internationalized criteria appear – albeit to varying degrees – throughout Argentina's academic community. But the distribution of prestige in Argentina's academe is a complex process, with coexisting and diverse principles of legitimation and circuits of recognition. ■

<sup>1</sup> Data for these two figures can be found in Beigel, F. (2010) "Social Sciences in Chile (1957-1973). A laboratory for an autonomous process of academia-building" in Alatas and Sinha-Kerkhoff (eds.), *Academic Dependency in the Social Sciences: Structural Reality and Intellectual Challenges*. New Delhi: Manohar, pp.183-212; and Beigel, F. (2016) "Peripheral Scientists, between Ariel and Caliban. Institutional Capital and Circuits of Recognition in Argentina. The 'career-best publications' of the researchers at CONICET" in *Dados* 59(4): 215-255.

Direct all correspondence to Fernanda Beigel  
 <[mfbeigel@mendoza-conicet.gob.ar](mailto:mfbeigel@mendoza-conicet.gob.ar)>

# > Social and Cultural Diversity in Argentina

by **Alejandro Grimson**, National University of San Martin, Argentina



*Bolivian immigrants celebrate diversity and simultaneously protest against racism towards immigrants during Buenos Aires Gay Pride, 2016. Photo by Federico Caruso.*

**E**very nation is more heterogeneous in socio-cultural matters than its self-image usually suggests, but Argentina is perhaps an extreme case. Most Argentinians believe that Brazil contains more indigenous people than Argentina does; but in fact, according to the 2010 National Census, whereas Brazil included 850,000 persons who identified themselves as indigenous, Argentina included 950,000 self-identified indigenous citizens – figures that represent 0.4% of the Brazilian population versus 2.4% of the Argentine population.

In Argentina, the state has constructed a self-image of a European society in South America, as if the whole country (the eighth largest on earth) were a replica of downtown Buenos Aires. But in recent decades, this picture has been in crisis. The demands of indigenous movements, new cosmopolitanisms, the state's weakness and its gradual acceptance of less homogenizing perspectives have coincided with broadening research in social sciences which challenges the country's typical self-image, as European, white and geographically centralist. But researchers have also avoided trying to squeeze that diversity into global models associated with neoliberal multiculturalism.

## > The traditional account: Europeanism and the melting pot

The narrative describing Argentina as a “melting pot” stems from the state's nationalist project. According to this account, Argentines “disembarked from ships” (Spanish, Italian, Polish, etc.) – a vision that limits to, and

>>

naturalizes, a prevailing white European character of the population. This is complemented by an apparent absence of indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples, as part of a hegemonic view linked to the country's spatial organization, privileging a centralist and "*porteño*" (Buenos Aires resident) standpoint.

As in Brazil, Argentina's supposed melting pot does not include indigenous peoples and Afro-Argentines, but only "races" stemming from European nationalities. Since the late nineteenth century, the Argentine state aimed to create a "civilized" nation by promoting immigration and economic progress, and developing public education. This project relied upon the hypothetical capability of the European immigration to supplant the native population's cultural habits – seen, from the dominant perspective, as a major obstacle to development.

The government's pressure to construct an ethnically-defined nation with a homogeneous culture, along with an effective ability to generate social inclusion, meant that every variation or particularity was seen as negative – or, directly, pushed into invisibility. As long as that homogenizing project was successful, ethnicity was a forbidden political theme, strongly discouraged by institutions.

Thus Argentina developed on the basis of a pact providing two totally different meanings to "equality": the avoidance or invisibilization of all ethnic difference, and cultural uniformity as a precondition to access the promises of citizenship.

Through this pact, every Argentine able to join the elites or the urban middle classes was "whitened"; anybody could eventually escape discrimination. However, an essential division excluded large groups of workers and popular sections, considering them poor, "*negros*", barbarians and "internal migrants" – especially when they took part in large political events. The opposite of this barbarism was civilization, considered to be Argentine, white, European, educated.

