



Research Committee on Social Transformations and Sociology of Development RC09

RC09 Newsletter,
Winter 2011

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Remarks from the RC 09 Chair

Dear RC 09 members and colleagues,

At the end of 2011, we send you hereby the Winter Newsletter of RC 09 "Social Transformations and Sociology of Development." So far, most of the RC 09 board members and many colleagues are busy checking the session programs for the next ISA Forum in Buenos Aires, Argentina. I hope that this important event will give us the occasion to meet many RC 09 members there and that you will be able to find some

funding at your institution or in your country. RC 09 has got very limited possibilities to support some presenters from Southern countries. Presenters and participants should then remember the registration deadline of April 10th, 2012.

This next ISA-Forum in Argentina is certainly very important because it takes place in a country of Latin America and thus in the Spanish-speaking world that has sometimes been considered as marginal to social sciences, mainly influenced by the English-speaking world and countries such as the US, the UK, France, or Germany. Since we all know that material resources heavily influence academic life, a success of this scientific event will display that sociological communities of the North and the South contribute to sociology as a global discipline and want to broaden scientific developments everywhere in the world. Sociologists from the region are very interested in the ISA-Forum and have submitted numerous abstracts. We hope that many colleagues from the North will join them, even if the distance to Argentina may be far for some of you. Since the last ISA congresses took place in Goteborg (Sweden) and Barcelona (Spain), it is certainly justified to choose a country belonging to the Southern hemisphere as the place of this next ISA meeting.

In this Newsletter, you will find interesting short articles from two colleagues focusing on the Arab spring: Joshua K. Dubrow compares this movement with the East European revolutions and Habibul H. Khondker includes his discussion in the recent global protest movements. Both scholars focus on important topics. One may furthermore ask what the events in the Arab world will mean for women's rights. Can we consider the Arab Spring as an opportunity to redefine the roles of both women and the Islamist parties? Or should they be considered as mutu-



Buenos Aires, Argentina

ally exclusive? And is feminism on the agenda of the new political forces in the Arab world? All in all, we are living a period that may be decisive for coming socioeconomic transformations. As Habibul Khondker tells us, not only the Arab world is on the move but the “West and the rest.” For us, as sociologists of social transformations and sociology of development, the current period is certainly an interesting and challenging one and asks for responsible actions as university teachers and researchers.

As usually, you will find in this Newsletter some interesting new references and information on publications by RC 09 members. Please, enjoy reading the Newsletter!

I would like to end this short message by sending you and your family season's greetings and wishing you a happy and fulfilling New Year that will make our professional bonds even stronger.

Best regards,

Ulrike Schuerkens

RC 09 President

From Tahrir Square to Tahrir Square (via Zuccotti Park)

By Habibul Haque Khondker, Zayed University, Abu Dhabi

Immanuel Wallerstein likened the “Arab Spring” with the social movements that swept many urban centers in Europe and North America in 1968. Like the social movements of 1968, the “Arab Spring”, Wallerstein (2011) holds, was “protesting against the inherently undemocratic behavior of those in authority” and challenged “vertical decision-making” (the two goals are not that different, after all), if not the social order. Many commentators drew a parallel between the collapse of socialism in the early 1990s hence the nomenclature, “Arab Spring”, while one historian found a parallel between the democratic revolutions in Europe of 1848. The parallels are interesting and open grounds for comparative understanding of social revolutions. However, in likening the “Arab Spring” to the past revolutions, one may risk denying the Arabs of their agency, as forces capable of making their own history on their own terms. Such analogy may also amount to a denial of subalterns of being arbiters of their own destiny. Why not evaluate the “Arab Spring” in its own terms, its own specificities? Why must we squeeze the events of the Middle East in to some pre-determined historical parallel? Egyptian sociologist Mona Abaza correctly points out a growing inequality between the western academics and their local counterparts in the scholarship of Arab revolutions.

