NEWSLETTER OF THE RESEARCH COMMITTEE ON CONCEPTUAL AND TERMINOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

International Sociological Association – Research Committee 35

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Contents

COCTA News

Dear members and friends of COCTA,

first of all, as usual, it is my great pleasure to welcome our new members! On behalf of the board I invite all members to participate in our activities and to make any proposals for conferences or other academic proceedings in the field of conceptual analysis.

This issue of *COCTA News* focuses on our contribution to the two major sociology congresses scheduled for 2012. The International Institute of Sociology has accepted both COCTA session proposals to the 40th **IIS World Congress** in **Delhi**, India, **16-19 February 2012** and you will find the two Calls for Papers below. You have received information about the application procedure for this event by email in August. The original deadline for submitting paper proposals has already expired. However, the IIS has indicated that there might still be open slots in some sessions. If you consider participating, but have not yet submitted a proposal, the IIS asks you to get in touch with the respective session conveners directly **before 25 September 2011**. A list of sessions is available here: http://www.scasss.uu.se/iis/iis2012/regular_sessions.html. For further information on the congress, please see here: http://www.scasss.uu.se/iis/iis2012/index.htm.

Our main event next year will be our interim conference at the Second **ISA Forum of Sociology** in **Buenos Aires**, Argentina, **1-4 August 2012**. We had a good response to the Call for Sessions and are able to continue our tradition of offering panels reflective of our committee's members' broad and diverse interests in the field of conceptual analysis. Please see the Calls for Papers below. If you have any questions about a particular session, please get in touch with the respective session organizer(s). Please note that all paper proposals must be submitted through the ISA website platform. Abstracts are limited to 300 words and must be submitted until Thursday, **December 15, 11:59pm (EST)**. You can access the platform and will find all the usual information including the grant deadlines on the Forum website: http://www.isa-sociology.org/buenos-aires-2012/.

In closing, as usual, I would like to ask you to spread the word on COCTA and let your colleagues know that everyone interested in our current and future activities is cordially invited to participate. Do not hesitate to present your ideas in case you would like to propose or organize a COCTA conference or session. We are looking forward to be meeting you (again) rather sooner than later!

On behalf of the board, cordially yours,

David Strecker

Global Modernity: The New World Historical Constellation and its Implications for Sociology

Regular Session at the 40th IIS World Congress in Delhi, India 16-19 February 2012

Organizer: *Volker H. Schmidt*, National University of Singapore,
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Largely ignored by the social sciences, the past few decades have witnessed dramatic changes. Within a very short span of time, modern social arrangements, structures, institutions and living conditions have spread across the globe, ushering in the age of global modernity.

The emergence of global modernity changes not only the newly modernized but also the relations between world regions. Following its breakthrough to modernity, once "backward" Europe surged ahead of all others, dividing the world into leaders and followers and subjecting large parts of the "rest" to its rule, terms of exchange, models of development, to a certain extent even culture. After World War I, the center of modernity shifted from Western Europe to North America. Presently, the world appears to be in the midst of yet another center shift, this time from West to East, resulting from successful modernization of much of Asia, especially East Asia, which is rapidly becoming the world's center of economic gravity and which could, if current trends continue, eventually also become its new center of political, scientific, perhaps cultural gravity.

What does this shift mean for the construction of world order? Will the new center(s) simply replace the old ones or are we headed toward a polycentric order with a multitude of centers spread around the world? And how will this affect our understanding of modernity? The currently dominating notions of modernity reflect primarily Western experiences, and although several of these notions have proven their worldwide appeal and applicability, global modernity for the first time puts their postulated universalism to a serious reality test. This raises the question as to which elements of contemporary understandings are peculiarly Western and which are the inevitable outcomes of modernization processes whereever they occur.

It is too early to answer any of these questions definitively. But the mere fact that one can now meaningfully pose them suggests some very fundamental transformations have already taken place. What can sociologists contribute to understanding the new world historical constellation that results from these transformations? How does it affect the discipline itself? Must the sociology of modernity, following the development of its subject matter, itself become global? The session aims to address some of these issues.