About 56% of the current population has some indigenous ancestry, though this does not mean that they identify today as indigenous. Argentina long denied miscegenation, along with the indigenous presence and the territorial, religious and linguistic heterogeneities, and much of Argentina's political history stems from that historical matrix of standardization and exclusion.

Argentina's civilizing model was intensely binary, and Argentina's dichotomous social self-image has remained so strong that it continues to pervade the country's "habits of the heart," including politics. White or black; civilization or barbarism; capital city or provinces; *peronistas* (supporters of the Peronist Party) or *antiperonistas*.

## > Racism and classism

Argentina is a case of "racism without racists." According to an old myth: "In Argentina there is no racism... because there are no '*negros*'." Although there are very few people of African descent, the expressions "*negro*" or "*negro de alma*" (black soul) are often used to refer, dismissively, to the poor, to shantytowns residents, to unionized workers, street protesters, *Boca Juniors* football team fans or *peronistas*.

Nevertheless, no political party gained votes through an openly racist or xenophobic campaign. Argentines are not all racists, nor are all racist attitudes identical; racism against immigrants from neighboring countries differs from racism against darker migrants from the provinces ("*el interior*"), against Afro-descendants (particularly newly-arrived from Senegal), or against Asian immigrants and other groups. Moreover, racism often intersects with classism, with the expression "*negro*" often serving as a synonym for "poor."

Social studies show that even though racism and classism tend to be concentrated in areas dominated by white people with high living standards, these attitudes are frequently incorporated into the language of the popular classes. Worse, the word "*negro*" is also used in everyday life to express closeness and affection, between friends, children and parents, or couples. "*Che, negro*" is a loving expression used informally when addressing a dear friend.

## > Regional, linguistic and religious heterogeneities

Argentine society is deeply heterogeneous in beliefs, practices, rituals and identifications. However, the prescriptive and hegemonic culture of uniformity not only ignores the reality of the country's different regional and provincial situations, but also downplays any socio-cultural productions – artistic and scientific – which question apparent homogeneity.

Argentina's self-identification is strongly based on the idea of being both Spanish-speaking and Catholic. The reality, however, is more complex. Indigenous languages like Kichwa and Guaraní are spoken in some provinces, Chinese and Korean were introduced by migrants and gained visibility from the 1980s, and different influences – particularly due to extensive Spanish and Italian immigration – have left traces in the varied ways in which Spanish is spoken across the country, with different wording, idiomatic expressions, accents, and so on. Religious diversity is similarly complex; while many indigenous peoples experienced conversion to Christianity, some indigenous beliefs continue to shape identities, while many Argentines today practice Judaism, various Protestant faiths, Afro-Brazilian religions, Islam, Buddhism and Spiritism.

### > Socio-cultural diversity and Argentina's future

Unless Argentines begin to pay more attention to their country's diversity, the critical stages that any country may go through – which seem cyclical in Argentina – could breed discriminatory speeches and practices, translating differences into a hierarchy of morality, prestige and rights. Over decades it was assumed that the only correct pronunciation was that of Buenos Aires, while all the other accents were considered marks of inferiority.

Today, as a country of immigrants, Argentinians welcome “new immigrants” for work, but reject them in everyday social interactions. These “new immigrants” are hardly “new”: the main focus of discrimination has been people coming from bordering countries, like Bolivia and Paraguay, whose presence has been stable in Argentina from the national census of 1869 onwards: never less than 2% and never more than 3.1% of the population. The Argentine children of these immigrants are frequently treated as Bolivian – a word that is also commonly used to refer to migrants from the northwest, and even to poor people in general.

This phenomenon has expanded rapidly since the 1990s, when unemployment grew first to 15%, later reaching 23%. These ideas about immigrants who come to “steal jobs” are well known in many societies, but Argentina is atypical: the economic crisis of 2002 abruptly reduced xenophobia, and in fact, in 2004 a law strengthening immigrants' rights was unanimously passed. Research suggests that hardcore racism and classism linger, generating a form of social racism but with no xenophobic political expressions.

