

GLOBAL DIALOGUE

13.1

3 issues a year in multiple languages

Talking Sociology with
Brigitte Aulenbacher
and Klaus Dörre

Breno Bringel
Carolina Vestena
Vitória Gonzalez

Towards the XX
ISA World Congress

Sari Hanafi
Anahí Viladrich
Geoffrey Pleyers
Rosana Pinheiro-Machado
Tatiana Vargas-Maia

Pluriverse
and Socioecological
Transitions

Maristella Svampa
Alberto Acosta
Enrique Viale
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Miriam Lang
Raphael Hoetmer
Carmen Aliaga
Liliana Buitrago
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Theoretical
Perspectives

José Maurício Domingues

Open Section

- > **The Challenges of Open Science**
- > **A Southern Concept for Multiple Sociologies**
- > **Latin American Sociology and the Crisis
of Contemporary Civilization**
- > **Fractured Brazil**
- > **Iran: This is Not a Protest, This is a Revolution**

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> Editorial

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all to this first issue of 2023, the first of our new editorial team at *Global Dialogue*. At the end of 2022, I was thrilled to hear from Eloísa Martín, ISA Vice-President for Publications, about my appointment as the new editor. The previous editorial team, led by Brigitte Aulenbacher and Klaus Dörre, ensured a smooth transition. I wish to thank them and their assistant editors Raphael Deindl, Johanna Grubner, Walid Ibrahim and Christine Schickert for their support and fantastic work over the past years. Professors Aulenbacher and Dörre will remain involved, along with founding editor Michael Burawoy, as consulting editors. No doubt this will be crucial in matching the project's ongoing history with the changes required.

Our managing editor Lola Busuttil, who has been working with *Global Dialogue* from its beginnings, has been the best guarantee for a safe transition. Her support is fundamental alongside that of August Bagà, Toffa Evans, and the large and dedicated team of regional editors.

Global Dialogue has been growing impressively since its launch in 2010. It started as a newsletter with an artisanal format and a relatively limited scope. In just over ten years, it became a magazine published in over a dozen languages, with an impressive number of contributors worldwide, making it possible for sociologists from all regions of the world to learn more about other realities, research results and concerns about the contemporary world.

This significant work needs to be consolidated and expanded. We have identified three main challenges for further developing *Global Dialogue* in the coming years: building public and global sociology from the ISA but also beyond the ISA, reorganising and providing stability to the editorial sections of *Global Dialogue*, and redefining the communication and dissemination strategies.

I have many ideas for each of these challenges, but before implementing them, I want to hear from you. To this end, between now and the XX ISA World Congress of Sociology in Melbourne next June, I will open a broad dialogue within the ISA community, with the help of my assistant editors Carolina Vestena and Vitória Gonzalez. Both are brilliant young global social scientists with editorial experience and a broad commitment to public sociology. Carolina is based in Kassel, Germany, and Vitória in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

This issue opens with an interview with former editors Brigitte Aulenbacher and Klaus Dörre, in which they explain how they translate public sociology into their research agendas, talk about their challenges as editors of *Global Dialogue* and their perspectives for moving forward a global sociology.

A first symposium brings together different texts with an eye to the next ISA Congress in Australia. Sari Hanafi presents some of its central topics and Anahí Viladrich reflects on the current moment of transition between online and face-to-face formats.

Geoffrey Pleyers, in turn, discusses some of the main challenges facing global sociology today and the role of the ISA in addressing them. Rosana Pinheiro-Machado and Tatiana Vargas-Maia take up one of the central themes of the Congress, contemporary authoritarianism, exploring why we need a new framework to study the contemporary extreme right.

The second symposium seeks to give visibility to a collective global effort initially organised by Ashish Kothari, Ariel Salleh, Arturo Escobar, Federico Demaria and Alberto Acosta: the post-development dictionary *Pluriverse*. Among the exciting collection of pieces, we decided to publish short texts by prominent activists and intellectuals reflecting the potential for a global dialogue on topics such as alternatives to development (Vandana Shiva), living well (Mónica Chuji, Grimaldo Rengifo and Eduardo Gudynas), Ubuntu (Lesley Le Grange), ecofeminism (Christelle Terreblanche), and the rights of nature (Cormac Cullinan). In addition, members of the Ecosocial and Intercultural Pact of the South (Maristella Svampa, Alberto Acosta, Enrique Viale, Miriam Lang, Raphael Hoetmer, Carmen Aliaga, Liliana Buitrago, and myself) sign a text on the geopolitics of eco-social transitions, questioning how the hegemonic ecological transitions of dominant actors in the North may be shaping a new type of green extractivism, which aggravates ecological debt, potentiates green colonialism and expands zones of sacrifice in the Global South. Alternatives to this scenario are also a central focus of this piece and the symposium.

In the theoretical section, José Maurício Domingues asks whether the post-pandemic world has led to the emergence of a new phase of modernity. His historical and sociological analysis of some trends in the development of the state, the economy and social policies helps us go beyond the hasty interpretations stemming from the pandemic.

Finally, the Open Section brings together three articles introducing different challenges for contemporary sociology. Fernanda Beigel discusses how the social sciences face up to the imperatives of open science to open the results and process of scientific research. Mahmoud Dhaouadi claims a Southern concept for multiple sociologies. And the members of the Latin American Sociological Association (ALAS) draw a diagnosis of the contemporary civilisational crisis and the role of sociology in this region. Two more texts specifically address the Brazilian and Iranian realities. In the first one, Elísio Estanque and Agnaldo de Sousa Barbosa argue that an interpretation beyond the short term is needed to understand Brazil's current polarisation. The second text, published under a pseudonym to protect the life of its author, offers an analysis of the recent mobilisations in Iran. We cannot normalise these situations neither can we remain silent in the face of rampant authoritarianism. *Global Dialogue* will continue to be committed to rigorous sociological analysis while taking a stand against global injustices! We stand for renewed internationalism! ■

Breno Bringel, editor of *Global Dialogue*

> **Global Dialogue can be found in multiple languages at its [website](https://globaldialogue.isa.org).**

> **Submissions should be sent to: globaldialogue.isa@gmail.com.**

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In this interview, **Brigitte Aulenbacher** and **Klaus Dörre** emphasize some challenges for public and global sociology, and how these two concepts work in their research agenda and in Global Dialogue.



The section dedicated to the **XX ISA World Congress of Sociology** offers reflections on some central themes of the event, such as the challenges of hybrid and in-person conferences, the renovation of global sociology and global dialogue, and the growth of the far right.



The thematic section on **Pluriverse and Socioecological Transitions** explore some core concepts, such as Buen Vivir, development, ecofeminisms, Green Pacts, Rights of Nature, and ubuntu.

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“With more hierarchical polarization in society,
we live in a time
when reasonable public debate is often impossible”

Sari Hanafi

> Challenges for Public and Global Sociology

An Interview with Brigitte Aulenbacher and Klaus Dörre

by **Breno Bringel**, Global Dialogue incoming editor, **Carolina Vestena** and **Vitória Gonzalez**, Global Dialogue incoming assistant editors



Brigitte Aulenbacher. Credit: Personal archive.



Klaus Dörre. Credit: Personal archive.

Global Dialogue Editors (GDE): *How do you transpose the concept of public sociology into your research agenda, bearing in mind both your local research networks and your international engagement within the ISA?*

Brigitte Aulenbacher (BA): Public sociology is a concept that allows the dissemination of scientific knowledge and stimulates discourse between academic and non-academic audiences, inspiring sociological work by taking up discussions from different societal fields. As Michael Burawoy coined the term, it is an overarching concept to describe the engagement of sociologists making their scientific knowledge available (“traditional” public sociology) or engaging in initiatives that emerge from civic society (“organic” public sociology). As a critical sociologist, I work on a twofold agenda combining the theory of society, in particular, the analysis of contemporary capitalism from a

feminist and intersectional perspective, with empirical investigation of the transformation of work, labor, care and science – covering phenomena like digitalization, domestic work and senior home care, residential care or the marketization of universities. If we take the second era of globalization (since the 1990s) as a turning point, we are witnessing a transformation of capitalism culminating in economic, ecological, social, and political crises and evoking a lot of protests.

From my perspective, this development is caused by what I call the structural carelessness of the capitalist economy. Rooted in the modern Eurocentric and androcentric idea of man and scientific–technological progress striving to master both human and non-human nature, and of competition and growth, the capitalist economy distances itself from ecological and social needs by neglecting them,

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subordinating them to or valorizing them by its accumulation-, profit- and market-driven mode of production. This goes along with dominance in relations of gender, race and class. The destructive effects, seen in the broad scope of climate change and increasing poverty and inequalities, as well as the political reactions, e.g. the authoritarian shift around the globe, are obvious. In Austria, we rediscovered the modern classic works of Karl Polanyi and founded the International Karl Polanyi Society making use of his comprehension of the history of market capitalism as the result of a “double movement”: the “movement” of the destructive market-fundamentalist commodification of nature, labor, money and, we can add, care, knowledge and other “fictitious commodities”; together with “countermovements”, e.g. labor and social movements represented by trade unions, Fridays for Future, care initiatives and many others, struggling against the disastrous effects of neoliberal market capitalism. Public sociology in my local and international networks and in *Global Dialogue*’s sections analyzing the transformation of capitalism, work and labor, care and science under neoliberalism is focused on sociological theory but also on practical or political recommendations.

In our discipline, there is considerable lack of agreement as to whether and how sociology should go public: should the discipline observe, analyze and describe societal development or should it interfere? As sociology is part of the society that it studies, there is no privileged standpoint allowing us to tell people what they must do – either with regard to their reflections on and analysis of contemporary developments or with regard to their activities. But sociologists can provide scientific knowledge and stimulate debates and, as researchers, can be part of alliances of different actors negotiating future perspectives and ways of safeguarding and sustaining livelihoods. In my research fields, there are many collaborations with museums, institutions of public education (*Volkshochschulen*), churches, trade unions and many others. Bringing together articles from around the world, *Global Dialogue* is of interest for local as well as international discussions.

Klaus Dörre (KD): In my case, I first became acquainted with Michael Burawoy’s public sociology concept during a [SWOP](#) conference in Johannesburg in 2012. Until then, it was almost unknown in German-speaking sociology. I was immediately electrified because, during the debate with the Public Sociology Group in Johannesburg, I realized that it was an approach that could innovatively ground research conceptually, as my team was already doing to some extent. I tried – with Brigitte Aulenbacher and others – to bring the debate about public sociology into the hitherto somewhat ignorant world of German-speaking sociology. We were successful, even though reservations within sectors of the discipline are still significant. In Jena, the concept of public sociology has now become a standard. This also applies to my own research group, which, for example, studies labor relations and trade unions in the sense of organic public sociology.

My most significant current experience with organic public sociology is based on a close collaboration with the left wing of the climate movement. Inspired by the founding of Students for Future with 1,500 participants in the German city of Leipzig, I wrote the book *Die Utopie des Sozialismus: Kompass für eine Nachhaltigkeitsrevolution* (The Utopia of Socialism: Compass for a Sustainability Revolution), which is being widely discussed within climate movements. Together with those students, I started the project “Renewing Socialist Politics from Below.” We are studying cases that are successfully implementing emancipatory socialist politics locally or regionally, and in some cases against the prevailing trend – and where possible, worldwide. Besides working groups in Germany, there are already interested parties in Brazil, Argentina, Chile, France, Greece, Italy, Portugal and some other countries. We want to expand the network and, if possible, extend it to every continent. The plan is to bring the empirical case studies together in a study along the lines of Pierre Bourdieu’s *La misère du monde* – though we are interested in discovering approaches that help overcome the world’s misery. We are particularly interested in new collective forms of property and interactions between class struggle and ecological social conflict. We invite all interested parties to cooperate.

GDE: What are the most important challenges you have faced in your work as editors of *Global Dialogue* when it comes to promoting the agenda of the magazine and disseminating it globally?

BA: Although our core editorial team has been interconnected internationally very strongly, this alone would not have been sufficient to cover the sociologies of so many countries. There are at least three challenges. First, the hegemonies, hierarchies and power relations inside the discipline privilege the sociologies of the Global North and the West in terms of dissemination, recognition and influence. If young scholars from the regional editorial teams or outside them applied to organize a country focus or section, such as the “Talking Sociology” section of *Global Dialogue*, they often argued that there are important sociological results in their respective national sociologies which have never reached the international debate. Second, the strong support from the ISA presidents as well as the Executive Committee members as consulting editors has made it possible to present global sociology. On their travels, Margaret Abraham and Sari Hanafi invited colleagues from different countries to make contributions, or colleagues from the Executive Committee organized different country focuses. Third, there is one further gap in knowledge production, and it is the most difficult to deal with: there is a lot of research into development in the Global South and in the East from the perspective of the Global North and West, but less the other way around. It is a challenge to acquire pieces from this latter perspective.

KD: In my view, a central problem is the provincial narrow-mindedness that still characterizes German-speaking and, to varying degrees, (Western) European sociology. We stew in our own juice too much, and research within the boundaries of the long-eroding Western European social capitalism. For me, it is not easy to break free from this narrow-mindedness. This has become increasingly clear to me in the collaborations between *Global Dialogue* and the Latin American Council of Social Sciences (CLACSO) network. The accusation of Eurocentrism was repeatedly heard – often justifiably. This hinders global sociological exchange. However, there are European points of view that are also perfectly legitimate sociologically on a global scale. For example, when I suggested devoting a special issue of *Global Dialogue* to the war in Ukraine, I was met with skepticism and rejection. Such skepticism is misguided: the argument that the more than twenty wars that are co-occurring worldwide do not enjoy the same attention despite high casualty figures is understandable but analytically wrong. The war over Ukraine is a war for a new world order, which includes the danger of a confrontation between nuclear powers. It is a global war in its consequences, making it necessary to revive E.P. Thompson's concept of "exterminism" and to fill it with new content. Exterminism refers to mechanisms of economies, political orders, and ideologies that act as a thrust in a direction whose result is inevitably the extermination of large masses of people. The Ukraine war catalyzes "double exterminism", in the words of John Bellamy Foster. Even if nuclear war can be avoided, accelerated armament and the continuation of extractivist modes of production dramatically increase the risk of ecocide.

GDE: A final question for both: When thinking about the agenda for the future, which perspectives on global sociology are in your opinion the most important ones to address? Let's invert the order and start with you, Klaus.

KD: The dangers of double exterminism also touch sociology as a subject, *Global Dialogue* included. We must ask ourselves what we can do with the means and methods of sociology to make what the world urgently needs possible: a social and ecological sustainability revolution. We must overcome the instrumental relationship with non-human nature and other living beings that has been existing since the Neolithic Revolution. This will only be possible in societies that are much more egalitarian and democratic than today's society under contemporary capitalism. If such a transformation fails, a new authoritarianism of "save yourself!" looms. The emergence of this new authoritarianism, or even fascism, is much more likely than a progressive way out of our economic–ecological meta-crisis. We must place the transformation problem much more

strongly at the center of global sociological exchange. For example, we have known since the first report of the Club of Rome that the world is heading for an "abyss" due to global warming and the exploitation of resources. Why is it that, despite this, more still needs to be done 50 years later, and only non-sustainability has been sustainable? How can this be changed? What type of society is required to support a sustainability revolution? In this context, we should be clear: sustainability is, according to the unjustly all-but-forgotten German sociologist Karl Hermann Tjaden, the antithesis of violence. Violence finds its expression in wars and gender relations, the relationship between ethnic groups or class-based exploitation.

Revolutionary sustainability also calls for us sociologists to rethink our role in society. We not only need to get out of our ivory tower, as suggested by Michael Burawoy years ago, we should also consider how to reorient public sociology. In his new book, Karl von Holdt proposes "critical engagement" as an emancipatory variant of public sociology that does not shy away from critically addressing the professional mainstream of the discipline that settles for maintaining the status quo. This fruitful approach that deserves worldwide debate is met with enthusiasm by students because a public sociology that can also be "right-wing" is too ill-defined for them. The fact that committed students think this way, despite all their career constraints, is a sign of hope for me.