Rethinking Slavery After Western Hegemony

Regular Session at the 40th IIS World Congress in Delhi, India 16-19 February 2012

Organizers: *David Strecker*, University of Jena, Germany, David.Strecker@uni-jena.de & *Gurminder K. Bhambra*, University of Warwick, UK, G.K.Bhambra@warwick.ac.uk

What is the significance of slavery for the contemporary world? Today, there is widespread acknowledgement of the fact that European Enlightenment coincided with the climax of transatlantic slavery. Nonetheless, it is commonly held that, ultimately, slavery and Western modernity are incompatible. The present challenges to the alleged Eurocentrism of social theorizing bring with them the opportunity to question this more or less dichotomous conceptualization and to ask whether the relationship of modernity and slavery might be more complex.

Scrutinizing this relationship under the currently emerging epistemic conditions of a growing awareness of global connectedness and a space for intercultural encounters promises new insights with regard to at least the following three issues: First, the hybrid nature of Western modernity itself is put into focus: structurally (the triangular trade) as well as culturally (postcolonial classics like Eric Williams and C.L.R. James emerging within the West). Second, the preoccupation with transatlantic chattel slavery has to a large extent marginalized research into other forms of slavery and has more or less blocked the question about the relevance of different types of slavery within different modernities. Finally, there is growing concern that new forms of so-called contemporary slavery are intrinsic to today's world.

Hence, rethinking slavery today promises to enhance and deepen our understanding of Western modernity, of slavery, and of our contemporary world. Accordingly, the session aims to investigate the issues referred to and others regarding the significance of slavery for the entangled modernities of the present world at a time when Western hegemony in social theorizing is being corrected by a growing awareness of the diversity of human experiences within connected histories.

Session Overview

for the 2012 COCTA (ISA RC35) Interim Conference

at the Second ISA Forum of Sociology,

Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1-4 August, 2012

Session A:
Global Modernity: Sociology Facing the Post-Western Age

Session B:
Time and Society

Session C:
Critical Theories: A Dialogue between Europe and Latin America

Session D:
Democracy and Democratisation

Session E:
Power and Slavery

Session F:
Postcolonialism and Decoloniality: A Dialogue

Session G:
Community: A Key Sociological Concept

Session H:
Subjectivity, Symbolic Power and Social Justice

Session I:
Epistemological Challenges Presented by the Experience of Modernity in "Non-Western Contexts"

Session J:
Business Meeting

Session A

Global Modernity: Sociology Facing the Post-Western Age

Organizer: *Volker H. Schmidt*, National University of Singapore,
socvhs@nus.edu.sg

Largely ignored by the social sciences, the past few decades have witnessed dramatic change on a global scale. Within a very short span of time, modern social arrangements, structures, institutions and living conditions have spread across the globe, for the first time reaching the majority of the world population and ushering in the age of global modernity.

The emergence of global modernity changes not only the newly modernized but also the conditions facing everyone else, including the relations between world regions. The sources of economic power are rapidly shifting toward Asia (especially East Asia) and other parts of the erstwhile global "periphery", and so are those of political power. In a few years time, more knowledge will be produced in the non-western world than in the West, and the "rest" has already overtaken the West in tertiary educational enrolment. Cutting-edge technological innovation is increasingly generated in non-western locations, and the most spectacular urban agglomerations are now found in (East) Asia. The center of modernity, it would seem, is shifting away from the West, giving rise either to a new center or to a polycentric modernity without any clearly dominant player.

What does this shift mean for the construction of world order? And how will this affect our understanding of modernity? Because the concept of modernity is laden with normative content, it has always been a contested concept. The currently prevailing notions of modernity reflect primarily western(-derived) experiences, sentiments, interests, values. Global modernity for the first time puts their postulated universalism to a serious reality test because It endows actors that were (or would have been) powerless before (or without) progressing to advanced levels of modernity with greater capacity to reject unwanted offers, as well as to generate competing models, views, etc. This raises the question as to which elements of contemporary understandings are peculiarly Western and which are the inevitable outcomes of modernization processes where ever they occur.

It is too early to answer any of these questions definitively. But the mere fact that one can now meaningfully pose them suggests some very fundamental transformations have already taken place. What can sociologists contribute to understanding the new world historical constellation to which this change has given rise? How does (or should) it affect the discipline itself? Must the sociology of modernity, following the development of its subject matter, itself become global? This session is devoted to addressing some of these issues.