Nevertheless, every time unemployment rises during a recession, discriminatory speeches tend to gain influence and relevance in public spaces. So long as diversity only destabilizes Argentina's traditional self-image as European but does not replace it with a more democratic, inclusive and intercultural view, racial and class injustices will persist. ■

Direct all correspondence to Alejandro Grimson <[alegrimson@gmail.com](mailto:alegrimson@gmail.com)>

# > Social Inequality

## in Contemporary Argentina

by **Agustín Salvia** and **Berenice Rubio**, University of Buenos Aires, Argentina



*Rich and poor neighborhoods in Buenos Aires. Photo by Juan Ignacio Piovani.*

**M**ost Latin American societies have been marked by underdevelopment and stark inequalities. In the mid-twentieth century, however, Argentinian society seemed to illustrate an alternative: high urbanization, full employment, universal healthcare and education, advanced intermediate industrialization and an extensive middle class – a relatively integrated society with moderate inequality and much social mobility.

But this society changed dramatically, having to abandon its longed-for future of progress. Indeed, particularly at the end of the twentieth century, in the context of neoliberal structural reforms, Argentinian society could not avoid the trap of underdevelopment: economic liberalization, trade openness and financial flexibilization resulted in instability, rising unemployment, poverty and social marginality, with deteriorating public health, education and social protection.

These processes produced a society marked by deep inequalities, internal conflicts and social unrest, a cycle that produced the economic, social and political crisis of 2001-2, the deepest in Argentina's modern history.

In contrast, the first decade of the 21st century, helped by a favorable international context, proved that some economic, occupational, social, political and institutional recovery was possible. But this period did not last long: the economy stagnated, and society's structural fragmentation became evident once again. By 2015, Argentinian society included several different layers of marginalized, poor and excluded segments. About 30% of the population could be considered poor, with 6% living in extreme poverty, unable to afford adequate food for their household. Poverty was exacerbated by extensive urban marginality: 35% of the households did not have sewers, 20% lacked running water and 15% resided in precarious housing.

In response to these impoverished social conditions, different readings have oscillated between denial, chauvinism and victimization. All too often, Argentinians imagine they live in a society that is homogeneous, cohesive, integrated and meritocratic, a stereotyped mythical image promoted by the state during the process of nation building, and later reinforced by the development of a relatively well-off urban middle class. But many other Argentinians believe that they live in one of the world's poorest and most discredited countries, with the world's worst social, political and economic problems.

These contrasting images – of a glorious past and a decadent present – permeate common sense, as well as the media and political discourse. In this context, Argentina's National Survey of Social Structure (ENES), one of the main projects of the National Research Program on Contemporary Society (PISAC), is exploring two tightly related processes: the structures of social inequalities; and the living conditions of the population, vulnerable groups and specific social segments. Since Argentina lacks solid social statistics or comprehensive structural studies of society, ENES has made a great contribution, both producing primary data and investigating key issues such as stratification and social mobility, habitat, living conditions and reproductive social strategies of different regions, sectors, and social groups. Equally important, ENES has helped to construct an empirically-based image of society, challenging stereotypical and mythical self-representations.

In fact, the data show that Argentina's current social structure is heterogeneous, unequal and fragmented. At the top, a political and economic elite made up of traditional families and a new bourgeoisie represents less than 3% of society. Below this pinnacle, an upper-middle class includes corporate directors, professionals, entrepreneurs, agricultural producers, and medium-sized traders, as well as skilled technicians and employees of the economy's most dynamic sectors. Together with the elite, these segments constitute about a third of society. These social sectors are strongly integrated into Western culture, with levels of education, quality of life and consumption patterns similar to those of the middle classes of southern Europe. Most of these individuals are concentrated in the City of Buenos Aires and adjacent suburbs, the main cities of the central Pampas and the gated neighborhoods of provincial capital cities.