BA: There are two aspects I would like to mention. First, from my perspective, there is considerable potential in collaborations between sociology and the arts. The new strand of art research and the contributions of artists to the debate about the contemporary and future development of society are remarkable. Our editorial team started some collaborations by requesting a photo story, photos, pictures and art research. However, much more is possible and could open new ways of reaching out to academic and non-academic audiences by combining sociology and arts on a local as well as a global level. Second, *Global Dialogue* can stimulate discourse by bringing together analyses and diagnoses of contemporary societal development from different lines of research around the globe. However, the steps that need to be taken or to be encouraged are international research networks that give space to the perspectives of different sociologies and countries, and to the search for common insights into societal development and solutions for the most pressing issues of our time. From my perspective, public sociology – the development of dissemination strategies as well as collaborations with different stakeholders in the various fields – must be an integral part of such a research agenda and research networks. ■

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> Welcome to the XX ISA World Congress of Sociology in Melbourne

by **Sari Hanafi**, American University of Beirut, Lebanon, and ISA President (2018-23)

We will at last meet in person. When finally deciding on the date for this XX ISA World Congress of Sociology, many questions remained: Should it be online, hybrid or in-person? Who cannot make it? Who is still fearful of coming too close to others? After almost three years of online meetings due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this major in-person event appears as a historic moment.

We envisaged different scenarios, but for now the outcome is most encouraging, with 7,126 abstracts submitted. Two-thirds of those are planned to be presented in person and the other third virtually. The program coordinators have done a great job assessing the submissions and accepting 6,408 abstracts from 124 countries. Compared with the previous World Congress in Toronto (2018), the number of accepted abstracts has increased by 19%. We invite all those who have been accepted this time to register before March 22, 2023, which is the deadline for presenters' registration.

The Congress program has been the subject of many meetings of the Program Committee, which is composed of our four Vice-Presidents (Filomin Gutierrez, Eloísa Martín, Geoffrey Pleyers, and Sawako Shirahase), the head of the Local Organizing Committee (Dan Woodman), four Research Coordinating Committee members (Hiroshi Ishida, Allison Loconto, Susan McDaniel, and Nazanin Shahrokni), another four from the National Associations Liaison Committee (Elina Oinas, Bandana Purkayastha, Celi Scalón, and Borut Rončević), our invited guest member, Armando Salvatore, and myself. The Local Organizing Committee, headed by Dan Woodman, has shouldered tremendous logistic work. I want to thank them all for the great work they have been doing. We have put together a wonderful program, with most speakers planning to attend in person. Let me share some highlights.

When we chose the theme for this ISA World Congress, *Resurgent Authoritarianism: Sociology of New Entanglements of Religions, Politics, and Economies*, authoritarianism had not become as widespread as it is now, including in the Global North. Its growth has been facilitated by the gradual "symbolic thickening" of public culture through combinations of extreme nationalist and religious fervor, notably when a national conservative project replaces the

liberal political project, and public reason becomes incapable of dealing with either a unified conception of justice or different conceptions of the good in society. With more hierarchical polarization in society, we live in a time when reasonable public debate is often impossible. These are demagogical times animated by the vertiginous rise of populism and many levels of misunderstanding between the religious and the secular, in our scholarship and media, in their relationship to politics, economy and culture. Religiosity is increasing in most regions, and secularism has become, in some countries, a civic religion set up against other religions, particularly of the populations originating from migration.

> Presidential panels and plenaries

Within this theoretical framework, we conceived a program with two presidential panels interested in connecting sociology to moral and political philosophy.

In the first one, entitled "Liberalism, the Other and Religion," two philosophers and two sociologists debate this theme. French philosopher Cécile Laborde defends minimal secularism, while Palestinian philosopher Azmi Bishara argues that comprehensive liberalism can be promoted if its basic values, like civil liberties and individual autonomy, are reproducible in the context of the prevailing culture. For Brazilian-Belgian sociologist Frédéric Vandenberghe, the sociological critiques of social injustices and social pathologies adhere to the repertoire of "liberal communitarianism": sometimes it veers more towards the communitarian pole of identity and authenticity, and sometimes towards the liberal pole of autonomy and justice. Finally, for Australian sociologist Anna Halafoff, the role of religion is to enable and resist the anti-cosmopolitan terror manifested in the rise of religious nationalism.

The second panel is about "Building a Just Post-COVID-19 World." The surreal atmosphere of the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed fault lines in trust among human beings, countries, citizens, and governments. It has pushed us to raise big questions about ourselves, our social relationships, and life more generally. This moment of crisis could be an occasion to address this new reality and the attendant rampant uncertainty actively. While

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this global crisis may have prompted fresh strategies to reinforce exploitation, dispossession, and neoliberal capitalism, and also increased the reach of our greed and selfishness, it has also allowed us to explore and provide new ways of understanding and reclaiming our humanity and social justice. Didier Fassin points out the unlearned lessons of the pandemic, focusing on public health and social inequalities. For him, the health crisis revealed the flaws of public health in most countries and the depth of social inequalities within and between countries. Eva Illouz is interested in fear as the anti-democratic emotion post-COVID times reveal. Meanwhile, Afe Adogame, with his Ghanaian sensitivity, unravels the nexus between religion, science, and pandemics that plays out in myriad ways. While science challenges the legitimacy and potency of religion in offering protection, healing, security, and hope, religion, in turn, confronts the efficacy and authority of science as a panacea. Finally, in the face of the impact of COVID-19, Li Peilin argues that modern world-systems theory, Cold War theory and clash-of-civilizations theory are incapable of understanding regional conflicts and the threat of world economic recession. He thus calls for more inclusive post-Western sociology to contribute to establishing a world order of peace.

In addition to these panels, eight plenaries will deal with four themes: secularism from the perspective of post-secularity or multiple secularities; authoritarianism, particularly in its brutalizing version and its effects on knowledge and post-factuality; populism and its different local forms of a global phenomenon, and an invitation for an intersectional approach to understanding the construction of the “people”; and neoliberalism, which generates so many inequalities, jeopardizing both individual and collective rights to life.

> Spotlight Sessions

As we aim for this Congress not only to converse with other disciplines but also with media, actors from within

civil society and policymakers, we conceived three Spotlight Sessions focusing on three burning trends and conflicts.

The first is about racism and Islamophobia. While after the civil rights era, overt racism was widely condemned, how do we conceptualize and measure its more subtle and diffuse present manifestations? This session will focus more particularly on the rise of Islamophobia. Nacira Guénif will argue that rather than considering that integration may be the solution to racism and *a fortiori* to Islamophobia, the rhetoric of integration in France and elsewhere has fueled racist practices and discourses, allowed dismissive policies and opened the path for an enduring Islamophobia. For François Burgat, the tensions and rifts between Europe and the Muslim world, whether domestic or regional, may be analyzed as resulting from various historical dynamics. For him, the most important of these rifts have little to do with global religious affairs but rather with those that are internal and political. Randa Abdel-Fattah will point out, as a sociologist and activist, how marginalized communities in Australia are betrayed by Muslim “leadership” which succumbs to the enduring and seductive power of commonsense ideas and scripts about “moderate/apolitical/integrated” Muslims so powerfully sedimented over two decades of the war on terror and the privileging of liberal multicultural frameworks of inclusion in fighting Islamophobia. Finally, Farid Hafez will focus on Islamophobia in Muslim societies as a way of regulating and disciplining Muslims, thus framing it as political. In many Muslim countries (e.g. some in West Asia), state institutions are pushing legislation to discriminate against Muslims who are politically opposed to those in power. Hafez thus moves beyond the majority-minority relation dynamics.

The second Spotlight Session will provide a sociological perspective on the war in Ukraine. The Russian invasion of Ukraine shocked the world. This is not an isolated war; it is exceptional due to its capacity to escalate into the Third World War, possibly a nuclear one. Going beyond

its geopolitical impact, four panelists, Nikolai Genov, Olga Kutsenko, Larissa Titarenko, and Tamara Martsenyuk will explore the transformations of Russian and Ukrainian societies that enabled the social conditions that led to the war to develop. They will also contemplate the possible implications of this war on the future transformation of both societies. The war also has wider European ramifications and poses questions as diverse as the development of the idea of Europe, the implications of the refugee crisis, the global social impacts of food and energy scarcity, academic freedom to assess the war critically, etc.

The last Spotlight Session is about the Arab–Israeli conflict. Some read this conflict as a settler–colonial project that has continued since 1948 and has established an apartheid system against the Palestinians, while others read it as conflicting nationalisms between Arabs and Israeli Jews. No matter how this conflict is read, a creeping “spacio-cide” process in the Occupied Palestinian Territories is evident at all levels. The Peace Process (known as the Oslo Process) did not stop it. Many Israeli and Palestinian scholars argue that the two-state solution has collapsed with the failure of the Oslo Process and that we should aim for one secular state for all its citizens. Four panelists will reflect on this topic: Palestinian sociologists Mohammed Bamyeh and Areej Sabbagh-Khoury, and Israeli sociologists Ian Lustick and Lev Grinberg.

> Former Presidents Panel and the history of the ISA

In June 2023, in Melbourne, we will be celebrating the twentieth edition of the ISA World Congress of Sociology. To highlight this important anniversary, I have focused part of my presidential project on publishing abstracts from all the previous Congresses and updating the outstanding work of Jennifer Platt’s *History of ISA 1948-1997*. Two studies were commissioned. One was conducted by Gisèle Sapiro, looking at plenaries and programs of selected Research Committees at past Congresses, and analyzing their changing forms and contents in terms of topics, theories, and methodologies. Tom Dwyer conducted the other study to update the *History of ISA* from 1997 until today. Former ISA Presidents Margaret Archer, T.K. Oommen, Alberto Martinelli, Piotr Sztompka, Michael Burawoy, and Margaret Abraham will also comment on these two studies.

> Author Meets Critics

For these sessions, we have selected six excellent books written or edited by sociologists from different geographical areas and with exciting and timely topics:

- *Critical Engagement with Public Sociology: A Perspective from the Global South* edited by Andries Bezuidenhout, Sonwabile Mnwana, Karl von Holdt
- *The Gift Paradigm: A Short Introduction to the Anti-Utilitarian Movement in the Social Sciences* by Alain Caillé
- *Aesthetic–Cultural Cosmopolitanism and French Youth: The Taste of the World* by Vincenzo Cicchelli and Sylvie Octobre
- *After the Arab Uprisings: Progress and Stagnation in the Middle East and North Africa* by Shamiran Mako and Valentine M. Moghadam
- *Diaspora as Translation and Decolonisation* by Ipek Demir
- *Refuge beyond Reach: How Rich Democracies Repel Asylum Seekers* by David Scott Fitzgerald

> And more

Research Committees have their own understanding of the theme of this conference and have selected papers with various approaches. Additionally, we have four fantastic Australian Thematic Sessions organized by the Local Organizing Committee in Australia on compelling topics: refugees, climate change, indigenous scholarship and contemporary inequalities in Australia. In the program there are also, of course, Integrative Sessions and sessions by the different national, regional, linguistic and thematic associations, as well as Ad Hoc Sessions, and Professional Development Sessions. Before the Congress, we have also organized some pre-congress events by the different Research Committees and the Australian Sociological Association (our local host). I would particularly like to highlight the seminar for the winners and finalists of the ISA Worldwide Competition for Junior Sociologists, which will bring together fifteen junior sociologists from fourteen countries.

Needless to say, Melbourne is a fantastic place to meet: it’s a vibrant and friendly city with public art, many parks and great food, and some affordable housing options. I hope to see you all in late June 2023! ■

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> Rekindling In-Person Conferences

in an (Almost) Post-Pandemic World

by **Anahí Viladrich**, The City University of New York (CUNY), USA



Credit: Unsplash.

In August 2022 I flew out to Los Angeles to join the 117th American Sociological Association Annual Meeting, the very first in-person event I had attended in more than two years. Happy to be back together with my colleagues, though still fearful of coming too close to others, I had serious misgivings about taking part in this entirely face-to-face four-day event with over 4,500 people present. Despite being fully vaccinated and boosted and having already had my fair share of COVID-19 infection (I had been sick twice to be precise), I felt hesitant about being indoors with thousands of colleagues – even if masked.

While weighing my options, I self-reflecting on the pros and cons of virtual versus in-person meetings, and decided to engage in what social scientists seem to do best: research the benefits of each. In this piece, I review what I learned and share some experiential lessons on how to make in-person conferences work better during an (almost) post-pandemic era.

> Coming full circle

Soon after the initial outbreak of COVID-19, Zoom conferences were recognized for having [democratized our access](#) to knowledge and networking opportunities. For the next two and a half years, online meetings proved to be the cheapest and easiest way to bring together academic and professional communities from the comfort of our own home offices – even our bedrooms. Not only does streaming mean that we can attend events from anywhere in the world, but these also leave [smaller carbon footprints](#), thus helping to mitigate climate change. Prior to COVID-19, we all had to carve out time for traveling to conferences, often held in far-away locations, which typically entailed long negotiations with our college administrations to secure funding for registration, airfares, and room and board.

Most of these challenges seemed to disappear the moment we went online in March 2020. As time went on, however, we became increasingly worn out (and [Zoomed](#)

out) as a result of screen exhaustion, not to mention the never-ending technological glitches and awkward mic issues that we all experienced from time to time. Ubiquitous among these are the all too common tales of toilets flushing or children crying in the middle of one's online presentation! Making the [most of virtual conferences](#) also often means spending little time attending our colleagues' presentations and breakout sessions. In fact, many institutions expect their faculty members to continue to perform their daily tasks while taking part in virtual conferences.

My initial hesitance regarding attending the ASA meeting this year, coupled with my fear of being at a potential super-spreader event, was counterbalanced by a strong desire for [face-to-face interactions](#). Extensive [advice and tips](#) literature helped ease my worries. Below is a summary of what I learned and how things worked out in the end.

1. Safety Guidelines & Knowing What to Expect: Like most professional organizations currently holding in-person events, ASA made safety a top priority and [COVID-19 protocols](#) were in place throughout. Pre-event communication between conference organizers and attendees was not only key in spelling out a safety strategy, but also in helping presenters manage their expectations. Before arriving, we were required to electronically upload our vaccination cards, which were also checked at the conference site upon arrival. We all knew what to expect as a result: no vaccination or no mask meant no entry.

2. Accountability & Honor Code: Although the risk of catching and transmitting the dreaded virus could not be definitively eliminated, we tried to minimize our exposure by being accountable to one another. As a result, we maintained a physical distance and continued wearing our masks indoors unless eating or drinking – even when presenting papers. Thanks to the beautiful summer weather in LA, many events were held outdoors, so we had ample space to interact.

3. Leveling the Field: Many of us were not immune to a shared [sense of collective “weirdness”](#): while grateful for the opportunity to engage with others, we experienced some uncertainty regarding how to approach our colleagues, and how to be approached, while dealing with disparate comfort levels with respect to maintaining a physical distance. What's more, many of us had become a bit rusty when it came to small talk. At ASA, some of my younger and less experienced colleagues told me that “breaking the ice” was not something they felt comfortable doing. Like any skill, being socially savvy is something that must be practiced. This is particularly true for those traumatized by loss or ongoing illness, for whom indoor spaces may have become little more than a germ-ridden playground.

Fortunately, the conference badges only included attendees' first and last names – with no additional information about their institutional or professional affiliation. This measure helped avoid preconceptions about status, rank and university affiliation, thus facilitating spontaneous communication among attendees. In addition, most of us experienced an almost visceral itch to interact with our peers and share anecdotes on how we were physically and emotionally surviving the pandemic. Talking to real-life human beings and shaking each other's hands is something that we no longer took for granted. In the end, our COVID-19 stories, small and big, provided us with common ground to connect with one another in unique ways.

4. Back to Being Fully Present: No virtual platform can truly replace the magic of real-life relationships: the core of what in sociological jargon is called *in situ* “social capital.” In plain English, the “chit chat” function of actual conference venues is almost like speed dating: you bump into a department chair, an editor or a junior colleague standing in line for coffee, let's say, and the next thing you know, a casual conversation becomes your ticket to a new job or a book contract. Or perhaps sparks will fly, and you will find [the love of your life](#). Learning about related projects during colleagues' presentations may elicit new ideas, enhance one's scholarship, and lead to productive chat during coffee breaks or conference receptions.

> The way forward

I almost missed the in-person ASA meeting this year. In retrospect, I'm glad I didn't. The old adage that attending conferences is [much more than merely presenting your work](#) became clearer to me than ever before. However, although face-to-face events are critical to the [survival of professional organizations](#), they still reflect key structural inequalities that were endemic before COVID-19. These include what I call the “five-star-hotel conference mode,” which favors those with institutional resources (read: money) to the detriment of less well-endowed universities, minorities, and graduate students. Fortunately, calls for making in-person events accessible to all, including welcoming participants from developing countries, have become a priority for many professional organizations, including ASA.