Session B

Time and Society

Organizers: *Hartmut Rosa*, University of Jena, Germany, hartmut.rosa@uni-jena.de
& *Time and Society,* http://tas.sagepub.com/

Because of the inherently processual nature of action and society, all social structures are necessarily *temporal structures*. This session seeks to explore and specify the temporality of society in all its ramifications. Thus we invite contributions that approach the subject from a theoretical perspective and ask for the conceptions of time in different strands of social theory. Furthermore, we are looking for contributions dealing with the temporalities of particular social spheres such as the temporality of politics, education or the economy. Finally, a specific interest lies in the identification of *temporal conflicts* that arise between cultures (multitemporality), classes or social spheres (desynchronization). The overall goal of the session is a clarification and specification of the concept of social time which is of interest to all scholars of temporality represented by the broad range of topics featuring in the interdisciplinary journal *Time & Society*. The journal is co-sponsoring this session and thus invites all readers and authors as well as everybody interested in the subject to a small reception following the presentations.

Session C

Critical Theories: A Dialogue between Europe and Latin America

Organizer: *Oliver Kozlarek*, Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo, Mexico, okozlarek@yahoo.com

Critical Theory (with a capital `C` and a capital `T`) emerged at a specific place and a specific time. It was the expression of a group of young German academics who reacted to the dehumanizing experiences provoked by the crisis that Europe went through during the first decades of the 20th century.

Critical Theorists believed that their experiences and critique of modern societies were representative for all modern societies regardless of the experiences that people in other societies may have gone through. Adorno even thought that nobody who had not made the same experiences that he and his European colleagues have made were qualified to get involved in the important enterprise of *Kritik*. He was especially concerned about the "nonoccidental pleople", because he did not trust their critical faculties. Critical Theory was reserved for a selected group of Europeans. Today, however, we are realizing that beyond many affinities experiences in and within global modernity vary. For instance: post-colonial critique has not only argued convincingly that colonialism has been a constitutive element in the formation of global modernity, but it has also shown that in formerly colonized societies *problématiques* emerged that critical theories from the `North` were simply not aware.

Since Latin American societies gained official independence some 200 years ago, post-colonial experiences accumulated and reflected about in this part of the world are particularly rich. Not only can we find here alternative "projects of moderniy"— as some scholars already argue—but also very impressive critical theories, which are not reducible to the influence of European Critical Theory. Because of the different evolution of academic institutions, important voices of Latin American critical theories are not limited to the discourses of the social and cultural sciences. Although some of them may express genuine sociological interests they often blossomed in extra-academic realms, especially in the strong essayistic tradition.

It is my contention that critical theory too has to be provincialized. But not only that: after it is has become clear that there cannot only be one Critical Theory for all the different experiences made in and within global modernity, the multiplicity of critical assessments have to be put in a dialogical relationship. Mapping and translation of critical theories becomes one of the main challenges. The aim of this exercise is not to disqualify European Critical Theory, but to complement it with other critical theories. This session wants to stimulate a dialogue between European and Latin American critical theories.

Democracy and Democratisation

Organizer: *Craig Browne*, University of Sydney, Australia,
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The concept of democratisation has achieved considerable prominence in sociology over the past few decades. Yet, democratisation has been used to characterise democratic changes in radically different contexts. On the one hand, democratisation is commonly used to refer to major transformations in political regimes, especially the transitions from authoritarian political orders to institutional arrangements typical of liberal democracies. Whether it refers to substantial changes in Latin America, Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa or the Middle East, in these contexts democratisation has usually involved the re-emergence or establishment of civil society and the promotion of the political rights of citizenship. Nevertheless, in this version of democratisation the focus tends to be on the political order, with contemporary discussions differing from earlier interpretations of comparable developments in their lesser framing by the assumptions of modernisation theory. On the other hand, the concept of democratisation has come to be invested with new meanings in both advanced nation states and the global south. Indeed, democratisation has been equated with a variety of changes in social relations, extending from the transformation of intimacy to transnational regulations of the global order. Even so, in these cases the predominant meaning of democratisation is that of actions and processes that extend, expand, or radicalise democratic practices beyond the parameters of a liberal democratic political order. In some cases, this image of democratisation is intended to reinforce and contribute to the realisation of the normative potential of a liberal democratic polity. However, in other cases this understanding of democratisation is inspired by the participatory and radical democratic critiques of the inadequacies of liberal democracy. These versions usually reference either the Ancient Greek meaning of democracy or the more modern ideal of democratising social institutions and hierarchical social relations in general, from the division of labour at work, schooling and pedagogy, gender and sexuality, culture and information, to social relations within the family. Democratisation is here equated with contesting the restrictions that liberal democracy and capitalist modernity impose upon both the theory and practice of democracy.