Next, another 33% of the population constitutes a middle or lower-middle stagnant class, a stratum including employers of small establishments, workers and employees with medium or low qualifications, retired pensioners and some independent professionals. Although they have incomes above the poverty line and some job stability (including, importantly, an affiliation through work to the national security system), this group exhibits little or no social mobility, and individuals are highly vulnerable to economic downturns and technological changes. As public services have deteriorated, individuals in this lower-middle class often seek access to private transportation, healthcare and education that could improve their quality of life – though these efforts are often unsuccessful.

Lastly, in the base of the pyramid, the final 33% of Argentinians combine different layers: the impoverished former middle class, the new poor and the excluded. Generally, this stratum includes unqualified self-employed workers, informal waged workers in micro-enterprises, rural workers or small agricultural producers from peripheral regions. Usually, their income comes from unstable or casual jobs, and from social assistance programs. These are the main users of low-quality public services and the run-down infrastructure of public education and healthcare. They tend to live in depressed suburbs, or in large public housing projects, particularly in Argentina's Northeast and Northwest.

In this last group, many households experience severe deprivation, infrastructure deficits and environmental risks. Also, most of the country's unemployed (9%) and informal workers (30%) belong to this segment. This segment includes the 45% of youths who have not finished high school, as well as the 15% of child workers and the 8% of children who suffer severe food insecurity. In addition, the women of these households suffer the harshest economic, social and cultural exclusion, often leaving school after only a few years because of domestic responsibilities or to work in the informal labor market.

A multi-institutional team of researchers is currently analyzing the data produced by ENES, compiling what may prove the most comprehensive account of contemporary Argentinian society so far. As these analyses are completed, they are revealing the deep heterogeneity and inequality of our society, highlighting Argentinians' varied experiences of poverty and related social setbacks. The findings also challenge widespread neoliberal discourses, pervasive in Argentina and in the region, which tend to describe social achievements as a result of individual effort within a meritocratic society and, in turn, to attribute poverty to individual failure. By analyzing the fragile living conditions and the unbalanced opportunity structure of Argentinian society, our data demonstrates the way intertwined forms of inequality concentrate in certain regions and among certain social groups, in a rather rigid social structure from which very few can escape.

Using a sample including more than 8,000 households and more than 27,000 individuals in 339 towns above

2,000 inhabitants, in all the provinces of the country, ENES findings show how diverse forms of inequality – class, gender, age, region of residence, environment, educational attainment, etc. – intersect. The data provides a complex picture of society, allowing generalizations at the regional level as well as interregional comparisons, and offering insights into internal social gaps and heterogeneities which were obscured by previous studies which focused only on the largest urban centers.

This type of study allows us to better understand poverty, marginalization and social inequalities in Argentina. By presenting our findings not only within academe, but also to the public opinion, we hope to provoke democratic debate about how to go forward. We hope the scientific information we have collected will enrich and engage public debates, challenge reductionist and simplistic social discourses, and contribute to constructing public policies that can address Argentina's accumulated social issues. ■

Direct all correspondence to:

Agustín Salvia <[alegrimson@gmail.com](mailto:alegrimson@gmail.com)>

Berenice Rubio <[beer.rubio@gmail.com](mailto:beer.rubio@gmail.com)>



# > Exploring Social Capital in Argentina

by **Gabriel Kessler**, National University of La Plata, Argentina, and member of ISA Research Committees on Futures Research (RC07), Social Stratification (RC28) and Social Psychology (RC42)



*A group of young dancers perform during the Day of Remembrance for Truth and Justice in 2016, marking the 40th anniversary of the military coup. Thousands of Argentinians actively participate in public demonstrations, particularly in favor of human rights.*

*Photo by Juanjo Domínguez.*

**W**hat do Argentina's micro-social relations look like? How do they vary within the country, and how does Argentina compare to other regions of the world? How are they influenced by Argentina's past, and by its more recent neoliberal period? PISAC's (Argentina's National Research Program on Contemporary Society) National Survey on Social Relations (ENRS) will explore these questions, focusing on social capital, sociability, self-identification and social barriers, tensions, participation and collective action. Considering its geographical coverage and topics, this survey is the first of its type, so it will provide new information for Argentina and could serve as a framework for surveys of other Latin American nations.