What the future holds is still unclear, and regardless of potential pandemic scenarios, streaming and online events (both synchronous and asynchronous) are certainly here to stay – even if in hybrid forms. Meanwhile, I can hardly wait for the next in-person event, where being in the “here and now” will hopefully encourage us to share a better version of ourselves, as both committed academics and compassionate human beings. ■

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> Global Sociology as a Renewed Global Dialogue

by **Geoffrey Pleyers**, Université Catholique de Louvain, Belgium, and ISA Vice-President for Research (2018-23)



| Photo montage: Arbu, 2023.

After its heyday in the 1990s, global sociology has come under harsh criticism by approaches that include subaltern, postcolonial, decolonial, feminist and gender studies, and Southern theories together with other “epistemologies of the South.” Beyond their heterogeneity and divergences, these approaches converge in challenging the legitimacy of global sociology, which has been identified with Eurocentrism and the domination of Northern/Western sociologists.

The epistemic agenda propounded by these critical theories combines two steps. The first is the deconstruction of the inherent Eurocentrism on which global sociology and most of our discipline’s cognitive frames are rooted, as Sujata Patel has argued. This challenges Western-dominated forms of producing and diffusing knowledge as much as Eurocentric worldviews. Enrique Dussel has shown that coloniality and the conquest of the Americas are not a side issue of modernity but a foundational event on which modernity has been built and through which it keeps reproducing itself. Western subjectivities have constructed themselves in a relation of domination over “others.” To analyze the social actors, mechanisms, and institutions that have built, maintained, reproduced, and updated

these forms of social and epistemic domination is an essential task for today’s social sciences. It includes reflexive analysis of their own past and current role in reproducing this social and epistemic system.

The second step is to pay attention to and give visibility to worldviews, experiences, and knowledge that have been “invisibilized” and denied by the modernization process. Indigenous, ecological, feminist, peasant, and minority movements have made this a significant part of their emancipatory struggles. It is also an urgent task for sociologists in the Global North and the Global South. For professional sociologists, this step notably includes revealing the contributions to our disciplines by researchers, actors, authors, and scholars that have been ignored for too long.

> Social and epistemic struggles

The main ideas on which such critical perspectives build arose alongside or at the margin of academic sociology. In Latin America, the rise of the “decolonial perspective” itself is one of the most striking illustrations of the fact that most significant debates in social sciences started among social movements, particularly indigenous movements, before pro-

gressively penetrating the academic world. In the past three decades, critical actors, social movements, and scholars from the Global South and from “oppressed backgrounds” (notably feminists and minorities), have profoundly transformed the way we see our world, modernity, equity, and “progress.” Small-scale farmers, indigenous peoples, activists, and movements from the Global South have developed perspectives such as ecofeminism and the “good life” (e.g. the *Sumak Kawsay* perspective in Ecuador) that have deeply impacted the way we see ecology, nature (to which we belong), and ourselves. Similar processes have occurred in the Global North. The concept of “intersectionality” appeared in the struggles of the feminist and black movements, from the pen of Crenshaw, who was not a sociologist but an activist and a lawyer. Thus many of our key concepts have arisen out of social movements “from below.”

Opening up Northern epistemologies to learning, stances, and lessons from the Global South leads to recognizing social actors as producers of knowledge, which includes practical knowledge as well as theoretical perspectives, epistemologies, and worldviews (“cosmovisions”). Indeed, indigenous, peasant, or feminist movements explicitly consider the defense of alternative cosmovisions as a crucial part of the struggle for social justice. “Our struggle is political and epistemic,” said Luis Macas, at the time a leader of the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE). Translating these struggles to academic arenas, Boaventura de Sousa Santos asserts that “there is no social justice without epistemological justice” and struggles for the “end of the cognitive empire.”

The fences surrounding academic epistemology debates among scholars have been broken. These “social and epistemic struggles” are not only our research objects, they cross our whole discipline. Epistemologies and sociology are part of the battleground of these emancipation projects and hence partly transformed by them.

> Is global sociology still relevant?

Is the project of global sociology still legitimate after this intense wave of criticism? Or is “global sociology” intrinsically bound to the Eurocentric (colonial, patriarchal, and capitalist) modern project and worldview? Should sociology renounce this project to do justice to knowledge rooted in local experiences, struggles, and specific cultures? Should we focus on rebuilding sociology’s regional and national histories to foster contributions by national and regional authors and scholars who have been invisibilized?

The “decolonial turn” invites Western sociologists to renounce their habit of rapidly universalizing their research results, concepts, and vision of emancipation. It demands that we acknowledge the epistemic domination rooted in Eurocentric sociology and recognize significant theoretical contributions by scholars and actors from different

regions of the world and from oppressed backgrounds to the history and relevance of our discipline. It requires that we revise the canon of our discipline and renew a “global sociology” which for too long was Western sociology (and actually only a part of Western sociology). However, the decolonial turn does not invalidate the project of global sociology. The Mexican indigenous Zapatista movement has shown that promoting “a world where there is space for many worlds” does not mean giving up any global perspective; quite the opposite.

To rebuild global sociology after (and through) the decolonial turn, criticism of Eurocentrism and the visibilization of alternative knowledge must be complemented by a third and indispensable step: [intercultural dialogue](#). This requires researchers to acknowledge their position and be open to learning from others. The posture is at once sociological, cultural, and personal. It should be rooted in a willingness to expose oneself to the risk (and hope) of losing some of one’s certainties and learning from the encounter with the other. Under these premises, sociology becomes a collective project that combines researchers’ reflexivities in a common quest for a better understanding of our world and also the actors who transform it.

Without this call for an open and intercultural global dialogue, the renewal of critical stances and theories runs three risks: fragmentation, isolation (through difficulties in reaching out beyond the most activist fringes of movements and critical scholars), and homogenization of Western social sciences and knowledge as dominant and Southern social sciences and knowledge as emancipatory. To renew global sociology and restore its relevance requires us to “provincialize” its European roots and contributions. As Chakrabarty rightly explains, this does not mean getting rid of all Western contributions to sociology and critical theory, but considering them a relevant part of a more comprehensive global sociology that builds on roots and proposals from the different regions of the world.

After developing a radical and compelling criticism of the colonial dimension of modernity and our epoch in his masterpiece *Critique of Black Reason*, Achille Mbembe entitled the epilogue to the book “There is only one world.” He insists on the connectedness of humanity and on the need to develop a new cosmopolitan perspective: “Whether we want it or not, the fact remains that we all share this world [...] The proclamation of difference is only one facet of a larger project – the project of a world that is coming, one whose destination is universal, a world freed from the burden of race, from resentment, and from the desire for vengeance that all racism calls into being.” Decolonizing history aims at rebuilding a common history, not only a history of the colonized people. Likewise, our aim is to rebuild a common sociology, with sociologists and actors from the Global South and from marginalized standpoints, not only for them but for all of us.

Thus the great challenge of our times is the progressive emergence of a planetary consciousness. If sociology is up to its tasks, it will contribute to this planetary consciousness. To do so, global sociology can neither remain rooted in the Western universities and canons, that presented themselves as universal, nor be limited to the criticisms of this Western Sociology. It needs to connect sociologies, as Gurminder Bhambra proposes, and from there on to rebuild a common sociology, one that is diverse but builds on common grounds that emerge from global dialogues.

> The ISA as a tool for renewing global sociology

Building this renewed global sociology by fully including in better ways research, epistemologies, and scholars from the Global South and oppressed backgrounds in general sociology has been one of the primary missions of the ISA over recent decades.

The ISA is built on the conviction that an open dialogue between sociologists from different continents is “critical to addressing major sociological issues across the globe,” to take the words of Sari Hanafi and Chin-Chun Yi, who gathered the contributions of the ISA Fourth Conference of National Associations in the book *Sociologies in Dialogue*. ISA Research Council has set up a task force to share good practices and make concrete proposals to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion within the ISA and its Research Committees. Opening spaces to authors from the Global South has been the shared mission of ISA journals and book series. Diffusing sociological perspectives from different continents and fostering cross-fertilization among them is the *raison d'être* of the ISA magazine *Global Dialogue*. The ISA social media contribute to sharing information, analyses, and perspectives from different continents. However, even in the age of Zoom, personal encounters often remain the

best setting to foster personal relationships that set the bases of a mutual understanding beyond differences in stances, arguments, and cultures. That is why world congresses and forums of sociology remain important events and why research committees combine virtual conferences with in-person meetings. Our challenge remains to build an inclusive and diverse international community of scholars able to renew global sociology. To that end, we need to democratize global sociology and access to international arenas while maintaining the importance of building social bonds rooted in personal encounters.

Acknowledging, “visibilizing” and learning from the sociology by researchers and actors from the Global South and from marginalized backgrounds is not only a matter of making sociology more democratic by meeting some diversity criteria and ensuring a fair access to the diffusion of knowledge. It is also a quest for better informed and more relevant sociology, capable of providing more complex and multi-situated analyses of the challenges facing our societies. Brazilian pedagogue Paolo Freire taught us that the perspectives of and the analyses by oppressed actors offer a better understanding of their reality and society. Contributions from feminist scholars and activists during the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated their ability to improve the knowledge of our world and its challenges far beyond feminist causes and gender equality. Likewise, analytical, and theoretical contributions by sociologists from the Global South help us to understand the reality and challenges of that region as much as to reach a better and “more global” understanding of life and society in the Global North. The epistemologies of the South together with feminist, ecological, indigenous, and intersectional approaches are more than alternative options for sociology in the twenty-first century. They are at the core of global sociology and have profoundly modified our discipline. ■

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> Why We Need a New Framework to study the Far Right in the Global South

by **Rosana Pinheiro-Machado**, University College Dublin, Ireland and **Tatiana Vargas-Maia**, Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil

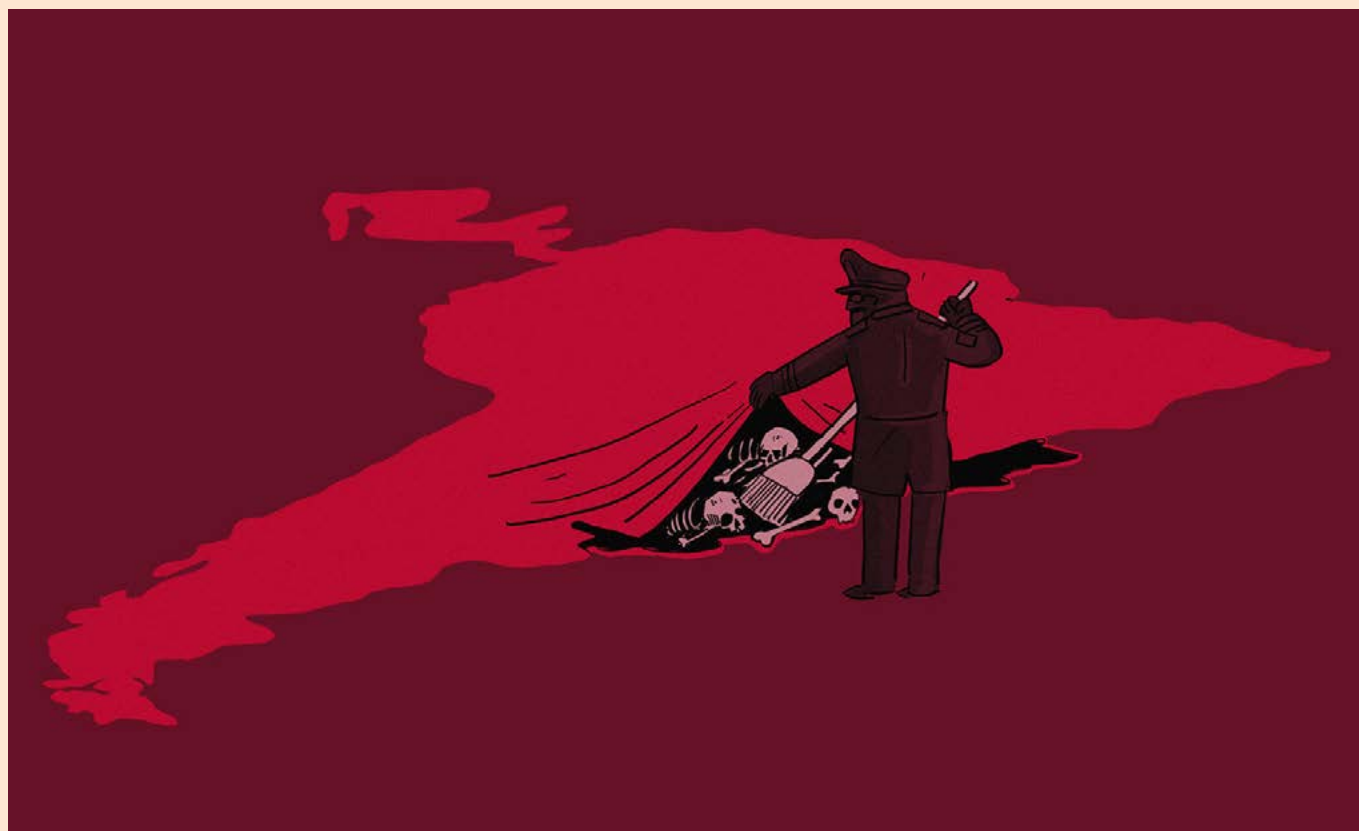


Illustration made by the Brazilian artist and political scientist Ribs (https://twitter.com/o_ribs and <https://www.instagram.com/o.ribs/>) for the Social Movements Observatory of the Nucleus of Studies in Social Theory and Latin America (NETSAL-IESP/UERJ). Credit: Ribs, 2021.

Vast scholarship has attempted to account for the rise – or resurgence – of the far right in the post-2010 world. In this short article, we argue that we need a new approach to understanding such a phenomenon, relying on a Global South perspective¹, in which colonialism and coloniality play a central analytical role (Masood and Nisar, 2020; Tavares Furtado and Eklundh, 2022). In the international literature, countries in the Global South are often presented as examples, case studies or variants of wider political events that place the United States and Europe at the center of their analysis. The problem of this colonized academic mindset is that countries like Brazil and the Philippines have experienced – and reinvented – one of the most radical and violent expressions of authoritarianism in the world. The profound damage caused by the Jair

Bolsonaro administration on the environment is immeasurable but receives only residual international academic and journalistic attention, which hinders a better understanding of the most ferocious impacts that extremists have on the world.

Works that respond to the recent populist and authoritarian wave differentiate little between Global North and Global South specificities, relying primarily on analysis of European and American parties and movements (i.e., Brown, Gordon, and Pensky, 2018; Eatwell and Goodwin, 2018; Hawley, 2017; Hermansson, Lawrence, Mulhall, and Murdoch 2020; Inglehart and Norris, 2016; Mondon and Winter, 2020; Mudde, 2017; Mudde 2019; Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2018). The result is a limited – yet universalizing – repertoire that focuses on processes that ac-

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count for recession in affluent countries, the collapse of the welfare state, migration issues, the impoverishment and resentment of the working class, de-democratization, and revolt against liberal democracy.

> The context of the emergence of the contemporary far right

We must first inquire about the social, economic, cultural, and political context in which the far right (re)emerges; and a look at some emerging economies is revealing in this regard. When Narendra Modi (in 2014 in India), Rodrigo Duterte (in 2016 in the Philippines), and Jair Bolsonaro (in 2018 in Brazil) came to power, their countries were not collapsing in any previous form of a welfare state: the poor were emerging from poverty and authoritarianism was not a novelty, but rather it held a great promise. At the time, India and the Philippines were continually maintaining high levels of economic growth. Although Brazil elected Bolsonaro amidst a recession, the resurgence of the far right occurred alongside the country's peak of economic development (Rocha, 2018). These countries were not facing a so-called refugee crisis, where immigrants would supposedly take the job opportunities of the autochthonous population. Instead, they were dealing with its racialized "internal enemies."