These divergences in the meanings and usages of the concept of democratisation raise a number of questions that this session seeks to address. Is democratisation a sociological category that details an unfolding and reinforcing process, in a manner equivalent to other concepts like rationalisation, globalisation, or modernisation? Does the concept of the 'democratisation of democracy' that has been used in related, but also different ways, by sociologists like Anthony Giddens and Bonaventura de Sousa Santos provide a means of reconciling the two dominant alternative understandings of democratisation in sociological discourses? Does democratisation actually mean substantially different things according to the model or paradigm of democracy that is taken as the point of reference, such as the models of participatory, deliberative, associative and reflexive democracy? How should one assess these endeavours to incorporate new meanings into the notion of democracy? Given current theoretical understandings and practices, is the

relationship between democratisation and governance inherently unstable? Whilst the idea of democratisation derives much of its normative connotations from its associations with social and political movements, has the prevalence of democracy over other political forms resulted in a paradox that is counter to democratisation, that is, is democracy a new ideology that has subordinated other images of emancipation? What has been learnt about democratisation from the variety of transitions to liberal democracy and their comparison?

Session E

Power and Slavery

Organizers: *David Strecker*, University of Jena, Germany,
david.strecker@uni-jena.de & *IPSA Resarch Committee on Political Power* (RC36)
http://www.ipsa.org/research-committees/rclist/RC36

Slavery represents the most extreme form of an asymmetrical power relation. In no other social institution is power distributed as unequally. For this reason, slavery has become a metaphor for repressive political institutions in republican theory. Actual instances of slavery, however, encompass a wide variety of forms of domination, including transatlantic chattel slavery as well as more traditional forms of personal servitude, contemporary forms like contract slavery and arguably also so-called slavery-like practices, most prominently debt bondage. This implies that power is involved in extreme domination in more complex ways than is commonly thought. Hence, examining the relationship between power and slavery in more detail holds the promise better to understand such domination: What types of physical, psychological, cultural and structural power are at work in the various forms of extreme domination referred to as slavery? How are they interrelated and how do they differ? Does the focus on slavery shed new light on fundamental theoretical problems like the relation between power and violence or power and authority? How are the respective mechanisms of power reproduced in different forms of slavery and when do they change or even break down? In which ways are actual forms of slavery comparable to political unfreedom? Under which conditions (characterized by power relations of what kind) are such analogies typically drawn?

This session invites empirical, typological, theoretical and conceptual contributions focusing on power and slavery in discussing these issues and related questions.

Postcolonialism and Decoloniality: A Dialogue

Organizer: *Gurminder K. Bhambra*, University of Warwick, United Kingdom, g.k.bhambra@warwick.ac.uk

Postcolonial studies is most usually associated with the triumvirate of Edward W. Said, Gayatri Spivak, and Homi K. Bhabha, although contributors to the field both pre-date these theorists and are disciplinarily more diverse. While postcolonial studies can be seen to have emerged within the humanities, more recently it has begun to influence the disciplines of the social sciences, particularly sociology. Decoloniality is the name given to a similar movement emerging in Latin America and focused, in particular, on the experiences of this continent in the context of understanding modernity. This roundtable session brings together key scholars working in both fields to discuss the commonalities and significant differences between the two theoretical perspectives and to discuss the implications of each for sociology more generally.

Community: A Key Sociological Concept

Organizers: *Pablo de Marinis*, Buenos Aires University, Argentina, pdemarinis@fibertel.com.ar & *Alejandro Bialakowsky*, Buenos Aires University, Argentina, alebiala_25@hotmail.com

Lately, there seems to be a re-emergence of the debate about the concept of community. This can be observed within sociological theories and empirical research, but also in political philosophies' insights, in social movements discourse, in social policies design and in non-governmental organizations rhetoric.

Community, however, is not a new notion in sociological theory. In the perspectives of K. Marx, F. Tönnies, E. Durkheim, T. Parsons, the Chicago School, and others, community appears, from dissimilar points of view and different terminology, as a relevant object. Also, in recent sociological theory, community seems to be a central topic of discussion. It can be found in a plurality of analytic formulations, such as (a) the notion of "reflexive communities" in A. Giddens´ assessments about late modernity, (b) the idea of "community of communication" in J. Habermas´ theory of communicative action, (c) as a tool to comprehend contemporary societies in the works of Z. Bauman and M. Maffesoli, (d) as a criticized and useless concept in N. Luhmann's studies, or (e) related to the calling for deconstructing its ethnocentric and essentialist characteristics by diverse theoretical perspectives.

