

XX ISA World Congress of Sociology



Resurgent Authoritarianism:
*Sociology of New Entanglements of
Religions, Politics, and Economies*

Melbourne, Australia | June 25-July 1, 2023
Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre
www.isa-sociology.org



Integrative Sessions will be held during the morning semi-plenary blocs of time 12:30-13:50, on Monday to Friday, June 26-30, 2023

Care, Care work and Migration in Light of the Pandemic and Global Conflicts

Participating units: RC05, RC19, RC32.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, many countries were facing the challenge of ageing populations and increasing needs for care, with care systems unable to meet that challenge. This was marked by chronic care worker shortages, high worker burnout and high turnover rates. The pandemic has highlighted, and in many cases, exacerbated the systemic fragility and inequalities of care work - work that depends on the low-waged labour of women, and racialized and migrant workers. Not only has the pandemic intensified the acute need for care workers, but local, national, and global mobility restrictions have further cut off migrant care worker supply chains. To secure needed care workers many countries have introduced new policies and programs and/or modified existing policies related to care, employment and migration to recruit, retain, train, and incentivize workers to work in the care sector. The effort has proven to be more challenging than expected, partly due to the recurrent Covid waves aggravated by new and emerging global conflicts.

This integrative session will examine care, care work and migration in light of the pandemic and global conflicts. As we move towards post-pandemic future, we ask: 1) what were the impacts of the pandemic on care, care work and migration; 2) what policy, institutional, political, and/or cultural changes have been made in response to the increased care needs, and how effective were they; and 3) how can we build back more resilient and inclusive care, care work and migration systems in future?

Prosumption in Post-COVID-19 societies: An Integrative Session

Participating units: RC02, RC17, RC24, RC40, RC52.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought back to the foreground of public debate the slow-moving phenomenon of “prosumption” (a term formed by combining producer and consumer, coined by Toffler in 1970), which blurs producers’ and consumers’ “work” in contemporary economies. Degrowth models or debate about other alternative economic paradigms imply that existing actors will have to take on more and/or different roles in

many sectors – particularly those related to energy, mobility, and food. These changing roles also mean changes in the types of knowledge, expertise, and services that prosumers are expected to have, which in turn condition the value of their labour. This integrative session will broaden debate among sociologists from across five research committees (agriculture and food, economy and society, environment, organizations, and professions) trying to explore a number of interdependencies, synergies, and conflicts that emerge through prosumption, in order to understand how the phenomenon is emerging and shaping diverse sectors of the economy in contemporary societies from around the world.

Our session will foster debate around the question of: what forms might prosumption take in diverse economic paradigms that are emerging to deal with the realities of a post-COVID world? Can certain organizational forms also emerge to reduce the inequalities and exploitation of some current forms of prosumption? What challenges does the concept of prosumer pose to the regulation of the economy? How does this concept redefine the power and structure of value chains? What can be its concrete social impact in post-covid societies?

Postcolonial and Southern Perspectives in Digitalization

Participating units: RC02, RC09, RC23.

There is broad consensus in both academic and public discourse that the omnipresent trans-formation process subsumed under the term “digitalization” is one (if not the major) dominant driving force of social change in contemporary societies that has been implemented by COVID19 and its economic and social lockdown. Changes have been realized not only in business and jobs but also upon life-worlds, daily routines, and practices by digitalization or the mediatization of everyday life.

With an interest in comparative analysis, the notion “transformation” raises the question which (pre-)existing structures are transformed by digitalization. What is specific about social changes referred to as “digital transformation”? What is new about the modus of digitally induced social change, for instance in comparison to previous fundamental social changes such as Industrialization?

Digital phenomena are often described either as radical new developments or as intensifications of well-known processes. Comparisons that are presented in this session will actually study similarity and differences of digitally induced changes, thereby offering an alternative to the opaque notion “digital transformation.”

We suggest presentations from non-western scholars and post-colonial perspectives in order to give an overview of current socio-economic developments in the North and the South. Case studies of digitalization in enterprises, local life-worlds, educational institutions and by state administrations will be presented. The overall objective is to precise recent developments in societies all over the world in COVID-19 times where transformations must cope with economic hardships and have to protect both lives now and in the future.

Understanding the Criminalization of Struggles for Rights: Resurgent Authoritarianism or Deliberalization of Democracies?

Participating units: RC12, RC29, RC47.

Criminalization of the struggles for rights and for democracy more broadly is becoming a global trend. As such, it cuts across a wide range of political regimes and types of legislations. The harsh intolerance and massive human rights violations towards activists is a visible trait of overtly authoritarian countries, as well as in so-called liberal democracies. However, evidence shows that well-established democracies can also display high levels of criminalization and violence against human rights defenders (HRD) and protesters. For instance, young activists giving water to illegal immigrants face 10 years sentences in the USA; penalization of environmental and Indigenous defenders and of public spaces are common trends in North America, Australia, and European countries; threats to gender, sexual and reproductive rights in Global North and South thrive; etc. While it is obvious that well-established democracies don't have the same room for maneuver than authoritarian regimes in terms of controlling courts, medias or armed forces, more and more studies show that countries criminalizing struggles for rights and democracy rely on a securitarian narrative to justify the use of violence against HRD and demonstrators.