The reappearance of the far right in colonized and peripheral parts of the globe – marked by persistent authoritarianism, conservatism, precarity, and coloniality – cannot be explained by an undifferentiated theoretical framework that was originally developed through European–American–Western lenses. In an insightful decolonial critique of the academic discourse on the far right, Masood and Nisar (2020) suggest that a comprehensive analysis of far-right populism must account for the heterogeneities of these movements across the Global North and the Global South. We are not suggesting that the experience in the Global North should be dismissed. The 2008 global economic recession, the 2016 Brexit referendum in the United Kingdom, and the election of Donald Trump in the United States were pivotal events in generating contagious waves of authoritarianism worldwide and creating contextual incentives and opportunities for such movements. Countries in the Global North exercise power over the Global South and continuously export extremist ideologies. In addition, digital social media, an interconnected global economy, transnational networks of power, and conspiracy theories are some of the elements that make the authoritarian populist wave global.

> Scholarship on the new far right: elements for a comparative and global agenda

Although the study of authoritarianism and populism in the Global South has a long tradition, scholarship on the new far right was slow to notice and encompass countries like Brazil and India as part of the same analytical phenomenon. The book *The Populist Radical Right: A Reader*,

edited by Cas Mudde in 2017, is primarily regional because it focuses mainly on Europe but is perceived as universal. The Bolsonaro phenomenon attracted global attention. However, the epistemological route of this process seems to be dominated by colonized forms of knowledge production that persist in academia. Now, Brazil was incorporated into several projects researching the new far right as a case study from the Global South, and the same analytical tools are applied to it. Agreeing with Masood and Nisar (2020), we believe that this route should be turned upside down: some of the clues to the current global phenomenon arise precisely from the unfinished or hybrid modernity of the Global South.

Although a vast body of literature has analyzed the causes and the social conditions that led to the resurgence of populist rightist politics in southern countries, the understanding of the phenomenon remains narrow and fragmented because it lacks a framework within which to explore why several emerging democratic powers turned – again – to authoritarian politics. By focusing on southern experiences, we should recalibrate the lenses through which we understand the experience of colonized countries, expanding conceptual ranges and limits (rather than denying them). In a new agenda for research, we need to ask: What is *new* in the new right? What are the similarities and differences between Bolsonaro's or Duterte's authoritarian populism and the past dictatorial regimes? What kind of lessons can the Global North learn from countries that have long been marked by expressions of extreme politics? These renewed forms of extremism, neofascism, and authoritarianism are combined with harsh neoliberal rationality amidst social precarity and manifested through new technologies that enhance – and mainstream – populism in the twenty-first century.

Perhaps the main difference between the far right in the Global North and South is a matter of intensity and scale. Yet it is precisely such intensity and scale that must be understood and contextualized within historical particularities. For example, Trump and Bolsonaro may express similar intolerable statements through the same social media channels, relying on identical dog-whistle tactics. However, the effects of equally hateful attitudes will be utterly different in countries that present different degrees of economic development and democratic consolidation of their institutions. Most scholars of the far right exhaust the analysis of similarities among populist authoritarians, but it is equally important to pay more attention to the fact that a crusade against gender and sexual rights in the Global South will be much more visceral – and therefore harmful – than in the Global North.

> The singularities of the Global South

Five aspects could constitute a new framework that account for some of the numerous singularities of the Global South:

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1. Economic recession and political subjectivity: The literature on the far right has focused on the figure of the resentful impoverished white men. In contrast, colonized countries in the Global South have persistently been marked by conflict and recession. Yet, the imponent economic growth of emerging economies is also a subject that fosters new types of political engagement. While nostalgia for a glorious past is fundamental to understanding neo-fascist subjectivity in the Global North, this category needs to be rethought in the Global South.

2. The nuances of nationalism and xenophobia: Nationalism has different expressions in colonized countries. As mentioned above, some countries in the Global South might not have a glorious past to exalt, but a future to project. These countries are likely to have internal enemies (racialized minorities) rather than external enemies (immigrants or refugees). Although racism is at the core of far right projects, British white supremacy has different meanings from Hindu supremacy, for example.

3. The legacy of dictatorship and strongmen: Several countries in the Global South have suffered the consequences of bloody dictatorships that have resulted in a persistent violent ethos within the military and police towards racialized and vulnerable groups, who have never experienced any sort of democracy.

4. Religious and moral conservatism in non-secular democracies: Secularism is a core principle of established democracies. However, new democracies in the Global South struggle to overcome religious interference in political affairs, and the nefarious effects of fundamentalism, which acts as a disciplinary mode that controls bodies and sexualities.

5. Resistance: The far right has reappeared in the Global South and this is a phenomenon that seems to last. However, some of the most important reactions and creative responses against such a political wave come from feminist social movements in Latin American countries, such as Argentina and Chile.

Lastly, these five aspects are neither conclusive nor do they work in a one-size-fits-all perspective. They are suggestions that may shed light on features that countries in the Global South share in their everyday expressions of authoritarianism. We believe that more comparative studies are necessary for a better understanding of the causes and consequences of the far right in the Global South. Such work could change the way we understand this political phenomenon in the world today. ■

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1. See Pinheiro-Machado and Vargas-Maia, 2018. This article is also a shorter and adapted version of the introduction to our 2023 book.

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> Green Pacts and the Geopolitics of Ecosocial Transitions

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Pacto EcoSocial eIntercultural del SUR

Credit: Pacto EcoSocial e Intercultural del Sur.

The [Ecosocial and Intercultural Pact of the South](#) was formed in the first months of 2020, after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Its main goal was to support a bottom-up ecosocial transition for Latin America. From its origins, the platform sought to promote, amplify, and systematize diverse local experiences linked to community control, territorial autonomies, food sovereignty, agroecology, community energy and ecofeminisms, among other struggles.

The initiative was motivated by the urgent need to respond to the different crises that the contemporary world

is going through. But also to offer alternatives, in Latin American terms, to the proposals for ecosocial transitions and Green Pacts that have emerged in recent years. We understand that, in contrast with the progress that has been made in all continents through various local experiences, those hegemonic pacts are insufficient, given that they end up reproducing the status quo and exacerbating the deep geopolitical asymmetries and North–South inequalities.

More than two years have passed, and the global situation has worsened. We are now immersed in a context of war (Russia's invasion of Ukraine), which has aggravated the energy and food crisis, and are facing the acceleration of the climate crisis. Moreover, the war has contributed to the intensification of both traditional and new forms of extractivism associated with hegemonic green transitions.

This article analyses three elements. First, we examine some key features of the hegemonic Green Pacts and formulate our critique. Next, we discuss the geopolitics of ecosocial transitions in terms of ecological debt. Finally, we highlight proposals for and challenges to the advancement of just transitions and sketch what could be a horizon of integral ecosocial justice.

> **The Ecosocial and Intercultural Pact of the South in the face of hegemonic Green Pacts**

Faced with the inescapable facts of ecological and [systemic collapse](#), energy transition has been taken up as a goal by broad corporate and political sectors around the world. For the most part, they see the need to reduce carbon emissions but do not question the current social metabolism of capital. Their “transition” discourses and programs are based on corporatist, technocratic, neo-colonial and even extractivist strategies which do not postulate structural transformation. From the perspective of the Ecosocial and Intercultural Pact of the South we question these approaches and recognize the need to root ecosocial transformation in a logic of global justice that is both critical of and alternative to the hegemonic proposals of transition.

In recent years, Green Deal and Green New Deal (GND) proposals have proliferated. They are diverse and heterogeneous but have generally come to form a framework for political-discursive confluence in the Global North concerning how to reduce carbon emissions and promote “equitable” and supposedly “sustainable” economic growth. Climate justice is often at the heart of the agendas of these Green Pacts, with “redress funds” earmarked for communities that have historically suffered negative environmental impacts. But all too often, climate justice stops at the water's edge. In its eagerness to transition to renewable energy, the Global North rarely considers the impacts of this transition on the Global South. This is even the case with most of the counter-proposals formulated by various

constellations of the political left, denominated [Green New Deals](#) in allusion to Franklin D. Roosevelt's historic New Deal, which otherwise have a stronger perspective on state intervention for social policies, economic regulation and job creation, while other Green Pacts leave more room for corporations and markets to lead the transition.

In general terms, all the Green Deals in the Global North recognize the urgency of climate change and the need to combine economic justice with decarbonization. Undoubtedly, they are a step forward in the face of developmentalist blindness and denial. But even the European Green Deal, arguably the most ambitious of the governmental programs to date, does not propose a complete economic transformation and is contested by critical actors within the region. Meanwhile, the US GND is largely aspirational. It has taken the form of a non-binding resolution of Congress, but not of a law. While the GND issue was part of Joe Biden's election platform, that same administration has already cleared millions of hectares for offshore oil development. For its part, China, despite an announcement of intentions in its latest Five-Year Plan, continues to be the country with the highest CO2 emissions in the world in absolute terms and a massive use of coal.

Many of the Green Pacts end up reducing the ecosocial transition to a market-dominated energy transition. The predominant vision is of a corporate transition in both the Global North and Global South. It can be seen as the continuity of a model, with the same logic of concentration and business as the fossil fuel regime. It perpetuates the vertical scheme of territorial intervention, typical of predatory extractivism.

An example for this corporate transition is the “lithium triangle” (northern Argentina and Chile, and southern Bolivia), where we are witnessing a reorganization of extractivism in terms of a green transition for the needs of the Global North, which requires a supply of batteries for electric vehicles. Another clear example is the deforestation of the Ecuadorian Amazon for the massive export of balsa wood, used in the construction of wind turbine blades in China.

It is essential to denounce and analyze this new intensification of extractivism in the name of the North's “green” energy transition. What the hegemonic Green Pacts call “transition” only represents a “diversification” of the energy matrix. Even in the best-intentioned cases in the North, with real concern for uniting social justice with environmental justice, the “just transition” is often restricted to a domestic level, without considering the impact it has on the Global South.

Without a decentralization and deconcentration of energy and a change in the mode of production, these pacts promote a kind of ecological transition that does not abandon the logic of capitalist accumulation and continues to

bet on infinite growth. Therefore, the unsustainability of the fossil fuel model in metabolic terms is maintained, as this growth model requires an exacerbation of the exploitation and devastation of nature.

In contrast to and in order to dispute these proposals, we propose to conceptualize just transitions from a perspective of the geopolitical South, so as not to continue to be defined and recolonized by the North. We also advocate for abandoning sectoral conceptions and developing a more multiscalar, holistic and integral vision of ecosocial transitions. An energy transition that does not address the radical inequality in the distribution of energy resources, that does not promote decommodification and decolonization, and strengthen the resilience and regenerative capacity of civil society and the fabric of life, will only produce partial reform, without changing the structural causes of the collapse.

> Ecological debt and the geopolitics of ecosocial transitions

[Our proposals](#) place the geopolitics of ecosocial transitions center stage. In the long term, this implies reading North–South relations, spatialities, and flows as marked by the relationship of the historical-colonial model of dispossession in Latin America vis-à-vis capitalism–imperialism of the Global North. In the medium and short term, it is a matter of exposing the “false solutions” promoted by states and corporations and recognizing how they play a destructive role in multiple territories.

The geopolitics of ecosocial transitions has several faces. One is the increase in global inequalities associated with the intensified extraction of raw materials from Latin America. Alongside that, there is also the associated direct and negative impact on communities and the loss of biodiversity, with an extreme acceleration of species extinction and population sizes of vertebrates having declined since 1970 by an average of 68% worldwide and even by 94% in the Latin American tropics, according to the World Wide Fund for Nature. All this underlines the ecological debt. While this has its origins in colonial plunder, it is then exacerbated by both ecologically unequal exchange and the naturalized claim of environmental space located in impoverished countries by the predatory mode of living of industrialized countries.

The pressures on the environment, labor and territories caused by the export of natural resources from the countries of the South must also be considered. Ecological debt is also growing in another interrelated way, as richer countries overcome their “national” ecosystem imbalances by directly or indirectly either transferring pollution (waste or emissions) to other regions or asking them for compensation (carbon offsets) without taking responsibility for it.

The ecological debt is also climate debt and there is a huge gap in historical emissions between the Global South and the Global North. Europe and North America, for example, are responsible for more than 60% of carbon emissions since 1750, while South America is responsible for just 3%. This cannot be ignored, just as we cannot restrict ecological debt to the realm of monetary compensation. This is because the commodification of nature and the corresponding environmental cost has left and continues to leave a system of planetary exploitation that affects racialized and colonized peoples in a totally disproportionate way.

By claiming the ecological debt, we advocate for comprehensive strategies to guarantee a dignified life for the peoples of the South in terms of integral, ontological, and reparative justice. In contrast, far from reducing geopolitical gaps, hegemonic transition proposals run the serious risk of deepening the colonial and ecological debts owed to the Global South. No climate justice and no ecosocial transformation are possible without including reparations for these debts. Far from any binarism and simplism, at this point, the dialogue between the struggles and critical sectors of the Global North and the Global South is strategic, both to encourage a global debate on *who owes whom*, and to promote new forms of internationalism between eco-territorial struggles from different latitudes.

> Between a just energy transition and ecosocial horizons of integral justice

In our discussions with other realities of the Global South (see our recent [Manifesto for an Ecosocial Energy Transition from the Peoples of the South](#)), we observe a trend to increase offshore oil exploitation, fracking, and even more mega-projects to feed the over-consumption of the Global North. Agrarian extractivism in the form of intensive industrial monoculture is appropriating all water, air, and land resources. The enormous degree of corporate control in all our countries is alarming.

Although socioecological transitions cannot be limited to the energy issue, a structural transformation of the energy system, the mode of production, and society/nature relations is essential. The main lines of the Ecosocial and Intercultural Pact of the South in terms of what we understand by energy transition are:

- Energy is a right and energy democracy is a necessity for sustaining the web of life.
- It is necessary to intertwine social justice with environmental justice to eliminate energy poverty. Ecosocial justice implies dismantling the power relations that continue to prioritize access for a privileged group of society only, excluding vulnerable sectors and exploiting feminized bodies and nature.
- We must decarbonize our societies and economies: this is a greater challenge in the South than in the North, both

because of the ecological, historical and colonial footprint left by exploitation, and because of the raw material reserves which exist in the South.

- Decoupling our economic, social and cultural structures from fossil fuels, from the mandate to exploit nature, and from the developmentalist imaginary which still positions Latin America as an illimited “El Dorado” is essential.
- The whole system must change, not just the energy matrix: deconcentrate, deprivatize, decommodify, decentralize, depatriarchalize, decolonize, repair and heal.
- We have to transform the mode of production as well as our matrix of social relations and relations with nature.
- Energy needs to be seen in a relational way, so we must make our interdependence and eco-dependence on energy visible.
- It is important to watch out for “false solutions”, for example, the limits of and double standards applied to renewable energy, lithium and other minerals for transition. This includes a critical perspective on the consensuses that corporations and states reach in spaces such as COPs to implement energy models that contemplate controversial issues for the South, such as green, grey or blue hydrogen, smart agriculture, carbon markets, geoengineering and other proposals aimed at maintaining the current power relations and asymmetries around energy between the Global North and the Global South.
- Fossil fuels are to be left in the ground.
- We have to reclaim the payment of the ecological debt, not only in monetary but also in structural and symbolic terms, from a regional or Southern perspective.
- It is vital that we de-escalate and reduce social metabolism: produce with less materials and energy and consume

less – redefining our understandings of well-being away from material and monetary dimensions.

To these strategic lines, specific proposals must be added in each context that are sensitive to the different realities. This is what we have recently tried to do by promoting with [CENSAT Agua Viva](#) and other Latin American organizations the document [Disminución planeada de la dependencia fósil en Colombia](#), a collective proposal that seeks dialogue with the energy transition proposal made by the Colombian government headed by Gustavo Petro and Francia Márquez Mina.

With sensitivity to the processes of change under way in our region, but also aware of the weight of retrograde and oligarchic forces, we in the Ecosocial and Intercultural Pact of the South will continue to move forward, combining protests and proposals, criticism, and alternatives to development. We will take up the ideas and concepts that have been forged in recent decades in the heat of movement struggles and place ourselves alongside them: the rights of nature, living well, redistributive justice, care, just transitions, autonomy, post-extractivism, eco-territorial feminisms, food sovereignty and autonomy. That is why we defend a radically different kind of pact: not the hegemonic Green Pact of agreements and deals among the usual fat cats; but rather, a pact with the Earth, from the South and for the South, as suggested by Arturo Escobar in the [presentation of our initiative](#). A pact understood as a commitment to other modes of living, and of being with and in the world. ■

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> Development for the 1%

by **Vandana Shiva**, Navdanya Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology, New Delhi, India



Small farmers are actually more productive than large industrial corporate farms, without using environmentally damaging commercial additives such as fertilizers, pesticides, and genetically engineered seeds. Illustration by Arbu, 2023.