Previous studies in Argentina have focused on networks and social capital from a traditional perspective, analyzing social support networks among the most disadvantaged sectors, for example after the 2001 crisis. In designing ENRS, we have drawn from international studies, hoping to allow comparisons, but we have also adjusted indicators to reflect local characteristics. Following recent successful

pilot tests (both qualitative and quantitative), our fieldwork is planned for November 2017. Here we present the main ideas and hypotheses underlying this comprehensive investigation of micro-social relations in Argentina.

How do people's personal networks differ across different social groups? Can we find patterns and regularities – and if so, what are these patterns? To answer these questions we use a “names’ generator,” allowing us to reconstruct interviewees’ personal social networks. A key issue is to determine the traces left both by the more cohesive Argentinian society of the past, and the recent neoliberal phase (as [Salvia and Rubio](#) describe it in this issue, GD7.4). In particular, we wonder whether the social networks of older people might be more heterogeneous than those of the younger generations, whose socialization has been formed in a more fragmented society. On the other hand, in developed countries as well as in Latin America, international evidence tends to show that as we move down the social structure, personal networks involve more relatives and spatially closer relations. Our hypothesis is that other criteria of differentiation – such as political affiliation, cultural

and consumption affinities – will overlap class cleavages. The changes in gender relations also matter, and we expect to find more diversity in younger women's networks, given their increasing participation in all spheres of social life. We will also try to see whether young people's intensified involvement in the virtual world influences their networks beyond the Internet. The survey will also explore differences between the country's most modern and most traditional regions.

What do we understand by social capital? And how can it be measured? This is the theme of the survey's second module. We take the idea of social capital seriously, defining it in terms of relations and resources. Indeed, not all relations have the same "worth," since their "value" is created by the quantity and quality of resources that they are able to mobilize. At the height of the neoliberal era, multilateral organizations seemed to have "forgotten" this; many policymakers assumed that the poor could turn to close social relations (which they termed "social capital") to overcome critical situations, without considering that their relatives' lack of resources challenged the very idea of capital.

In Latin America two opposite ideas coexist around this issue. On the one hand, the classic perspective of moral economy (linked to the pioneering work of Chilean anthropologist Larissa Lomnitz in the 1970s) claimed that social sectors unable to satisfy their needs through the market or the state build networks in order to survive. Therefore, with higher marginality one would expect stronger subsistence networks. On the other hand, drawing on Robert Castel's idea of disaffiliation, exclusion from the labor market correlates with social deterioration became widely accepted during neoliberalism. Labor exclusion also undermines micro-social relations, rather than strengthening them. Our hypothesis is that both explanations might be valid among the most disadvantaged social sectors, so the challenge will be to explain why we find disaffiliation in some cases, and strengthened social networks in others.

We will also explore the links between networks and resources: what circulates, among whom, and in what ways. Exchanges include goods, labor contracts, care, advice and support of various types. We hope to understand the differences in resources exchanged by dissimilar social groups. Also, we are interested in exploring how money circulates: loans, gifts, payments made by third parties, etc. We hope to examine what is given and what is received, so that we can map circulation and reciprocity. Here again we take the idea of social capital seriously as we look for the "golden contact," that is, any relation who is in a privileged position due to power, money and/or social contacts, and who might have done some sort of special favor in key moments.

What about different forms of sociability? This is the question of the fourth module, which focuses on friendship, family and more expressive contacts, either face-to-face or virtual, where neither capital nor exchange is at stake. We are also interested in the type of relationship and the frequency of contact that various social groups have with their relatives.

With regard to the virtual world, we expect to find that far from leading to a decrease in sociability, virtual relations and face-to-face relations reinforce each other, particularly among the youth. But since Argentina is a country with intense urban social life, we are also concerned with the places where sociability is practiced, and with the spaces of encounter. In addition, we explore links with people from other countries, hypothesizing that these will be stronger among the migrant population and upper classes, due to their international connections. Friendship is a vital value in Argentinian society; we are interested in determining how it originates and in what spaces, taking different spheres of socialization into account.