What implications do these common trends have for our comprehension of democracy and institutional mechanisms guaranteeing judicial independence? In pursuing their struggles for rights against all odds and reaching out to national and international legal frameworks for protection of rights, protesters and HRDs choose to fight for new innovative meanings and practices of democracy exposing authoritarian elements in all kinds of regimes, being them democratic or not.

(Dis)Entangling Religion(s) and Politics in fighting for Freedom and Dignity. Cross approaches from Algeria, Palestine, and Tunisia

Participating units: Fa3iloon Center, Algeria, Palestinian Sociological Association, Tunis El Manar University, Tunisia.

During the last decade, almost all the Arab countries have witnessed different types of social movements, uprisings, non-violent insurgencies, and revolutions. From 2010 notably, alongside experiencing different ways to achieve their goals, social actors were (re)framing their complaints, arguments, and social and political demands. In the successive waves of such different movements Freedom and Dignity were pivotal targeted demands. Coronavirus pandemic was an additional crisis time challenging sanitary (in)justice governmental policies and strategies.

This has been evident for Algeria, Palestine, and Tunisia. Yet, for the last decade, in each country, and from a sociological standpoint, one can point out different ways of (dis)entangling religion(s) and politics. From the point of view of social change actors, the post-2011 decade constituted a fighting time for Freedom and Dignity. Even though partisan-organised Islamist politics has obvious presence and role in all three countries, one can point out a range of differences. In Algeria, the Army moved from opposing 2019 Hirak to leading/framing it. This strategic shift gave birth to a specific democratic transitional process with which Islamists had, among others, to deal. Palestinian fight against colonial and Zionist apartheid proved to be tightly entangled with fighting against repressive politics of Palestinian Authority. This has something to do with (dis)entangling religion and politics as Islamists are ruling in Gaza strip. While experiencing several elections and democratic transition steps, Tunisians saw how a

Revolution could be devoured by populism on behalf of fighting Islamism. In the three countries, Dignity seems to be gradually hidden as a slogan, a target and/or a value. Comparative and cross approaches drawn upon each single country-case are supposed to problematize (dis)entangling religious backed political discourses, populisms, and (re)placing Freedom and Dignity on human value scale. While Palestinian and Tunisian units did organised a joint integrative session during Toronto 2018 congress, Algerian unit is reinforcing this MENA regional coordination.

Constructing the foundations for Asian sociology: A case of family and gender studies

Participating units: Japanese and Vietnamese National Association, RC06.

As the world is being restructured, the global mode of knowledge production needs to be decentralized and reconstructed in parallel. A group of Asian sociologists resolved to take up this challenge systematically, focusing in particular on the domain of gender and family studies. We decided to initiate a two-level plan to strengthen the foundations for inter-Asian collaborative research. The first level was the collection, translation, and dissemination of influential academic works written in various Asian languages. The International Editorial Committee for this project, which resulted in the publication of a four-volume set, *Asian Families and Intimacies* (Sage, 2021), comprised experts from nine Asian societies: Japan, Korea, China, Taiwan, Vietnam, the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, and India. The second level of the project was the Comparative Asian Family Survey (CAFS), conducted in Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, India, Qatar, and Turkey, using a common format. The proposed session would be co-hosted by the Japanese and Vietnamese national associations, which played crucial roles in the afore-mentioned projects, together with ISA RC06 on family research. The session will aim both to disseminate the results of the two projects and to share our experience with those who wish to construct sound and active regional sociologies.

The Good University: Addressing Growing Stratification and Gender Discrimination in the University Workforce

Participating units: Australian Sociological Association, RC08, RC32, RC56.

In recognition of Raewyn Connell's outstanding contributions to sociological research, for which she has been awarded the third ISA Award for Excellence in Research and Practice, this integrative session builds on her latest book that focuses on inequalities within the modern university system. Stratification has been key to the rise and hegemony of elite Western universities, having been built on a legacy of imperialism that centers knowledge and material resources in the metropole. While universities were founded to serve society for the common good, Connell examines how they are also responsible for rising inequalities that are legitimized by regressive policies in favor of powerful and elite actors. Gender and racial inequalities have shaped who sits in the upper echelons of faculty and administration and who is forced into contingent work. Since the onslaught of COVID-19, academia's rapidly neo-liberalizing structures have further fostered contingent work, gender and racial inequalities, and the exploitation of non-academic staff.