We need to move beyond the discourse of 'development' and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as shaped by capitalist patriarchal thinking, and reclaim our true humanity as members of the Earth family. As Lessem and Schieffer write in their book *Integral Economics*: "If the fathers of capitalist theory had chosen a mother rather than a single bourgeois male as the smallest economic unit for

their theoretical constructions, they would not have been able to formulate the axiom of the selfish nature of human beings in the way they did."

Capitalist patriarchal economies are shaped through war and violence – wars against nature and diverse cultures, and violence against women. And while the objective is to own and control the real wealth that nature and people produce, there is an increasing replacement of material

processes with economic fictions such as “the logic” of competitive markets. Separation is the key characteristic of paradigms emerging from the convergence of patriarchal values and capitalism. First, nature is separated from humans; then, humans are separated based on gender, religion, caste, and class. This separation of what is inter-related and interconnected is the root of violence – first in the mind, then in everyday actions. It is not an accident that social inequalities of the past have taken a new and brutal form with the rise of corporate globalization. It is often observed today that in accordance with current trends, 1% of the global population will soon control as much wealth as the remaining 99%.

Today, corporations claim legal personhood surpassing the rights of real people. But the distancing of fictitious constructs from real sources of wealth creation has gone even further. Finance is now substituted for capital, with tools and technologies that allow the rich to accumulate wealth as “rentiers” while doing nothing. Money making in the financial economy is based on speculation; and financial deregulation lets the rich speculate using other people’s hard-earned wages. The idea of “growth” has emerged as the measure of success among individuals and governments. It speaks of a form of development and its crises: global experiences and a paradigm designed by capitalist patriarchal Big Money, just for Big Money to grow bigger.

What the paradigm of economic growth fails to take cognizance of is the destruction of life within nature and society. Both *ecology* and *economics* are derived from the Greek word *oikos* which means *home*, and both words imply a form of household management. When economics works against the science of ecology, it results in mismanagement of the Earth, our home.

The climate crisis, the water crisis, the biodiversity crisis, the food crisis are all different symptoms of mismanagement of the Earth and her resources. People mismanage the Earth and destroy her ecological processes by not recognizing nature as the “real capital” and “source” of everything else derived from it. Without Nature and her ecological processes that sustain life on Earth, the grandest economies collapse and civilizations disappear.

Under the contemporary neoliberal development model, the poor are poor because the 1% has grabbed their livelihood, resources, and wealth. We see this today in the displacement of both the communities from Rojava in the Middle East and the Rohingya people of Myanmar. Peasants are getting poorer because the 1% promotes an in-

dustrial agriculture based on the purchase of costly seeds and chemicals, which traps them in debt and destroys their soil, water, biodiversity, and freedom.

My book, [Earth Democracy](#), describes how the Monsanto corporation monopolized the cotton seed supply through hyped-up marketing of engineered Bt cotton. Often forced into debt through the purchase of these expensive GMO seeds and other so-called Green Revolution technologies, some 300,000 Indian farmers have committed suicide over the past two decades, with most suicides concentrated in the cotton belt. I have started a rural research farm called Navdanya to counter these violent monopolies. We save the farmers’ own traditional varieties of organic cotton to distribute in the Seed Freedom movement.

If farmers are getting poorer, it is because the *Poison Cartel* – now reduced to three players: Monsanto Bayer, Dow Dupont, and Syngenta Chem China – makes them dependent on buying costly seeds and chemicals. Vertically integrated corporations, linking seed to chemicals to international trade to the processing of junk food, are stealing 99% of the value that farmers produce. They are getting poorer because “free trade” promotes dumping, destruction of livelihoods, and the depression of farm prices. Moreover, small farmers are actually more productive than large industrial corporate farms, without using environmentally damaging commercial additives such as fertilizers, pesticides, and genetically engineered seeds. By contrast, the global peasant union Via Campesina points out that traditional ways of provisioning not only allow more autonomy for farmers but can even mitigate the effects of global warming.

It goes without saying that the “growth economy” of the 1% is deeply anti-life, and many of its effects are felt by working people in the Global North as well. The Filipino peoples’ NGO IBON International affirms that if masculine violence was used traditionally to keep women exploitable both as productive workers and reproductive bodies, now masculine violence works in the service of capitalist profit making. People everywhere are getting poorer because governments captured by the 1% impose profit-making privatization policies for health and education, transport, and energy, reinforced by World Bank and IMF mandates.

Workers, farmers, housewives, and nature at large are made into “colonies” by the dominant capitalist patriarchal economic paradigm. The capitalist model of development by globalization expresses a convergence of two forms of violence: the power of ancient patriarchal cultures combined with the modern neoliberal rule of money. ■

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> “Buen Vivir”: Genealogy and Horizons

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Mural painted by Luísa Acauan Lorentz on the outside wall of a house in the rural area of Porto Alegre, Brazil. Credit: Luísa Acauan Lorentz, 2022.

The category of *buen vivir* or “living well” expresses an ensemble of South American perspectives which share a radical questioning of development and other core components of modernity, while at the same time offering alternatives that reach beyond it. It is not akin to the Western understanding of well-being or the good life, nor can it be described as an ideology or culture. It expresses a deeper change in knowledge, affectivity, and spirituality: an ontological opening to other forms of understanding the relation between humans and non-humans which do not imply the modern separation between society and nature. It is a plural category that is under construction and takes specific forms in different places and regions. It is heterodox in that it hybridizes indigenous elements with internal critiques of modernity. References to the ideas of *buen vivir* have been

recorded since the mid-twentieth century, but its current meanings were enunciated in the 1990s.

Important in this regard were the contributions of the *Proyecto Andino de Tecnologías Campesinas* (Andean Project of Peasant Technologies) in Peru; the *Centro Andino de la Agricultura y el Desarrollo Agropecuario* (Andean Centre for Agriculture and Livestock Development in Bolivia); and different intellectuals, as well as social and indigenous leaders, among whom Alberto Acosta stands out, in Ecuador. A wide range of social movements have supported these ideas, which brought about political changes in Bolivia and Ecuador, and achieved constitutional recognition. *Buen vivir* includes different versions specific to each social, historical and ecological context. These come about through innovation, and the linking and hybridization of concepts stemming from indigenous traditions with critical postures within modernity itself. Among these are the Aymara’s *suma qamaña*, the Bolivian Guarani’s *ñande reko*, *sumak kawsay*, the Ecuadorian Kichwa’s *allin kawsay*, and the Peruvian Quechua’s *allin kawsay*. The Ecuadorian/Peruvian *shūr waras* and the Chilean Mapuche’s *küme morgen* are analogous concepts. Among Western contributions are the radical critiques of development, including post-development; the recognition of the coloniality of power and knowledge; feminist critiques of patriarchy; alternative ethics that recognize the intrinsic value of the non-human; and environmental visions such as deep ecology.

There is no single *buen vivir*; for example, Ecuador’s *sumak kawsay* is different from Bolivia’s *suma qamaña*. In the former case, approximate translations to Western categories refer to the art of good and harmonious living in a community, although defined in social and ecological dimensions at the same time. Meanwhile, the latter case also addresses living together in mixed communities but in specific territories. Similarly, it is as incorrect to say that *buen vivir* is exclusively an indigenous proposition, as it is to say that it implies returning to a pre-colonial condition; although these contributions are essential to its construction.

There are shared components beyond the diversity of the category (Gudynas 2011). All of the perspectives ques-

tion the concept of progress and the notion of a single universal history. They are open to multiple, parallel, non-linear, and even circular, historical processes. They question development because of its obsession with economic growth, consumerism, the commodification of nature, and so on. This critique spans capitalist as well as socialist varieties of development. From this perspective, speaking of a socialist *buen vivir* makes no sense. The alternatives are both post-capitalist and post-socialist, disengaging from growth, and focusing on the complete satisfaction of human needs from the standpoint of austerity. *Buen vivir* displaces the centrality of humans as the sole subject endowed with political representation and as the source of all valuation.

This implies an ethical opening up (by recognizing the intrinsic value of non-humans, and the rights of nature), as well as a political opening up (the acceptance of non-human subjects). It confronts patriarchy, even at the heart of rural and indigenous domains, postulating feminist alternatives that revive the key role of women in the defense of communities and nature. The modern separation between humanity and nature is also challenged: *buen vivir* acknowledges extended communities made up of humans and non-human animals, plants, mountains, spirits, and so forth, in specific territories. An example of this is the Andean concept of *ayllu*: mixed socioecological communities rooted in a specific territory.

Buen vivir rejects all forms of colonialism and keeps a distance from multiculturalism. It upholds, instead, a type of interculturality that values each tradition of knowledge, thus postulating the need to refound politics on the basis of plurinationality. *Buen vivir* bestows substantial importance upon affectivity and spirituality. Relationships in extended communities are not restricted to market exchanges or utilitarian links; instead, they incorporate reciprocity, complementarity, communalism, and redistribution, among other qualities.

The ideas behind *buen vivir* have been the subject of a harsh critique. Some consider that they reflect an indigenous reductionism, while others affirm that, in actuality, they are a New Age invention. Intellectuals from the conventional left have maintained that they are a distraction

from the true objective, which is not alternatives to development, but alternatives to capitalism; they also reject the intrinsic value of non-humans. Despite these arguments, *buen vivir* ideas have achieved strong and widespread support within Andean countries. From there, they have spread rapidly throughout Latin America and the global scene, providing the basis for specific alternatives to development, as in the constitutional recognition of the rights of nature and of the Pacha Mama; moratoria on Amazon drilling; models for transitions to post-extractivism; or cosmopolitics based on the participation of non-human actors.

The sharp contradiction between these original ideas of *buen vivir* and the development strategies of the Bolivian and Ecuadorian governments, which have promoted extractivist practices like mega-mining or Amazonian oil extraction, has become evident. Such “progressive” regimes have attempted to surmount these contradictions via new definitions of *buen vivir*, whether as a type of socialism in Ecuador, or as integral development in Bolivia, thus placing it within modernity. These positions have been supported by some state agencies, intellectuals, and non-South American intellectuals who, despite their intentions, are only enacting the coloniality of ideas. Despite everything, the original ideas of *buen vivir* have been maintained. They continue to nourish social resistance to conventional development; for instance, in the case of the indigenous and citizen demonstrations in Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru in defense of territory, water, and Mother Earth. This demonstrates that *buen vivir* is not limited to a few intellectuals and NGOs, but that it has garnered a high level of popular support.

To sum up, *buen vivir* is an ongoing proposal, nourished by different movements and activists, with its advances and setbacks, innovations and contradictions. It is inevitably under construction as it is not easy to move beyond modernity. It must necessarily be plural as it encompasses positions that question modernity while opening up other ways of thinking, feeling, and being – other ontologies – rooted in specific histories, territories, cultures, and ecologies. However, there are clear convergences within this diversity that distinguish it from modernity, such as rejection of modernity’s belief in progress, the acknowledgement of extended communities stemming from relational worldviews, and an ethics that accepts the intrinsic value of non-humans. ■

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> Ubuntu:

A Just and Empowering Concept and Way to Live

by **Lesley Le Grange**, Stellenbosch University, South Africa



Madagascar, Avenue of the Baobabs.
Credit: Antoni Socias, Unsplash.

Ubuntu is a southern African concept which means humanness and implies both a condition of being and a state of becoming. It concerns the unfolding of the human being in relation to other human beings and the more-than-human world of non-human nature. In other words, the becoming of a human is dependent on other human beings and the cosmos. Moreover, ubuntu suggests that a human being is not the atomized individual of the Western tradition, but is embedded in social and biophysical relations.

Ubuntu is therefore “anti-humanist” because it emphasizes the relational existence and becoming of the human being. *Ubuntu* is derived from proverbial expressions or aph-

orisms found in several languages in Africa, south of the Sahara. In the Nguni languages of Zulu, Xhosa, and Ndebele spoken in South Africa, *ubuntu* derives from the expression: *Umntungumntungabanye Bantu*, which suggests that a person’s humanity is ideally expressed in relationship with others, and, in turn, is a true expression of personhood: “We are, therefore I am.” *Botho* is its equivalent in Sotho-Tswana languages and this word is derived from the proverbial expression: *Mothokemothokabathobabang*. Ubuntu comprises one of the core elements of a human being. The Zulu word for human being is *umuntu*, one who is constituted of the following: *umzimba* (body, form, flesh), *umoya* (breath, air, life), *umphefumela* (shadow, spirit, soul), *amandla* (vitality, strength, energy), *inhliziyo* (heart, center of emotions),

umqondo (head, brain, intellect), *ulwimi* (language, speaking), and *ubuntu* (humanness).

> A recovered traditional way to live

Ubuntu is, however, not only a linguistic concept, but has a normative connotation embodying how we ought to relate to the other – what our moral obligation is towards the other. Ubuntu suggests that our moral obligation is to care for others, because when they are harmed, we are harmed. This obligation extends to all of life, since everything in the cosmos is related: when I harm nature, I am harmed.

Like all African cultural values, ubuntu was circulated orally and traditional: its meaning was interwoven within the cultural practices and lived experiences of African peoples. Such cultural values became eroded or effaced by colonization. However, in postcolonial Africa, ubuntu and its equivalents have been re-invoked as a part of a decolonizing project, and it also enjoys increasing appeal globally as an alternative to dominant notions of development that threaten the possibility of achieving social justice and environmental sustainability. For example, some Afro-descendent groups in South America are invoking ubuntu to gain a more nuanced understanding of *buen vivir*.

> A just and empowering concept

Ubuntu conveys the idea that one cannot realize or express one's true self by exploiting, deceiving or acting in unjust ways towards others. Without the presence of others one is not able to play, to use one's senses, to imagine, to think, to reason, to produce works, or to have control over one's environment. Ubuntu therefore depicts solidarity among humans and between humans and the more-than-human world. It can be invoked to build solidarities among humans in the struggle for social justice and environmental sustainability, which are central concerns of social movements around the globe.

This concept includes the proposal that human creativity and freedom should only be constrained when they harm others. Ubuntu is the manifestation of the power within all beings that serves to enhance life, and never thwart it. It is a power that is productive, that connects, and that engenders care and compassion – it is the power of the multitude that gives impetus to social movements. This form of power is in contrast to power that imposes, that divides, that colonizes – the power of the sovereign wielded by supranational organizations, governments, the military, and the corporate world. The latter form of power results in the erosion of ubuntu.

> Multidimensional transformation

The transformative potential of ubuntu lies in its providing alternative readings of some of the key challenges facing humanity in the twenty-first century: growing inequality among humans, impending ecological disaster, and human interconnectedness with new technologies to the extent that it is difficult to determine what “being human” is now. Concerning the last challenge, invoking ubuntu brings the importance of affirming humanness into the foreground, not by defining what it is to be human so as to declare other entities “non-human,” but through a process that involves the unfolding of the human in a context of burgeoning new technologies. Addressing inequality in the world suggests a concern about humans only – it is human-centered – whereas addressing the ecological crisis extends that interest to the more-than-human world – it is eco-centric. Ubuntu is transformative in that it transcends the [human-centered \(anthropocentric\) and eco-centered \(eco-centric\) binary](#).

Relationality among human beings should be viewed as a microcosm of relationality within the cosmos. Nurturing the self or caring for other human beings is therefore not antagonistic to caring for the more-than-human world – ubuntu cannot simply be reduced to a category of anthropocentric or eco-centric. The self, community, and nature are inextricably tied up with one another – healing in one domain results in healing in all, and so too is suffering experienced transversally across all three dimensions. The struggle for individual freedom, social justice and environmental sustainability is one struggle.

> Misappropriation to be wary of

Two potential limits of ubuntu might be identified. First, a narrow ethnocentric interpretation of the concept could be used politically to exclude others. By this, I mean that certain groups who have gained political power in post-colonial Africa might claim that the concept belongs to them – even though this might contradict the meaning of the term – or hold the view that it cannot be subjected to critical scrutiny. Put differently, ubuntu could become reduced to a narrow humanism that results in atrocities such as the xenophobia experienced in South Africa in recent times. Second, because of its popular appeal, ubuntu could be coopted by supranational organizations, governments, and the corporate world to suit their own agendas; or given the dominance of Western ways of knowing, it could become assimilated into a Western cultural archive, thus eroding its indigenouslyness. ■

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> Mapping Ecofeminist Debates

by **Christelle Terreblanche**, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa



Mural on the facade of a building in Caracol Oventic, Zapatista territory in Chiapas, Mexico. Credit: Vitória Gonzalez, 2017.