The module on self-identification and social barriers explores the forms of self-identification and their association with network-building. In this sense, we hope to determine what prejudices and stereotypes serve as barriers when it comes to establishing relational networks. Moreover, since conflicts are part of micro-social relations, the survey examines troubled relations and types of conflict, including all forms of violence and aggression.

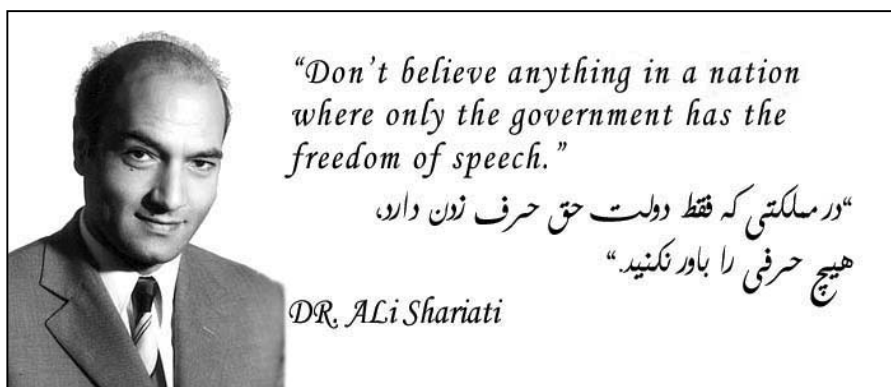
Last but not least, we also examine the organizations different people belong to, the time they invest in them and the activities that they carry out, as a way to probe participation. In general, previous studies suggest that the level of organizational participation is rather low, so we are interested in asking whether social media have changed this, and in understanding very specific and discontinuous forms of participation that may have been overlooked by traditional surveys.

These are just some of the dimensions and issues that ENRS will try to capture. Along with PISAC's other projects, we hope to develop, for the first time, a profound portrayal of Argentinian society. This will allow us not only to know our society better, but also to engage more actively in current international discussions within sociology. No less important, we hope the survey will lay a foundation for renewed involvement in public debates and for higher commitment to the development of public policies informed by social science knowledge. ■

Direct all correspondence to Gabriel Kessler <[gabriel\\_kessler@yahoo.com.ar](mailto:gabriel_kessler@yahoo.com.ar)>

# > Ali Shariati, Forgotten Sociologist of Islam

by **Suheel Rasool Mir**, University of Kashmir at Srinagar, India



| Ali Shariati.

**A**li Shariati (1933–1977) is widely regarded as the Voltaire of Iran's 1979 Revolution. He was born into a religious family, received his doctorate in 1963 from the Sorbonne's Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines, and died in England in 1977. In Paris, Shariati enthusiastically read western socio-political thought and philosophy and was highly influenced by Karl Marx, Jean-Paul Sartre, Georges Gurvitch, Frantz Fanon and Louis Massignon. He was widely admired in pre-revolutionary Iran where he was considered to be a peripheral *enfant terrible* – a “troublesome Islamic Marxist” who needed to be silenced. His uniqueness lies with the way he threaded religion onto other intellectual legacies.

Dr Ali Shariati was one of many Muslim intellectuals who sought to provide answers to the problems confronting Muslims in the modern, Western-dominated world. In his view, a new cultural reorientation that recognized individual agency and autonomy could help Muslim societies overcome the structural causes of their stagnation and underdevelop-

ment. In his anti-colonialist discourse Shariati underlines the role of religion in liberating society. Echoing Frantz Fanon in his call for a “new man,” Shariati called for “new thinking,” a “new humanity,” and a more humane modernity that did not seek to turn the Third World into another Europe, United States, or Soviet Union.