Some commentators wanted to see in these revolutions predictable outcomes through their own ideological lenses. Many saw these uprisings as springboards of secularism. They saw in these a pattern of social transformation from sacred to secular. As some continued to write in that vein, Egyptian vot-

ers were busy electing a political party affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood as the majority party. Tunisia where the cascade of movements began in January 2011, saw the most radical Islamist party, Hizb Attahrir, boycotting election for what it alleged to be “un-Islamic”. Moderate Muslim party, Ennahada that modeled itself Turkish Justice and Democracy Party, got the majority and was ready to form a coalition with the secularist parties. These outcomes could have hardly predicted when commentators were celebrating the fall of the dictators and welcoming the new era of liberalism, secularism and modernity as if modernization was an historical invariance. Tunisian sociologist Alaya Allani, and others contextualized the rise of Islamic forces in terms of growing class inequality and social polarization.

Revolutions and social movements as aspects of social transformations often produce all kinds of outcomes - some intended but mostly unintended. Recent elections in Egypt which put the Justice Party, the political wing of the Muslim Brotherhood as winners dishearten many who were looking forward to meaningful changes in Egypt after decades of authoritarian rule. Muslim Brotherhood, at least, does not see elections as “un-Islamic” and moderated its position. The uncertainty comes from the first runner up, Al-Nour which is known to take extremist position such as issuing fatwa (religious edicts) on public wearing of high-heeled shoes for women.

“Revolution”, Mao Zedong once said, “is not a dinner party”. Revolutions often take ugly turns. In the days following the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak inter-communal violence increased culminating in the killings of dozens of Coptic protestors in October. Tahrir Square received the shocking news with dismay. The Coptic Christians, who make up 10% of the Egypt’s 80 million citizens had experienced attacks from fringe groups of extremists before. What was different this time was that they clashed with the military. The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) has been in power since the fall of Mubarak regime early this year with a promise of return to power to the civilians. Although the military government has asked the civilian prime minister to launch an investigation of the events that led to bloodshed, the future of the January 25, revolution in Egypt hangs in the balance. The stepping down of the deputy prime minister in early December, 2011 marks a new political crisis.

The word Tahrir, in Arabic means liberation. The Zuccotti Park which is the eye of storm of recent protests in New York near Wall Street was formerly known as Liberty Plaza Park. The similarity is more than symbolic. Whatever way the revolution goes in Egypt, one thing the Egyptian protestors at Tahrir Square have already accomplished is that they have inspired protest movements in Spain, Israel, and more important in the United States of America. The protests at the Wall Street have been named as Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement. Their goal was simple. They know that the real power lies not in the Capitol Hill or the White House. The real power lies in the capital of corporate America. The corporate oligarchs who played a key role in the economic crisis were rewarded with bailouts where the poor were left to fend for themselves. Like Peter Finch, the protagonist in the famed movie *The Network*, the average Americans are now saying, “Enough is

enough". The shout is reverberating not just in Wall Street or in the camps of Zuccotti Park but across the United States. And as in the "Arab Spring", the social media – Facebook, Twitter, etc. - played a vital role in connecting people. The protest movement has gone global as fifty leading Chinese academics signed a petition of solidarity with the protestors as if in a role reversal of the US reaction to the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989.

The mainstream Americans have always been suspicious of the Sixties style protest movements and in recent years, with the rise of the conservative Tea Party movement, which was professedly in favor of the rich and those privileged groups whose bulging profits and corporate tax cuts reached obscene proportion.

The protestors in New York managed to put across their message loud and clear for the whole world to see. A poster in the wall street says it all, '1% rich, 99% poor'. The growing inequality in America which was known to sociologists, is now becoming public knowledge. The link between Washington and the Wall Street, explored long ago by the likes of C. Wright Mills, is now under the very nose of everyone.