Ecofeminists spell out historical, material, and ideological connections between the subjugation of women and the domination of nature. As members of an evolving movement, they speak to a diverse body of political theory including feminist, decolonial, and environmental ethics, urging examination of how foundational concepts are embedded in and corrupted by traditional sex-gendered assumptions. From its beginnings in the 1960s, ecofeminist theory was inspired by grassroots direct action. Ecofeminism grew rapidly alongside the anti-nuclear and peace movements of the 1970s and 80s, and amidst rising public concern over environmental degradation. Women activists are found wherever the social and ecological reproduction of life is threatened: whether by toxic waste, race violence, exploitation of care workers, biodiversity loss, deforestation, commoditized seeds, or dispossession of ancestral lands for “development.”

Ecofeminists assert that human emancipation from historically patriarchal attitudes cannot be achieved without the liberation of all “othered” beings. They see how women in the Global North and peasants and indigenous peoples in the Global South can combine into a single authentic political voice. The reason is that these social groupings are skilled in caring for human and non-human life. As a politics, ecofeminism is therefore *sui generis* and not simply an offshoot of feminism, Marxism, or ecology. Notwithstanding some cross-fertilization of ideas, ecofeminism rearticulates feminist concerns about social equality by linking it to environmental justice and integrity.

> A reconstructive revolution offering reflexive self-awareness

Ecofeminism is sometimes regarded as a revival of ancient wisdom on the interconnectedness of “all life.” An example would be India’s Chipko women who, centuries ago, protected forests from logging, with their arms wrapped

around the trees. However, the actual term *ecofeminism* is attributed to French feminist Francoise d'Eaubonne's 1974 appeal for a revolution to save the ecosphere: a total reconstruction of relations between humans and nature, and also between men and women. Pioneering theorist Carolyn Merchant's historical analysis of the European scientific revolution, *The Death of Nature*, exposed the determination of modernity's fathers to master women's reproductive sovereignty through institutionalized witch hunts. The specialized knowledge of herbalists and midwives was replaced by a "profession of medicine" positing nature and the body as "machines." This abolished the precautionary principle inherent in women's care-giving labors, while reinforcing at the same time an ancient dualist ontology of men's rational superiority and control over "others" such as "unruly" women and "chaotic" nature.

Mainstream liberal modernists have often read the ecofeminist critique upside down as entrenching the patriarchal idea that women or natives are "essentially closer to nature" and thereby inferior. In fact, ecofeminists deconstruct old hegemonic binaries stemming from the "man over nature" dualism, revealing just how these are used by people of sex-gender, ethnic, and class privilege to maintain their social domination by "othering." Understood in this way, an ecofeminist standpoint can help deepen a person's reflexive self-awareness as to how they themselves are served by existing power relations.

> Women's work, ecological knowledge, and materialist critiques

Internationally, women do 65% of all work for 10% of wages while in the Global South, women produce 60% to 80% of all food consumed. Following research in colonial Africa and South America, Maria Mies and her German Bielefeld School associates proposed a "subsistence perspective" validating the ecological knowledge of women and peasants as producers and provisioners of life¹. Since the 1980s, this economic argument has mobilized ecofeminism as a post-development politics, anticipating contemporary alternatives such as the Latin American indigenous *buen vivir* or "good life" worldview, and recent European attention to de-growth and solidarity economies. Another exposé of "maldevelopment" has been Vandana Shiva's account of how communal food sovereignty achieved by Indian women farmers was lost after the introduction of twentieth-century Green Revolution technologies.

As financial and technological fixes deepen the ecological crisis, ecofeminists uncover the complex class, ethnic, and sex-gendered character of capitalist appropriation. Being a

materialist politics grounded in labor, it is non-essentialist; it connects the dots between overconsumption in the affluent industrialized Global North and its "taps and sinks" in the Global South. For it is the peripheries of capitalist patriarchal productivism that carry its polluting fallout – as ecological debt for indigenous communities, and as an embodied debt for living women and future generations. Materialist ecofeminists such as Ariel Salleh, Mary Mellor, Ewa Charkiewicz, Ana Isla, and others link subsistence and eco-sufficiency². Their structural critiques of reductionist economics point to its blindsiding of reproductive work in homes and in fields – and of the natural cycles on which capitalism depends.

> An ecofeminist meta-industrial response to the environmental crisis

Ecofeminists argue that such reproductive labor stands *a priori* in opposition to capitalist and Marxist valorization of production and exchange value as the driver of accumulation. Salleh conceptualizes unspoken reproductive workers – women, peasants, and indigenes – as a worldwide majority "meta-industrial class" whose skills express an "embodied materialist" epistemology and ethic. Their regenerative modes of provisioning at the cusp of nature are a ready-made political and material response to the environmental crisis. Such workers exist around the world in a vast, yet seemingly invisible, patchwork of non-alienated work, maintaining life in a complex web of humanity–nature relationships. Meta-industrial labor infuses ecological cycles with a positive net "metabolic value." Clearly, ecofeminism expands the focus of traditional Marxist class analysis. And indeed, its theorization of the "naturalized" underpinnings of capitalist appropriation through reproductive labor is being taken up on the academic left. There is always a risk, however, that women's theorizations will be repackaged in existing patriarchal meta-narratives.

> Convergent communal emancipation and care

An ecofeminist politics aims to foster human emancipation through regenerative solidarity economies based on sharing. It puts complexity before homogeneity, cooperation before competition, commons before property, and use value before exchange value. This emancipatory politics is gaining recognition for its capacity to elucidate convergences between the concerns of ecology, feminism, Marxism, and life-centered indigenous ethics such as *swaraj* in India and the African ethos of *ubuntu*. The analysis it provides offers a systemic sociological foundation for all post-development alternatives which seek both equality and sustainable ways of living. Ecofeminists argue for a world-view based on care for the diversity of all life forms. ■

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> Nature Rights and Earth Jurisprudence

by **Cormac Cullinan**, environmental lawyer, South Africa

Pachamama (Chinese ink on paper).
Credit: Luísa Acauan Lorentz, 2019.



Most contemporary civilizations are organized to maximize gross domestic product (GDP) in ways that degrade the environment and contribute to climate change. Such civilizations are likely to collapse during the twenty-first century unless they can be reoriented to promote human well-being by enhancing the integrity and vitality of the ecological communities within which they are embedded. Advocates of nature rights, also known as the rights of Mother Earth, argue that in order to achieve this transition, legal systems must recognize that all aspects of nature are legal subjects that have inherent rights, and must uphold those rights. The legal recognition of nature rights both contextualizes human rights as a species-specific expression of nature rights, since people are part of nature,

and creates duties for human beings and juridical persons to respect nature rights.

Legal recognition of nature rights is an aspect of a wider discourse about Earth jurisprudence and other ecological approaches to governing human societies. Earth jurisprudence is a philosophy of law and governance which aims to guide people to coexist harmoniously within the Earth community instead of legitimizing and facilitating its exploitation and degradation. Nature rights, like human rights, are conceived of as inherent and inalienable, and arise from the mere existence of the rights holder. This means that every being or aspect of nature, including people, must, at the very minimum, have the right to exist, the right to occupy a physical place, and the right to interact with other

beings in a manner that allows it to fulfil its unique role in ecological and evolutionary processes.

> Nature rights made explicit in law

The most significant contemporary expression of nature rights is the Constitution of Ecuador, which was adopted in September 2008. Later, the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth (UDRME) was proclaimed by a Peoples' World Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth in Cochabamba, Bolivia, on 22 April 22, 2010. The Constitution of Ecuador states: "Nature or Pachamama, where life is reproduced and exists, has the right to exist, persist, and maintain and regenerate its vital cycles, structure, functions, and evolutionary processes" (article 71). The Constitution makes it clear that recognition of the rights of nature is intended to create a framework within which citizens may enjoy their rights and exercise their responsibilities to achieve well-being through harmonious cohabitation within nature. Furthermore, it would be a framework that requires both the state and private persons to respect and uphold the rights of nature and mandates the state to guarantee a development model that is consistent with doing so. New Zealand legislation recognizes the Whanganui River and the Te Urewera area as legal entities with rights. Courts in India have recognized the Ganga and Yamuna rivers, the Gangotri and Yamunotri glaciers from which those rivers flow, and related forests and watercourses as legal entities with rights. The Constitutional Court of Colombia has recognized the Atrato river basin as a legal entity with the right to "protection, conservation, maintenance and restoration."

> The consumerist worldview

Modernity, capitalism, and consumerism arise from the deeply anthropocentric view that human beings are separate from nature and can transcend its laws. This human exceptionalism sees Earth as a collection of resources which exist for the purpose of human gratification. Since resources are understood to be scarce, outcompeting others in order to secure a greater share is understood to be of paramount importance. This worldview is the basis of most legal systems today. The law defines nature (other than human beings) as "property" and grants the owner extensive decision-making powers in relation to these "assets" and the power to monopolize the benefits from them. This provides the basis for economic and political systems that concentrate wealth and power and legitimize decisions that prioritize the short-term economic interests of a tiny minority of humans over the collective interests of the Earth community and life itself.

> The eco-centric worldview

The recognition that nature has rights, on the other hand, is based on an eco-centric worldview that sees humans

as a particular life form or aspect of Earth which plays a unique, but not preeminent, role within the Earth community. For example, the Preamble and first article of the UDRME refer to Earth as a self-regulating, living community of interrelated beings that sustains all beings and consequently prioritizes maintaining the integrity and health of the whole Earth community. Nature rights advocates point to the findings of branches of science such as quantum physics, biology, and ecology in order to provide evidence that every aspect of the cosmos is interconnected and to refute the widely held beliefs that human beings are separate from, and superior to, nature. This approach also draws on ancient wisdom and traditions, and the cosmologies of indigenous people, which view Earth as a sacred community of life and require humans to maintain respectful relationships with other beings.

Earth jurisprudence and nature rights pose a fundamental challenge to every aspect of the mainstream "development" discourse, and to capitalism and patriarchy. They posit a different understanding of the role of humanity, the fundamental purpose of human societies, and how to promote human well-being. For example, from an eco-centric perspective, *development* is understood as the process whereby an individual develops greater depth, complexity, empathy, and wisdom through interrelationship or "inter-being" with the community of life. This is the antithesis of the contemporary meaning of *development*, which involves exploiting and degrading complex natural systems to increase GDP.

> A new movement and a novel manifesto

Since 2008, nature rights and Earth jurisprudence have become an increasingly prominent aspect of the discourse of social movements, environmental and social justice activists, and indigenous peoples throughout the world. These concepts have become a central theme of the discussions within the United Nations about "living in harmony with nature," and have been incorporated into the programs of several green and eco-socialist political parties. Nature rights and Earth jurisprudence address the deepest roots of contemporary environmental and societal problems. They provide a manifesto that transcends race, class, nationality, and culture; they are based on an understanding of how the universe functions – an understanding that is more accurate than anthropocentric, mechanistic, and reductionist worldviews. Nature rights provide a basis for a global rights-based movement that can shift the norms of acceptable human behavior as has happened with human rights. These strengths mean that although the nature rights movement is still in its infancy, its influence is likely to continue to grow ever more rapidly and it has the potential to have a profound global impact. ■

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> Post-Pandemic Tendencies

and the Phases of Modernity

by **José Maurício Domingues**, State University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and member of the ISA Research Committees on Sociological Theory (RC16) and Historical Sociology (RC56)

The coronavirus/COVID-19 pandemic that befell the world in 2019-20 implied a sea change in the articulation between state and society. Since 2008, neoliberalism had been in check. The pandemic suddenly brought about what may be called *emergency Keynesianism* and an amplification of social policy to keep whole countries afloat. What just a few months or even days before had been unimaginable became possible: the measures taken and the amount of money thrown into the economy and safety nets were astonishing. There was an amazing return of the state, with all its “capabilities,” to face up to the situation¹.

Can we speak of an epochal change, or is it just changes of less import that we observe? Will the shifts last? Is this a moment of punctuation in the otherwise stable trajectory of policy?² In what follows I will sketch an answer regarding the intervention of the state in the economy and social policies, with a prior discussion of the phases of modernity. Strictly concerning the political system, continuity prevails, despite the deeper changes demanded in many quarters of society. Liberal democracy is a mixed regime, and the trend towards more oligarchy and less democracy, unfolding since the 1980s (towards *advanced oligarchical political systems*), has not been reversed. There is also an evident increase in surveillance. Politicians remain largely concerned with themselves, their power, and the rich, though pressure for more robust social policies has been mounting. Individualism is rampant, and the pandemic may have exacerbated it, provoking mostly defensive and private-oriented attitudes, in contrast for instance to the intensification of sociability in the aftermath of the “Spanish flu” pandemic a century before. This is certainly an issue that awaits sociological analysis. What I have to say here applies only partly to the world of the renewed party-state-cum-capitalism system, where the presence of the state is much more intense and a much more authoritarian political system operates. However, regarding social policies, the prevalence of social liberalism is telling.

> Modernity and its phases

Modernity – political modernity included – is a contingent evolutionary divergence. It has, however, counted on previously developed civilizational elements with increasingly global characteristics, along with hybridizations, and its dominant forces defeated the relatively short-lived challenge authoritarian collectivism presented. It has developed, since the late eighteenth century, in three distinct phases (as shown by the work of Offe, Lash and Urry, Castells, Wagner, Domingues, and others). The first was liberal and market-oriented (or regarded this as a program); it was simultaneously colonial (though the Americas were already independent). The second was state-based, around the world. Though the liberal economic and juridical structure remained in place, “real socialism” (more appropriately called authoritarian collectivism) radicalized the state elements it borrowed from modernity, discarding the liberal and market infrastructure. Then a third phase, more complex, more individualistic, with a greater presence of networks – alongside the reinforced market and the state – and under the aegis of neoliberalism set in.

Are we, in the post-pandemic world, witnessing the emergence of a new phase, or is it only an inflexion that has come about within the third phase? Outside the party-state domain, neoliberalism was the dominant game in town until recently (and its supporters struggle to maintain its dominance). However, we can suppose that the association of the third phase of modernity with neoliberalism was merely contingent, regardless of the profound imprint it will leave on the world, whatever else happens.

> The state, the economy, and social policy

Already before the pandemic, neoliberalism was seen as too limited to cope with the economy; more or less explicitly or implicitly, governments were already moving away from some of its tenets, and now powerful agents

“Can we speak of an epochal change, or is it just changes of less import that we observe? Will the shifts last?”

appear to be increasingly aware of the problem. Implementing change has been more complicated, though, with inconsistencies, resistance and opacity frequently characterizing recent developments. Although I cannot develop this issue here, geopolitics and competition between China and Western countries also loom as a backdrop to the present transformations, with the former for a long time now making use of a complex mix of neoliberalism and strong state intervention.

Take for instance the European Union. We can discern three possible future scenarios: one conservative (business as usual); one somewhat chaotic and conflictive; and one transformative, in which the goals of meeting the challenges of climate change (especially through an energy transition), digitalization and revamping social policy are achieved, along with changes in taxation. The NextGenerationEU project, with common funds from money borrowed in the market, already moves the EU in the direction of the third of these possibilities, with a strengthening of the “European state,” which can make the tasks of even powerful national states easier (by combining with them; for instance, through financing up to 40% of France’s relaunch plan which aims to enact technological renewal up to 2030). Regarding taxation, apart from a global flat tax rate of 15% on corporations, in order to avoid their tax heaven schemes and, more generally, tax evasion, not much has been discussed (save in the United States, where taxes on the rich have been slashed). In any case, a global tax rate on corporations, which experts and politicians discussed for some time when the pandemic broke out, may still be limited, as critics argue, but it is unprecedented. Whether it will grow in strength is arguable (in Germany, for instance, maneuvers to avoid respecting the constitutional clause forbidding further debt have been adopted, with little ado), but a movement in this direction is likely to advance. In any case, the political system will mediate these regulatory changes. In the US, the eventual approval in August 2022, after fierce wrangling, of the Democratic Party’s 740-billion-dollar project to tackle inflation, push for the substitution of fossil fuels by renewable energy, and reduce medicine costs was a breakthrough, albeit far more modest than hoped for by the left.