As one of the most influential Muslim thinkers of the twentieth century, Ali Shariati had a major role in articulating a religiously-inflected discourse of radical social and political change in Iran during the 1960s and 1970s. For this reason, many scholars see Shariati as an advocate of political Islam. Viewing the role and function of religion in a sociological context in line with Max Weber and Emile Durkheim was one major source of separation between Shariati and the *ulama*. A very large section of Shariati's work is concerned with Marxism. He used Marxist concepts such as historical determinism and class struggle to “re-interpret” Islam. This “theological Marxism” or “theologized Marxism” is Shariati's most innovative intellectual contribution. For him, a retooled version of

Islam was needed to succeed where Marxism appeared to have failed.

In Shariati's view, religion as a *movement* is a modern school of thought/ideology and religion as an *institution* is a collection of dogmas. In *Religion against Religion* Shariati accused the clergy of monopolistic control over the interpretation of Islam in order to set up a clerical despotism; in his words, it would be the worst and the most oppressive form of despotism possible in human history, the “mother of all despotism and dictatorship.” Shariati himself stressed these differences emphatically: “Religion has two aspects; one is antagonistic to the other. For example, nobody hates religion as much as I do and nobody harbors hope in religion as much I do.” Shariati succeeded in producing a radical layman's religion that disassociated itself from the traditional clergy and associated itself with the secular trinity of social revolution, technological innovation, and cultural self-assertion.

Shariati believed that social change would be successful if enlightened thinkers, the intelligentsia, realized

the truth of their faith. The intelligentsia, Shariati argued, were the critical conscience of society and were responsible for launching society's renaissance and reformation. As such, the young Shariati favored the concept of "committed/guided" democracy. In *Community and Leadership* he advocated the idea of "committed/guided democracy," meaning that intellectuals are obliged to raise public consciousness, and guide public opinion in the transitional period after the revolution. Being a social activist, he always conveyed the message of social justice and tried to create societies based on egalitarianism. For Shariati, existing democracies are minimalist. Shariati's maximalism calls for a radical democracy.

Shariati's strong egalitarian leanings and constant critique of class inequality made him a socialist thinker. However, for him socialism is not merely a mode of production but a way of life. He was critical of a state socialism that worshipped personality, party, and state and proposed a "humanist socialism." According to Shariati, the state's legitimacy derives from public reason and the free collective will of the people. For him, freedom and social justice must be complemented with modern spirituality. His trinity of freedom, equality, and spirituality is a novel contribution to the idea of an "alternative modernity."

Shariati's legacy and his contemporary followers have contributed to

a deconstruction of the false binaries of Islam/modernity, Islam/West, and East/West. In advocating a third way between these two extremes, Shariati's thought finds common ground with other contemporary reformism including the Islamic liberalism of Abdolkarim Soroush, and Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im. Ali Shariati's contributions to sociology take as their premise the continued dominance of Western civilization in non-Western societies. Many of his writings stay as relevant and useful in contemporary world as they were when they were first written. ■

Direct all correspondence to Suheel Rasool Mir  
<[mirsuhailscholar@gmail.com](mailto:mirsuhailscholar@gmail.com)>

# > The Chinese Edition of *Global Dialogue*



Jing-Mao Ho.

**J**ing-Mao Ho joined *Global Dialogue* in 2010 when he was a research assistant to Dung-Sheng Chen, Distinguished Professor of Sociology at the National Taiwan University. Dr. Chen supervised the translation and editing work in the first few years (occasionally along with Mau-Kuei Chang, Research Fellow of Sociology at Academia Sinica, Taiwan). Jing-Mao Ho has greatly enjoyed and learned much from translating English *Global Dialogue* into both traditional and simplified Chinese since Volume 1, Issue 1. He is now a PhD candidate in Sociology at Cornell University, USA, after receiving an MS degree in Computer Science and an MA degree in Sociology from the National Taiwan University. His master's thesis on public intellectuals' symbolic struggles was awarded the Best Master's Thesis Award by the Taiwanese Sociological Association. His doctoral dissertation takes a comparative and historical approach to examining the relationship between statistics and nation-state building. He is also more broadly conducting research on topics in political sociology, science and technology studies, transnational sociology, quantitative methodology, and theory. ■

Direct all correspondence to Jing-Mao Ho  
<[hojingmao@gmail.com](mailto:hojingmao@gmail.com)>