The mainstream political parties are either in denial, dismissing the protests as the "anti-American" activities of the hippies, or are trying to coopt them as the Democratic Party seems to be trying. Which way the protests go is anybody's guess. These protests may not morph into a revolution, yet it might be a reminder for those who have forgotten about social contract, the obligation of the state to the people. Will these protests bring to light the deeper contradictions of the US-style capitalism and democracy of the rich? Could it be that the collapse of socialism that was the cause for celebration in the late 1980s and early 1990s was a prelude to the collapse of the unbuttoned, neo-liberal capitalism? William Robinson of University of California, Santa Barbara explains the Arab revolutions along with the protests in Europe and the United States as global protests against the neo-liberal globalization which is in crisis.

Capitalism will perhaps survive the wave of protests but it is time for a new social compact to be drawn for all the parties involved – a compact that would be truly inclusive of the majority – poor, hippies, the Middle East, Europeans, Americans, the Arabs and everyone else – in other words, the 99%.

Habibul Haque Khondker is professor of sociology at Zayed University, Abu Dhabi, Member of the Executive Committee, ISA and Vice-President of RC09 Social Transformation and Sociology of Development of International Sociological Association.

1989 and the Arab Spring

By Joshua Kjerulf Dubrow, Polish Academy of Sciences, Poland

The Middle Eastern social transformations of 2011 invite comparisons to the Eastern European revolutions of 1989. Even its media moniker - “Arab Spring” - invokes the same metaphorically correct yet temporally wrong seasonal motif, “Prague Spring,” associated with the thawing of Communist-era authoritarianism. Most social scientists are bystanders to these current events, a privileged position in an information-poor environment that enables and emboldens scholarly thought. While some reject the 1989 - Arab Spring comparison, it is fruitful to ask: What can the scholarship of 1989 bring to the study of the Arab Spring?

First, consider the idea that most of what we know today on the Arab Spring may be wrong. This was true in 1989 of the events of that year. Besides nostalgia, the point of the innumerable “twenty years after” conferences and publications of 2009 throughout Eastern Europe was to revisit the fact that social scientists still debate the basics: What kind of revolution was 1989? an economic, political, or cultural one? Was it top-down or bottom-up? How did it diffuse across the region? Who won, who lost, and why? And so on. Social, political, and economic data similar to the high western standards in the social sciences from Communist-era Eastern Europe are hard to come by, a situation that Arab Spring scholars will undoubtedly run into. Even if the area studies’ disciplinary apparatus has shifted from the Communist past to the European Union future, each year, new facts come to light and scholars use new media to broadcast their views. That the Middle East in 2031 will host similar scholarly summits seems to be a safe bet.

Some established knowledge may not change. The so-called Middle East is as diverse as so-called Eastern Europe, from peculiar brands of authoritarianism to socio-economic, demographic, and cultural compositions, and from the mode of rebellion to government reaction. In fact, most Eastern European revolutions were symbolically street-protests and formally bureaucratic ones, largely conducted behind closed doors and around conference tables. The Arab Spring seems vaguely similar to pre-post-communist Romania where violence colored the expression and suppression of dissent. Roots of rebellion also link the populations of Eastern Europe and those of the Middle East: Western pro-democracy rhetoric masks the bland micro-motivations of everyday people frustrated by their difficulties in eating, living, and working in relative comfort. Instead of revolutions from above or revolutions from below, the revolution of these groups is right here on Earth.

The role of regional and global governance constitutes a stark difference when comparing the events of 1989 and the Arab Spring. That the USSR publicly denounced its own interventionist policy in the region is a commonly cited trigger for 1989: no tanks, no Communism! After years of saber-rattling, the U.S.

reacted by sending kind words of encouragement on a wholesale revolution in Eastern Europe. After seriously studying President H. W. Bush's reaction to 1989, President Obama approached Tunisia and Egypt by cautiously doing nothing that would seem to be a threat to the Arab League or the United Nations. The global governance regime in the post-Cold War era no longer balances rival superpowers but it does exert a strong influence on the Arab Spring. The United Nations sanctioned NATO strike in Libya is a glaring difference to the events of 1989 in the Arab Spring.