Of special note are the proposals to finance a renewal of economic infrastructure, particularly in terms of digitalization but also of more prosaic things such as bridges and roads, and allow for a transition in energy sources capable of mitigating the ongoing climate change in both the

US and Europe. Strategic, specifically high-tech areas are at stake above all, with microchips particularly standing out; lots of money and new organisms within the state will promote such goals and state procurement of innovative products (the usefulness of such a strategy was buttressed by how vaccines against the coronavirus were supported by the state). Industrial policy is making a comeback: though very different from in its heyday in liberal-capitalist countries (more “indicative,” that is), it has become far more relevant, compared to what happened in the last quarter of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first. Some speak of a return of planning, especially regarding climate change and energy transition. In any event, budgetary limitations overall have become much softer – while spending has become elastic, including even numerous bail-out operations.

In trade and financial regulation, a veritable change has been taking place. For decades, antitrust policies were downplayed, with the supposition that they had become self-defeating. Since the Reagan government, they were supposed to be concerned with consumer welfare. Hence dumping, slashing prices to defeat one’s competitors, for instance, was not seen as a problem. The goal was to protect competition as such, not specific competitors. Hence mergers and fusions creating gigantic oligopolies did not merit intervention. This is being [completely revised](#), with antitrust policies becoming much more encompassing and detailed. Moreover, the regulatory scheme has expanded from a typical and more limited US institutional approach towards dealing with market services to consumers of, in particular, basic monopoly-like public goods (telephony and post, water and sewage, or trains and aviation) to encompass social policy and other activities.

Nevertheless, regarding social policy, we seem to be getting more of the same. Social liberalism, with a two-layer policy – one, market-based for the well-off; the other, state-provided for the poor – has become common wisdom. Thus far, no punctuation in the evolution of social policy, shaking the stability of steadily-expanding social liberalism, has robustly emerged. Whereas [healthcare may become more universal](#), for the first time a globalized, social liberal response seems to be emerging in more general terms. While there used to be significant differences, especially between the center of the global system (as well as some authoritarian collectivist countries) and the periphery, the former with more robust and tendentially universalist policies, at present social liberalism has got the

unquestionable global upper hand. It concentrates on poverty (on “equity,” not equality). Despite widespread social dissatisfaction, no organized forces have shown enough strength, or even really tried, to deflect social policy towards universalism and full social citizenship.

What is clearly set to prevail are cash transfer schemes. This may happen according to Latin American minimal grants and targeting³ – to combat but also politically manage poverty – found in all such countries, but elsewhere too; or following the extremely mean German *Arbeitslosengeld II* (known as *Hartz IV*), with its workfare rationale. They are a sham in an increasingly wealthy and unequal world. It is true that something like the German new, [improved Bürgergeld](#) may eventually indicate new social-democratic pathways, between small amounts of money for the deserving unemployed and more generous universal provisions, despite firm resistance from the Christian Democrats (see also the recent Italian *Reddito di cittadinanza*, made even meaner by the Meloni government). In any case, as things stand right now, change will be limited.

> The future

Only time will tell: it is possible that Minerva’s owl only spreads its wings at dusk. But we can at least highlight some specific tendencies that seem to have unfolded in the last few years and will probably intensify. Admittedly, it all depends on the unfolding of ideas and programs, and particularly of political struggles, whose outcomes do seem, however, to point consistently in one direction. Developments have been thus far uneven across the world.

We might hope that change would introduce a much more generous, greener, and solidary era in human history. This seems unlikely nevertheless; but it does not mean that a new phase of modernity, or an inflexion within the third one, is not emerging. Its final direction, however, is still uncertain. ■

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> (Re)Opening the Social Sciences: The Challenges of Open Science¹

by **Fernanda Beigel**, CONICET and Universidad Nacional de Cuyo, Argentina, and Steering Committee member of ISA Research Committee on the History of Sociology (RC08)



Credit: Pixabay.

In 1996, former ISA president Immanuel Wallerstein called on the international community to restructure the social sciences in the well-known Gulbenkian Commission Report. The report questioned the development of these disciplines in the nineteenth century, when they accompanied the development of European colonial states, turning their particular experiences and observations into a supposedly universal theoretical construction. The consolidation and institutionalisation of these disciplines required each of them to have specialised methodologies, and this strengthened the partitions separating the analysis of the social. Under the slogan “Open the social sciences”, the report identified the need to abandon Eurocentrism and promote multilingualism, interdisciplinarity, the transparency of research processes and international collaboration.

Recently, UNESCO adopted its “Recommendation on Open Science”, which draws on similar concerns and aims to open up the results (through open access to publications) and the process (through open access to data) of scientific research. Open science encompasses all scientific disciplines and all aspects of academic practices, including basic and applied sciences, natural sciences, social sciences and the humanities. It emphasises the need for traditional science to be open to different knowledge systems. It also recommends active collaboration with different societal sectors and active engagement with the problems relevant to society (citizen science).

With 25 years between one publication and the other, the main difference between these two global projects lies in the digital character of open science and its emphasis

on the openness of the research process (open data, open evaluation) through collaborative infrastructures. On the other hand, what unites the two projects is a concern for the structural inequalities that affect the process of knowledge circulation and the need to ensure epistemological diversity and multilingualism.

> **Safeguarding the openness of social science data**

Because of their epistemological characteristics, relationships with the subjects they study, and methods of enquiry, the social sciences and humanities present specific challenges to the open science project. The indiscriminate openness of their research processes and the data collected have implications that affect the privacy of individuals and may endanger subaltern communities. However, codes of ethics, “habeas data” norms and national legislation on the use of personal data provide a sufficient framework to safeguard these aspects, which is why it is necessary to reflect on the resistance to sharing research data in the social sciences and humanities.

In disciplines less accustomed to teamwork, much of this resistance is fuelled by fear of losing intellectual property rights over work or diminishing the harvest of individual achievements in academic or theoretical terms. As is also the case in the “hard” sciences, there is a declarative recognition of the social value of science, but a difficulty in accepting that publicly funded research is a common good. The direct implication is that knowledge is cumulative, and we should avoid collecting the same information repeatedly from different research teams. There is also some isolated resistance in this area related to the intimate recognition of the empirical weaknesses of research that would not stand up to open scrutiny of the evidence.

One of the main advantages of making data openly available to the scientific community and generating collaborative infrastructures is that these platforms are interoperable and allow for the integration of information about the people who produced each digital object, their institutions, projects and open access output. Institutional repositories play a fundamental role in the curation of digital objects. It is expected that datasets and scientific products of different types can be deposited together with the scholarly evaluation that gives them their seal of quality. Open evaluation, an aspect of open science that is not yet globally agreed upon, can favour the knowledge dialogue and help resolve ideological objections or theoretical disputes that are the order of the day in these disciplines and often end up challenging the publication of an article.

Nevertheless, Open Science does not foretell only advantages. The dominant use of English as the code of interoperability promotes inequalities, reinforces the exaggerated homogenisation of science communication in

English, and puts bibliodiversity at risk. Meanwhile, an acceleration of open access to scientific publications has been stimulated, mainly in Europe, through programs such as “Plan S” from “Coalition S” and the imposition of direct charges to authors (article processing charges: APCs). The indiscriminate and gradual increase of APCs to ensure the publishing industry’s exorbitant profit rates is already generating a greater segmentation between researchers in hegemonic and non-hegemonic countries. The project of Open Science is an ongoing construction with tensions and struggles.

> **Questioning Eurocentrism and implementing contextualised Open Science**

Revisiting the project of opening up the social sciences launched by the Gulbenkian Report coordinated by Immanuel Wallerstein makes it possible to recover the vitality of a program that questioned the foundations of a Eurocentric and colonial system of knowledge that today is part of the open science project. At the same time, it raises questions about the relatively marginal participation of the social and human sciences in a project that these disciplines could embrace more enthusiastically. The specificity of research conducted in sociology and the other social and human sciences, both in ethnographic dynamics and in the coproduction of knowledge with vulnerable social groups, poses difficulties when sharing research data. The reasons for this are diverse and due to the sensitive nature of information on people or organisations and the type of data they construct, which only sometimes find a place in the established formats for sharing datasets in institutional repositories.

In this sense, building capacity at the institutional level is essential to recover all the normative sets involved and disseminate open science principles and good practices. Also, there is a need for more significant commitment from researchers to advance in opening up publicly funded research data and the revision and contextualisation of open data modules to adapt them to the specific needs of each field of study.

One of the main dimensions of open science, citizen science, finds a rich theoretical and practical terrain for developing participatory science in the social sciences. Latin America has developed a theoretical tradition and its methods of participatory science for decades. In addition to the contributions of Fals Borda, experiences such as Paulo Freire’s Popular Education and the Southern Epistemologies are milestones. Most Latin American universities have been implementing extension projects (third mission) since the beginning of the twentieth century. These interactions between universities and society offer an accumulation of practices that promote the coproduction of knowledge and establish their itinerary to broaden open science’s participatory nature.

In this sense, the novelty of participatory science arises not when certain social groups are “invited” to collaborate with scientists but when it is linked to the right to science and the right to investigate. For participatory science to be effectively open and exercised as a basic human right, we must recognise that researchers do not own the data collected with public funds. And above all, the communities that participate in social research cannot be instrumentalised as mere collectors of information without a right to processing and interpreting.

Citizen Science is not the prerogative of the social sciences. On the contrary, the experiences surveyed are mostly linked to the environmental sciences. But some regions of the world – mainly the more peripheral ones – have a tradition of building a science of participatory action that offers a series of methodological principles that can be extended. At the university level, the set of practices and experiences gathered in the tradition of *critical extension* represents an accumulation of crucial knowledge for developing citizen science and multi-university knowledge.

> Democratisation, informational justice and the eradication of inequalities

It is indispensable to subvert information asymmetries and unequal power relations to boost open and participatory science. More democratic systems of governance of open research processes are needed. The CARE Principles (Collective benefit, Authority to control, Responsibility, Ethics) for Indigenous Data Governance offer a conceptual framework for seeking to reverse historical power imbalances in the scientific practices that the academic community carries out with communities. Still, specific actions and incentives are required for evaluation and funding systems, contextualised at the institutional level according to the needs of the communities involved.

Global asymmetries in digital infrastructure, languages of knowledge circulation and the accumulation of academic prestige have a decisive impact on the conditions for opening up science in each country and region. From this perspective, the dialogue between Wallerstein’s program and the open science project is becoming more productive today. To continue it requires some reflections linked to the decolonisation of science to design open science policies for the entire Global South. We may even need to imagine new forms of academic diplomacy that bring together diverse actors in the scientific world, such as national professional associations, regional networks, publishers, students, librarians, researchers and international organisations.

Opening up research data and making it freely accessible for sharing and reuse is a core issue of open science. But

it does not guarantee the capacities for the interoperability of these data, nor does it assure the social appropriation of the results or the relevance it has for a particular society. The current logic of scientific development is tied to a global academic system based on a “mainstream” productive model that has been noxious at all levels. Many discussions are required, overthrowing widely held beliefs to advance in the academic community.

Due to its specificity, it is critical to analyse the openness of indigenous ancestral knowledge separately, which was the subject of deep discussion during the elaboration of the Draft of the Open Science Recommendation at UNESCO. The idea that this may imply a compulsive opening of indigenous knowledge was criticised by native communities in the global consultation convened for this purpose and led to substantial changes and new phrasing in the Recommendation. Some studies prove processes of extraction of traditional indigenous knowledge and its commodification. Stevia is a paradigmatic case of cognitive contribution produced by Paraguayan Guarani families, located in the Cordillera de Amambay, who discovered the existence of Ka’a He’e and its sweetening property, the place to find it and information about its growth. Its expropriation and processing under rules and procedures set by the scientific institutions of the imperial metropolises made this vegetable enter the capitalist economic rationality favouring exploitation processes. When opening science to other knowledge systems, it is essential to reaffirm the Recommendation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) and the autonomous and inalienable right of indigenous communities over their traditional knowledge.

Accordingly, the local, national and regional anchoring of science policies puts scientific sovereignty at the forefront of public agendas of non-hegemonic countries in various dimensions; for example, the repatriation of data extracted by commercial platforms or publishers, the autonomous government of indigenous knowledge and the discussion of the social relevance of science in a contextualised balance between global criteria and local research standards. We must recognise infrastructural asymmetries as a critical piece to boost epistemological diversity. Likewise, we should generate policies to eradicate social inequalities in the processes of knowledge generation and inequalities of race, ethnicity, disability or gender in its circulation. These asymmetries are multi-scalar, as are the solutions we must find to promote an open science aligned with social, cognitive and informational justice. ■

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1. An extended version of this article in English will be published soon in *Global Perspectives* (Special Issue “Social Sciences in Latin America”).

> A Southern Concept for Multiple Sociologies

by **Mahmoud Dhaouadi**, University of Tunis, Tunisia, and member of ISA Research Committees on History of Sociology (RC08), Sociology of Religion (RC22), and Language and Society (RC25)

“**T**otal sociocultural influence” (TSCI), which is a concept that is not used by modern social sciences, can be defined as a type of sociocultural influence which affects every individual in the community or society without exception. That is, nobody deviates from the norms of TSCI. This is contrary to the mainstream sociological idea that deviance from sociocultural norms is inevitable. And there are indeed numerous publications and university courses on deviance in the USA. It is against this background of compelling deviance in human societies that here I analyze two cases when deviance from some sociocultural norms does not occur, the first one in Tunisian society and the other in all Arab Muslim societies. As such, my concept of TSCI can be seen as falling in line with increasing [calls today for “multiple sociologies” and “decolonizing sociology”](#). My concept of TSCI is the outcome of my observations of the following two specific phenomena.

> Prohibition of keeping female animals

Observations show that people in northeastern Tunisia (in the towns of Ras Djabel, Rafrat, Ghar El Melh, Sounine, El Alia and Meteline) strictly do not keep female mules, horses and donkeys. Raising the females of these animals is considered a major social scandal that cannot be accepted according to the norms of the community in the region. This deeply rooted and widespread sociocultural norm among the residents of these towns has even led them to avoid calling non-living items by their feminine names. For example, they substitute the feminine word “camionnette” (van) by the masculine word “camion” (truck). The impact of these sociocultural norms on the behavior of all the residents of the region is *total* and overwhelming: all residents keep only male mules, horses and donkeys.

As I have said, it is scandalous in the local culture to raise the females of these animals, and even simply mentioning or speaking of female animals in public is usually responded to negatively, with reactions ranging from embarrassment to violent anger. The local culture of refusing to keep female animals makes the locals practically indifferent to the existing sociocultural norms concerning this matter in the rest of Tunisia or beyond.

To explain this phenomenon, my hypothesis is that the land in this region cannot meet the needs of many animals, let alone the potential continuing increase that could result from the presence of females. Yet the residents do need some animals to plough their small plots of land and to carry things when tractors, trucks and cars are lacking.

In this context, keeping only male animals has become the best strategy to satisfy their needs.

> Circumcision of every male

The concept of TSCI applied to the keeping of animals can also be applied more widely to the Arab Muslim world. All Tunisian Muslims practice the custom of male child circumcision throughout the country. That is, there is no exception among Tunisian families from all classes (lower, middle and upper classes). Indeed, there is no room for deviance from the sociocultural norm of circumcision.

> The sociological perspective

My analysis of the two phenomena reveals similarities between the two. In the first case, all residents of northeastern Tunisia refuse to keep female mules, horses and donkeys; in the second one, all Tunisian Muslims engage in the practice and celebration of male circumcision. To the sociological eye, these two phenomena underline the importance of the value of masculinity within Tunisian society in general and for the community in northeastern Tunisia more particularly.

TSCI on behavior appears as a new concept that can hardly be found in contemporary Western sociological literature. The late Immanuel Wallerstein did not appear to recognize the concept of TSCI explained here when he wrote in *Sociology in America*: “we can take it as a *given* that the norms of group culture (at all levels) are never fully observed by all members of the group.”

His claim does not reflect the cultural norms of Tunisian society and Arab Muslim societies exemplified in this article. The underlying potential cultural differences between Arab Muslim and Western societies are compatible with the increasing calls today for decolonizing sociology and multiple sociologies, as mentioned earlier. Therefore, the social scientist may legitimately ask: Can TSCI be applied to non-Arab Muslim groups and societies?

