

The 2021 ISA Forum of Sociology 23-28 February

The Fourth ISA Forum of Sociology, the first to take place online, will open on February 23rd. 58 ISA Research committees, working groups and thematic groups have organized over 800 panels where over 3.300 researchers from 125 countries will present their latest research during 6 days.

Our **opening plenary on Tuesday 23 February at 12:30 (time of Brazil) / 15:30 GMT** will host four extraordinary sociologists who have built global analyses rooted in a dialogue with actors, movements and researchers in the global south: **Boaventura de Sousa Santos (Portugal), Rita Segato (Brazil), Ashish Kothari (India) and Jean-Louis Laville (France)**. The Forum opening sessions, as well as 6 plenary panels and the ISA editors sessions will be livestreamed on the ISA Facebook page and thus made available for a wide audience. Please join us on the ISA Forum Zoom platform or on the ISA Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/InternationalSociologicalAssociation/live/>

For those of you who won't present a paper, the ISA has set up an **"attendies" registration that will allow you to access any of these 800+ panels** for a reduced cost of 25 USD (students) / 50 USD (full rate). <https://isaconf.confex.com/isaconf/forum2020/registration/call.cgi>

The first ISA Virtual Forum

This fourth ISA Forum takes place amid a global pandemic that has shaken our lives and our societies. Organizing a Forum in the pandemic and moving it online has been a historical challenge for our association. I would like to thank each of you for preparing presentations under such difficult circumstances and every session organizers for setting up the hundreds of panels. Our efficient ISA secretariat, our ISA president Sari Hanafi, the ISA Vice President for finance Sawako Shirahase and the members of its Executive Committee, the Local Organizing Committee and its chair Hermilio Santos, have all worked hard to prepare the encounter. This Forum would not exist without the dedication and largely invisible organizing work of the presidents and program coordinators of the 52 research committees, working groups and thematic groups that participate in this Forum and are the vibrant heart of our International Sociological Association. My deepest gratitude to each and every one of them.

This Forum was going to take place in Porto Alegre, Brazil, aiming at strengthening the global dialogue with our Latin American colleagues, whose theoretical, epistemological and analytical contributions are indispensable tools to understand the global challenges of our times. In this process, we have strengthened our partnership with the Brazilian Sociological Society (SBS), the Latin American Sociological Association (ALAS) and with the Latin American Social Science Council (CLACSO), that have organized semi-plenary sessions at this Forum. We have extended this partnership to other regional associations, starting with the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa and the Arab Council for Social Sciences whose presidents will join us in the closing session.

This IV ISA Forum will also be the opportunity for our community to pay tribute to three of our most distinguished colleagues in three special panels. **Immanuel Wallerstein** was not only a major global social scientist and a global citizen committed to social justice. He presided over the ISA between 1992 and 1996, leaving a considerable legacy. **Erik Olin Wright** will notably be remembered for shedding light on “real utopias” that embody the hope of fairer and more human times. **Marielle Franco**, a Brazilian sociologist who was murdered on March 14th 2018, has become a global symbol of a struggle against racist, colonial, hetero-patriarchal domination and police violence and for social justice, human rights and democracy. Her life as a black woman from the favelas shows that intersectionality is not only a theoretical concept. She also exemplifies the importance of enlarging the access to studies in sociology to women and men from less privileged backgrounds, beyond the gender, race and social barriers. These sessions in tribute to Erik Olin Wright (24 February 2021, 17:45 time of Brazil), Immanuel Wallerstein (25 Feb. 12:30 in Brazil) and Marielle Franco (25 Feb. 17:45 in Brazil) **will be livestreamed** on the ISA Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/InternationalSociologicalAssociation/live/>

The Forum will also be the opportunity to attend “professional development sessions” and learn how to write article and meet editorial standards with our Vice-President for Publication Eloisa Martin and the editors of the ISA journals in sessions that will be available on Zoom and livestreamed on the ISA Facebook page.

In addition, ISA Vice-President Filomin Guttierrez and her team dedicated to promote early career sociologists have prepared videos of inspiring senior scholars in a dialogue with young researchers and Hermilio Santos and the Porto Alegre Local Organizing Committee a series of videos on the Challenges of Brazil. All these videos will be available on the ISA Forum website.
<https://www.isa-sociology.org/en/conferences/forum/porto-alegre-2021>

Global Sociology in the Pandemic

The global pandemic gives even more importance to the ISA primary mission: ***gathering social scientists from all over the world to share their research and analyses***. Over the past year, sociologists have played an essential role in dealing with the pandemic and analyzing its impacts, notably around four areas to which a significant part of this Forum will be dedicated. Sociologists have demonstrated that the COVID-19 pandemic is not only a sanitary crisis. It is also a social, ecological, and political crisis. While the virus may infect each human being, the pandemic affects us differently and exacerbated social inequalities, notably in terms of class, race, and gender. An intersectional approach is crucial to understand how the crisis is experienced and why the way we face it is profoundly unequal and unfair.

We also have explored the way actors experience and live the pandemic. The COVID-19 has reminded us of our vulnerability as biological, human, social and spiritual beings. The pandemic, the confinement and the fear of contagion have had a profound impact on the live and subjectivity of individuals, and on their relationship with the others. Intergenerational relations have taken new shapes and meanings. Social distancing measures have put solidarity at risk and often shrunk the limits of the community within

which it takes place. Digital technologies have reshaped many realms of our lives, from work to family, as well as our way of teaching, researching and meeting in congresses and forums.

Another stream of research has analyzed the way policymakers and political regimes deal with the outbreak. The pandemic has revealed the strengths and weaknesses of governments, public policies and political regimes. It has transformed the relationship between citizens and their government and shown the importance of public healthcare.

We have also analyzed and debated the longer-term impacts of the pandemic. Many of us have stressed the need for a world more sensitive to human beings, care, and social inequalities, and with stronger welfare states. However, increased competition between states and the power of transnational corporations have often prevailed in the management of the pandemic. The crisis management also may pave the way for a new authoritarian era, with biopolitics grounded in new technologies. The way humanity will get out of the COVID-19 pandemic will rely on how policymakers, economic actors, citizens and social movements deal with this multidimensional crisis and defend their visions of the world.

The COVID-19 pandemic has stressed how deeply interdependent we have become. Fostering a global dialogue among social scientists from all continent is the core mission of the ISA. Opening more spaces for our colleagues from the Global South and for their concepts, research and action is fundamental to our work. In the North and in the South of the planet, women, indigenous people, minorities have helped us to reach a better understanding of our world and the global challenges of our times in a different way. Hence, the epistemologies of the South and feminist and intersectional perspectives on democracy, ecology and social justice are more than alternative options for sociology in the 21st century. There are at its core and have deeply transformed it.

Geoffrey Pleyers
President of the IV ISA Forum
ISA Vice-President for Research