Parting from this variety of proposals, four dimensions in the analysis of community can be pointed out: (1) as an abstract ideal type of a certain kind of social relationship; (2) as an historical predecessor of modern society; (3) as a political utopia or horizon for social interventions; (4) as the ontological substratum of all sociality. These guidelines are not isolated from one another. On the contrary, and according to each case, they are combined in different ways, emphasizing one or the other, and remaining open to the construction of alternative dimensions that will complement them. Therefore, we invite all those who find themselves interested in the reflection about "community", to participate and contribute from multiple perspectives to the debate of its various dimensions and orientations.

Session H

Subjectivity, Symbolic Power and Social Justice

Organizers: *Jochen Dreher*, University of Konstanz, Germany, jochen.dreher@uni-konstanz.de & *Hermilio Santos*, Pontifícia Universidade do Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, hermilio@pucrs.br & *Daniela Lopez*, Universidad de Buenos Aires, Argentina, lopez.danielag@gmail.com

The investigation of the idea of social justice and the constitution of power hierarchies requires focusing on the dialectical relationship between individual and society. Starting from Max Weber's methodological individualism, this session will discuss different perspectives on the correlation between the subjectivity of the individual actor based on knowledge structures and systems of relevance with objective power hierarchies for the analysis of social justice. To establish a bridge between subjectivism and objectivism – a task proposed by Pierre Bourdieu –, we may be able to apply the concepts of "habitus" and "symbolic power" to be able to confront the idea of social justice. Symbolic power is based on the recognition of economic, cultural and social capital. Recognition, though, is related to the subjectivity of the individual actor which is determined by specific categories of perception and interpretation of the world. Correspondingly, social justice depends on the recognition of established categories and concepts of equality, solidarity, etc. The session will specifically, but not exclusively focus on theoretical orientations related to sociology of knowledge and phenomenology which serve to challenge these reflections in demonstrating how social justice is established through the confrontation of imposed power structures on the basis of individual decision making within social action.

Session I

Epistemological Challenges Presented by the Experience of Modernity in "Non-Western Contexts"

Organizer: *Sergio B. F. Tavolaro*, Brazil, sergiotavolaro@hotmail.com

As the modern pattern of sociability is becoming truly global, some well-established images of the so-called "peripheral societies" are increasingly called into question. Sociology, itself a product of European intellectual endeavors, contributed substantially to consolidating the image of Western European societies (alongside some of its prosperous offspring) as reflecting the very pinnacle of modern experience. For quite some time, this modern nucleus shone as a remote, distant and untenable beacon, projecting a sense of civility towards societies in all directions. Despite systematic attempts by "late comers" to adjust to the new cognitive, moral-ethical and aesthetic patterns, "the West" managed to consolidate and perpetuate its unchallenged position as the one and only reference point and role model of modernity.

Things began to change by the end of the 20th century. Rather than a distant and dim light shining on the horizon of "peripheral societies", modernity assumed a very visible presence in virtually all parts of the world. Moreover, rather than being passive receptors of conceptions and ways of life alien to them, "non-Western societies" became increasingly active diffusers of their own imaginary of the modern; some even managed to become role models themselves, leading others toward advanced stages of modernity and thus taking on a role that not too long ago seemed to be the exclusive preserve of the "West".

This turn of events presents sociology with a number of epistemological challenges. How are we to come to terms with a new world historical constellation wherein modernity, understood both as a form of sociability and as a narrative, has reached unprecedented levels of penetration on a global scale? Can modernity be reduced to a single pattern with some locally specific, yet insignificant variations? Or are we rather faced with a plurality of experiences that are irreducible to one another? How are we to explain these variations? Are they due to peculiar cultural background conditions or might they instead derivate from asymmetric positions in the world (economic) order? Alternatively, are we missing the point when insisting on the importance of differences that, from a theoretical perspective, are barely worth mentioning? Ultimately, is sociology equipped with a conceptual apparatus that allows it to come to terms with the new order of things? Or does the new condition require new ways of theorizing?

We invite papers to reflect upon this apparently disorienting epistemological picture. Informed by the social experience of numerous (Latin American, Southeast Asian, African, and other) societies whose richness is rendered invisible by treating them as mere "others" to the West (as residual categories such as "non-Western societies" do), we welcome theoretically and/or empirically oriented papers that attempt to tackle some of these issues.

Session J

RC35 Business Meeting

Organizer: *Volker H. Schmidt*, National University of Singapore,
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