Regardless of the answer to that question, understanding and explaining the cause(s) of the powerful TSCI described in the previous examples is of great importance, especially to anthropologists and sociologists. The answer to this puzzle requires research into the cultural systems and the social structures of human societies. These examples underline the credibility of the main hypothesis of this article, stressing the unavoidable TSCI on Tunisian and Arab behavior. ■

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> Latin American Sociology and the Crisis of Contemporary Civilization

Declaration of the General Assembly
Latin American Sociological Association (ALAS)
XXXIII Latin American Congress of Sociology



Illustration made by the Brazilian artist and political scientist Ribs (https://twitter.com/o_ribs and <https://www.instagram.com/o.ribs/>) for the Social Movements Observatory of the Nucleus of Studies in Social Theory and Latin America (NETSAL-IESP/UERJ).
Credit: Ribs, 2021.

In the context of the current global chaos, Latin America and the Caribbean are experiencing tension between the advancement of the dominant sectors' project for society and its internal allies on the one hand and, on the other, the demands of broad strata of the population whose lives are hanging by a thread. Capitalism is entering a new phase of accumulation based on renewed forms of incorporation of peripheral societies into the global market. The rapid

incorporation of technological advances into everyday life and production methods is playing an important role in this. For our peripheral societies, this implies the destruction of internal markets as they fracture between a modern globalized sector and large majorities reduced to functional consumers of the system (whose economic activities are located in traditional forms of production that still exist, in informal jobs or as low-level labor in the modern sector).

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We are also facing a historical moment of deep civilizational and systemic crisis in which the climate and environmental emergency, setbacks for democracy and rights, the militarization of territories, and the food, energy, migration, and ethical-political crises stand out. Decades of neoliberalism have dismantled public services, and the doctrine has also strongly impregnated individual and collective consciences and subjectivities beyond the economy. At the same time, our societies are increasingly torn apart by profound inequalities that have become even more pronounced since the COVID-19 pandemic.

> Latin America at a new historic crossroads

In this scenario, our region finds itself at the crossroads between a social, economic and political project that forms part of the new pattern of accumulation and the need to build new sociopolitical projects that attempt to rise to the current challenges of our times. On the one hand, global geopolitical reconfigurations, the weakening of the dominance of the United States and the emergence of other poles of influence – especially China – lead to new pressures in our region in the dispute for global hegemony. On the other hand, indignation has emerged, and vigorous political and social movements that aspire to a different kind of society have been strengthened, with growing centrality of feminism, environmentalism, youth interests, anti-racism, and the agendas of indigenous peoples and communities. In this way, new possibilities and policies of eco-social transition based on concrete utopias are being shaped in protests and daily disputes in the territories.

However, the battle between these antagonistic forces is a mismatch. Even in those countries where the popular option has managed to advance more significantly, even reaching national governments, the project of power remains hegemonic. This can be seen in socioeconomic and cultural processes, which continue to be guided by capitalist patterns and neoliberal ideology, even though their results have proved that they are a failure, condemning humanity to catastrophe. This sets limits and imposes challenges on popular political forces, which have gained strength amid overinflated hopes. They are therefore caught in the crossfire between the forces that are not prepared to see their hegemony diminished and the sectors that support them but are often frustrated at not seeing their expectations realized.

> The role of contemporary Latin American sociology

It follows from the above that we are at an unprecedented stage where the fate of most of the population of

our region is at stake. It is in the very nature of sociology to characterize this process, to study its consequences, to envisage its future evolution and to elaborate proposals. Since the situation is unprecedented, Latin American sociology should undertake an epistemological, theoretical, methodological, and technical effort with urgency and vigor. This is what Latin American sociology has done throughout its history. We should recall, for example, the innovations that marked the transition from a fruitful essayist style to so-called scientific sociology, the overcoming of the latter by committed sociology and action research, the questioning of developmental theory by dependency theory and political ecology, the epistemic innovations of feminist theories, or the Latin American-style proposal for the interpretation of social movements that challenged the hegemonic theories of the Western world. Each of these innovations, which we could call re-foundations, responded to societal changes.

At this point, it is necessary to identify the practical and theoretical changes that sociology needs to analyze, and to understand the complex global and regional system. We must ask whether there is a need to reorganize ALAS working groups and the thematic prioritization of our core debates to contemplate complex problems concerning the climate, poverty, development models, social movements, cultural and identity transformations or the colonial question.

The profound change in Latin American and Caribbean society that has been briefly outlined in this document encourages Latin American sociology to rejuvenate itself while simultaneously rescuing all our critical legacy that, in many ways, has accompanied the seventy years of ALAS. We need to innovate in our views and approaches to perform the task of understanding in order to transform. We must also vigorously defend sociology, the public university and the sociologists of our region and the world who have suffered threats and reprisals, imprisonment and even murder. We stand in solidarity with all of them and call for joint and internationalist action to strengthen our discipline and its transformative vocation.

This declaration avoids references to countries or the mention of names of the authors, with only one exception: Pablo González Casanova, the great Mexican sociologist and former president of ALAS, to whom this Assembly pays tribute, on the occasion of his 100th birthday, for his exemplary life as a sociologist committed to the most worthy causes. May his career and work serve as an example to the present and future generations of Latin America and the Caribbean. ■

Mexico City, August 19, 2022

> Fractured Brazil

by **Elísio Estanque**, University of Coimbra, Portugal, and member of ISA Research Committee on Social Classes and Social Movements (RC47), and **Agnaldo de Sousa Barbosa**, São Paulo State University, Brazil



Brazilian flag hanging between clothes in a popular neighborhood.
Credit: Charl Durand, Pexels.

The severe social fractures in Brazil are well known, but in the recent context of election dispute it is worth considering three dimensions that can help an international reader to comprehend the contradictions and challenges that the country is facing, which are at once historical, socioeconomic, and political.

> The historical dimension

More than 500 years after the first missions of evangelization, the brutal impact of the slave trade and the colonial system constituted the genesis of a Brazilian elite whose imperial conception was extended to its own republican movements. After the conquest of independence, the troubled period of the empire (1882-1889) was transformed

into an intense conflict between different fractions of the elite, making it impossible to carry on a true national project. The emergence of the First Republic was supported by the most conservative sectors of the governing body, still resentful of the abolition of slavery (1889), leaving out the popular classes. At the same time, the phenomenon of the “coronelismo,” associated with major landowners, strengthened a tendency that would determine Brazilian politics until the shift promoted by Getúlio Vargas in the twentieth century. In this turn, the new industrial bourgeoisie, which had expanded from the 1920s onwards, incorporated the exploitative “status” inherited from the old landlords and coffee plantation owners, and preserved the authoritarian ethos of the “coronelismo.” It is true that after the first Getúlio Vargas government (1930-1945) Brazil underwent a surge of industrialization and urbanization which propelled the nation towards progress. However, despite Getúlio’s developmentalist drive on behalf of the new entrepreneurship elites, militarism continued to determine the elitist ambitions of the ruling class, culminating in the president’s suicide (1954) and later control of power by force (1964).

> The socioeconomic dimension

At the socioeconomic level, the 1970s and 80s put social movements on the Brazilian political agenda, including the new trade unionism where Lula da Silva was the central figure, paving the way for the end of the military regime. The dynamics of the waves of rebellion became the engine that strengthened democracy, along with the social agenda that Lula da Silva would later put into action. Even then, the specter of a “Lulist” triumph contributed to the victory of opportunism with Collor de Mello making it possible for the rise of the (center-right) Brazilian Social-Democratic Party and Fernando Henrique Cardoso. However, after a very successful phase of government, in the context of the “Real Plan” (the financial reform that introduced the new currency), economic stagnation followed from the end of the 1990s, with high external debt and a tax policy that benefited financial capital, leading to social instability, more informal labor, low salaries and increased inequality.

> The political dimension

The political dimension of contemporary Brazilian society reflects a division in which the political–electoral field

is practically split down the middle. It is worth recalling some nuances of the Brazilian political system. Ideologies tend to be diluted in a regime that is presidentialist but not nominal or, in other words, there is a so-called “presidentialist coalition”: an unwritten rule in which presidential stability is largely dependent on parliamentary agreements. In the words of Professor Cicero Araujo, it is a sort of “[invisible chamber](#)” which, since the days of Fernando Henrique Cardoso, “has informally become a parallel access to the power of the state, interwoven with all the workings of official power. This includes a promiscuous relationship between political representation (at all levels) and economic power, especially that most associated with and dependent on public resources.” In addition, voting in Brazil involves several simultaneous ballots, in the case of general elections for the President, Federal Congress, State Governors, State Congress and Senate. This requires multiple negotiations with endless bargaining and transactions at summits. In other words, it is easy to manipulate the process, and this contributes to the discrediting of political parties and democracy itself.

> **Demonic elections**

The old divisions were reflected in the recent electoral debate. In fact, more than a “debate of ideas,” it was a dispute for electoral hegemony, with one eye on tactics and coalitions, and the other on electoral polls. The antagonism of interests translated into a Manichean narrative that exerted constant pressure to demonize the main opponent. So, it was the satanic image of an enemy, projected from both sides, that positioned hate as the decisive factor in the recent campaign. Faced with the voiding of the “third way” represented by Ciro Gomes and Simone Tebet (with just 7.2% in total in the first round), Bolsonaro and Lula mobilized the grassroots and tried to attract the undecided, accusing each other of having demonic intentions against Brazil as a nation and its people. As in Europe, the spectrum of fear and resentment are used as electoral weapons these days.

> **Hatred and a coup avoided**

Major economic interests (especially the agrobusiness sector) with the help of media, evangelical churches and digital networks (like WhatsApp), have been driven by the

deep-rooted anti-Worker’s Party emotion, that turned itself into the vernacular of (class) hatred directed not only against the Workers’ Party and Lula da Silva, but against everything that could be called leftist, socialist, communist, etc. The rationality of the average and popular strata was practically exhausted by their perplexity at the impending economic decline toward misery. For this reason, Bolsonaro tried to take isolated measures to contain fuel prices (even if this meant mortgaging state public services), which nevertheless proved insufficient. Due to this, Lula da Silva did not take up too much time talking about the future. It was enough for him to recall the success of his first governments, when Brazilians – especially the poor ones – lived their “golden decade” at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The coup threat was latent for a long period in the pre-election phase, but then the main bodies of the judiciary (especially the Superior Electoral Court and its president, Alexandre de Moraes) came out as obstacles to the coup, managing to overshadow the most radical sectors of the armed forces.

> **Roadblocks and normalization**

Finally, the strong tension in Brazilian society was revealed in the aftermath of Lula da Silva’s victory, with the defeated candidate failing to acknowledge defeat and remaining silent for more than two days after the results were announced. The reaction of the most radical social sectors, with hundreds of roadblocks on the main highways and the destruction carried out on the buildings of the three governmental powers in Brasilia at the beginning of the legislature, revealed, on the one hand, the hateful resentment against Lula’s return to the presidency in total disregard of democracy and, on the other hand, the new challenge to the judiciary system that had been unleashed. Many shapers of opinion now draw attention to the strong evidence of criminal action strategically enacted at the service of powerful forces linked to Bolsonarism. The fact that the acting president has distanced himself and called for the demobilization of truckers and protesters – albeit late and unconvincingly – calmed the most exalted spirits, while at the institutional level the preparation and beginning of the transition indicate a “normalization” that is expected to pave the way for a promising new cycle. This will be a herculean task, but not impossible. ■

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> Iran: This is Not a Protest, This is a Revolution

by **Iranian Voices**



Street demonstration in support of Iran protests with the slogan "WOMEN, LIFE, FREEDOM", 2022. Credit: Flickr.

On September 13, 2022, Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Kurdish-Iranian woman from Saqqez, was arrested in Tehran by the so-called morality police because of her alleged inappropriate outfit. Amini died three days later in hospital after falling into a coma due to what are believed to have been injuries from being beaten in custody.

Amini's death has sparked a new wave of protests throughout Iran that has called not only for an end to gender segregation but also for the overthrow of the Islamic Republic. Because of the Iranian regime's many malpractices and the reformists' betrayal, the protesters do not believe in reforms anymore. They strive for a revolution.

> Waves of protest in Iran

As part of the current protest movement, many young girls and women have taken off their headscarves and burned them in public in a deliberate sign of resistance to state-mandated veiling and control over their bodies. While women have played an active and integral role in protests throughout the last four decades, the issue of gender has never been on the agenda of protests per se – except for the protests in 1979 when women protested against the government's plans for compulsory veiling by law. The first demand that students made in the current protest movement was the abolition of gender segregation in the cafeterias of the universities.

Despite the visibility of young women protesting in public, the powerful slogan "woman, life, freedom" as the central message of the protest, the dominant symbols of women and gender in mass cultural and artistic production, and the issue of gender being firmly on the agenda, the protesters and their demands are multifaceted and not limited to women and gender. The protests have uniquely united Iranians from various generational, social, ethnic, religious and geographic backgrounds, regardless of gender. Male students, teachers, doctors, merchants, workers or civilian blood donors from all geographic corners of the country have joined the protests and strikes. Hence, we have been witnessing a very broad social movement.

The vexing issue of the veil is one of the many issues that the Islamic Republic has not managed to resolve since 1979. In order to uphold its Islamic identity and character, the state has held a tight grip on issues such as mandatory veiling and gender segregation, and it finds itself in an impasse, unable to make any conciliatory adjustments or legal changes – even though about half of Iran's population opposes compulsory veiling.

The many political, social, and economic malpractices and examples of mismanagement by the regime have added to many Iranians' dissatisfaction, frustration, and despair. They protested in 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2021 against unemployment, increased gasoline prices, bad water equality, air pollution, and economic mismanagement,

to name a few issues. Mahsa Amini's death was the last straw for the disillusioned Iranians.

The protesters do not demand reforms or fixes to the system, nor do they believe in reforms anymore. The period between the end of the 1990s and the Green Movement of 2009 witnessed a vibrant discourse about changes in law, political reforms, and women's rights; but with the brutal crackdown, arrests, house arrest, torture and forced confessions of many reform-oriented individuals, the era of reforms came to a complete halt.

> **"We are not afraid anymore, we will fight"**

In November 2022, the head of the judiciary, Gholam Hossein Mohseni-Ejei, invited the protesters to a table to talk by saying: "I'm ready. Let's talk. If we have made mistakes, we can reform them." But the protesting Iranians dismissed his effort as yet another tactic of betrayal. They responded with slogans such as: "This is not a protest, this is a revolution."

The protesters go as far as to call for the end of the Islamic Republic. They chant "Death to the dictator" or "Death to Khamenei" and write on walls and banners "We are not afraid anymore, we will fight" to indicate their fearlessness and determination. They claim to be leading a revolution in the making. Many crucial symbols of the Islamic Republic have been destroyed or burned down. These include police and Basij stations, street signs such as "The Islamic Republic Street" or "Palestine", statues of the founder of the Islamic Republic Ruhollah Khomeini or the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) commander Qasem Soleimani, as well as banners and photographs of Khomeini and the current religious leader Ali Khamenei.

The Iranian regime was surprisingly slow and hesitant in its initial reaction in the first three weeks. This may

have been due to the UN General Assembly that was taking place in New York City at the end of September or to Khamenei's silence and disappearance from public.

Indicative of the regime's authoritarian nature, the state has employed a range of responses throughout the protest movement. These include shutting down the Internet; organizing widespread pro-regime demonstrations; shooting at protesting crowds with rubber bullets and paintballs; arresting protesters and artists; discrediting the reputation of protesters; destroying demonstrators' vehicles honking in support of the protests; denouncing the Iranian diaspora; blaming foreign powers for the protests; and misrepresenting facts, slogans, and events.

Even though state officials such as the member of the Guardian Council and the Assembly of Experts Ahmad Khatami or the commander of Iran's IRGC Hossein Salami have threatened protesting Iranians with severe consequences such as execution, the protests have not waned; not even when the first cases of torture, rape and executions of prisoners became public.

After these first months of the protest movement in Iran it is still too early to know where the protests are heading. It remains to be seen whether and when the vast majority of silent and absent Iranians and the dissident clergy will eventually join the demonstrations. Meanwhile, a (group of) leader(s) emerges, and the protesters start forming organizations and coalitions and formulating specific demands for the aftermath of a potential overthrow. After the initial period of visibility in the international community, conflicts often enter a dynamic of routinization and fall out of the news in the rest of the world. It remains to be seen whether this will happen again and what the position of the international community vis-à-vis the Iranian regime will be. ■

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