The proposed integrative session will build on Connell's analysis of the "good university" with a particular emphasis on its role for the history of sociology, as well as the historical sociology of inequalities of gender and knowledge in order to consider how to democratize learning, decolonize knowledge hierarchies, and how to fight against growing stratification and gender discrimination in universities.

We ask: 1) What can be done to combat the deepening crisis in universities that have predominantly served the elite class and have supported Eurocentric policy research agendas based on Western traditions? 2) In a post-pandemic world, how do we decolonize higher education and counter the gender and racial histories of inequality and discrimination that have defined this institution?

De-Centering Global Sociology: The 'Peripheral Turn' in Social Theory and Research

Participating units: German Sociological Association, RC08, RC16, RC35.

While the sociological canon has been questioned repeatedly throughout the history of the discipline, the challenges to mainstream sociology were catalyzed especially by the emergence of Southern perspectives and their continued presence at the level of established academic arenas. The ISA has been particularly effective in this regard. Bringing together historical, theoretical, conceptual and expertise and more, this session intends to shift the discussion further: beyond the dissemination of marginalized sociological knowledge and demands for its inclusion into the canon, towards a radical reconstruction of a truly global sociology by rethinking the discipline in terms of a 'peripheral turn'. While 'peripheral' perspectives account for the vast majority of the world population, this notion highlights that these originate at a far distance from the established centers of power and sociological knowledge production with which they are hierarchically entangled, an entanglement reflected by the composition of the speakers and the participating units. Further, such an approach links the diversity of subaltern perspectives: not merely a geographical or geopolitical category, it encompasses a broad variety of social relations grounded on power inequalities: economic, political, racialized, gendered, etc. Expanding our knowledge on the various forms of inequality and oppression, this session will, moreover, contribute to undermining sociology's complicity in reproducing these and to challenging some of the most enduring exploitative hierarchies.

Social movements under varieties of authoritarian threats

Participating units: ALAS Latin American Sociological Association, RC44, RC47, RC48.

Social movements and activists continue to face severe violent threats by authoritarian and non-democratic states across the globe. This phenomenon is nothing new, and even in severely repressive authoritarian environments, people still protest and mobilize, challenging power holders and promoting democracy in politics and society. However, the current global resurgent authoritarianism is characterized by multiple modes of stern expressions, including softer forms where democratic states use direct and indirect mechanisms of governance that isolate power against popular discontent. In times of

profound instability and multiple crises (financial crisis, pandemic crisis, humanitarian crisis and war), different traits of authoritarianism have been installed across political regimes, including extra-legal measures furthering executive or presidential power or anti-democratic measures undermining the right of free speech and collective organizing. Such measures, in many cases the result of political, economic and ideological entanglements, are justified as necessary to cope with the exceptional circumstances. However, emergency policies have been institutionalized and normalized far from exceptional, affecting social movements' capacity to organize and mobilize people and resources. Examples include:

- the monitoring and digital control of activists
- the withdrawal of financial resources
- the rendering of several action repertoires as illegal
- the public delimitation of movements
- the strategic use of pro-government, anti-democratic mobilization against progressive movements.

This integrative session examines several dimensions of authoritarian risks to social movements and their responses across different political regime types. It looks explicitly at how labor and social movements, in both Global North and Global South, react to authoritarian threats and how they make new modes of repression visible and develop alternative democratic visions from below. Each research unit will contribute a different perspective on the theme: activist subjectivities in the face of authoritarianism (RC47), workers and authoritarianism (RC44), collective action and authoritarian tendencies (RC48), and variations of regional experiences (ALAS)

Covid-19 in BRICS countries: Comparative Sociological Perspectives

Participating units: Brazilian Sociological Society, Indian Sociological Society, South African Sociological Society, Chinese Sociological Association, RC07, RC20.

At this integrative session, sociologists from the BRICS countries – Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa - will present their research on the realities of the COVID-19 pandemic and discuss their findings with the ISA community, emphasizing comparative perspectives. We will orient the session toward critical issues of theoretical, methodological, and practical importance. Theoretical questions examined include: state failure, the private/public distinction, ideational, and social conflicts. Methodological questions will be highlighted from technologically driven Artificial Intelligence and socially constructed online culture to modifying traditional research techniques to observe never-before-imagined objects, e.g., a vital and resilient civil society during the pandemic.

This timely session promises to provide a venue where the participating scholars have agreed to make sociological interpretations of data related to institutional policies and strategies considered successful at dealing with the pandemic in BRICS countries. Sociologists will identify recommendations for decision makers' consideration and actions regarding the detection, regulation, and even prevention of future pandemics. The session will serve as a forum to assist sociologists in exploring mechanisms that employ comparative sociological reflections to broaden understanding of the future of sociology as a scientific, and teaching discipline that also is capable of reaching out to a wider public audience.