The Internet plays a role in the Arab Spring, just like the radio played a role in 1989. Both technologies facilitated revolutions with their speed of communications and their ease in creating and connecting large crowds. We should expect academic struggles between the Gladwellites who argue that people, not computers, lead revolutions, and the technology enthusiasts who believe that we have never seen anything like this before.

Future comparisons of the events of 1989 and the Arab Spring will depend on the slowly evolving outcomes in the Near and Middle East. If authoritarianism loses, we can expect studies of collective memory of authoritarianism, and, paradoxically, nostalgia for the undemocratic past. Economists may rush in with neoliberal shock therapy advice and political scientists may catalogue the varieties of democracies that spring up and explore how political elites may use the new fluid party systems to escape accountability. For liberal social scientists, the idea of authoritarian retrenchment seems to be too depressing to think about.

Sociology has approached the events of 1989 and its aftermath from every conceivable angle: economics, politics, policy, culture, demography, gender, ethnicity, and many of their sub-disciplines. Somewhat understudied is the role of religion in the transformations of 1989: while Solidarity-era Poland had obviously Catholic roots, few scholars reflected on the Christian-flavored democracies that have characterized the rest of Eastern Europe. Many scholars in the post-9/11 western countries already fret over the role of Islam in shaping the emergent democracies. No matter the outcomes of the Arab world, social scientists will study the relationship between religion and politics in this region.

For us as sociologists of social transformations and development, the Arab Spring is as important as it is interesting, full of challenges to existing concepts and theories, and rich in research possibilities. With real lives at stake, the Arab Spring unfolds as real life often does: quickly and over a long time span. Comparing the events of 1989 to the Arab Spring, we know they are different; just how different they are in fact is too early to discern.

Reference:

Gladwell, Malcom (2010) "Small Change: Why the Revolution Will Not Be Tweeted." *The New Yorker*, October 10. http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2010/10/04/101004fa_fact_gladwell, accessed on November 27th, 2011.

Members News and Publications

Nikolai Genov and Tessa Savvidis (eds.) (2011) Transboundary Migration in the Post-Soviet Space. Three Comparative Case Studies. Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, Bern, Bruxelles, New York, Oxford, Wien: Peter Lang.

The collective monograph contains the results of an empirical project conducted in Armenia and Georgia as well as in Moscow (as the favourite destination of migrants from the South Caucasus) from 2008 to 2010. The book is the first contribution to comparative research in the migration-intense post-Soviet space, and covers the complete cycle before, during and after migration. The survey focused on such relevant issues as national migration profiles including age and gender composition, “brain drain” and “brain waste”, return potentials, remittances, child separation, migration perception, and personal experiences in Moscow and other destinations. As results of the field studies confirm the international trend of feminization in migration and a high awareness of the ambivalent nature of migration among two cohorts of migrants from Armenia and Georgia in Moscow and six cohorts of returnees in the respective countries of origin.

Nikolai Genov / Tessa Savvidis (eds.)



Transboundary Migration in the Post-Soviet Space
Three Comparative Case Studies

PETER LANG
International Verlag der Wissenschaften

Nikolai Genov (ed.) (2011) Global Trends and Regional Development. New York: Routledge.

For millennia, contact between societies was limited to trade or wars, a situation that changed profoundly with the development of global markets serving industrialization. The outcome was the emergence of one global human civilization, and one common future that will depend on the capacity of individuals and societies to manage the potentials for social development.

This edited collection is dedicated to the discussion of four global trends: upgrading the rationality of organizations, individualization, the spreading of instrumental activism and universalization of value-normative systems. The mutual influence of these interrelated trends brings about both constructive and destructive effects in social life, social integration, and change.

Contributors examine questions such as: How do global trends pave their way in regions? What are the similarities and differences of regional development? How do agencies cope with the challenges of global trends in regional development?



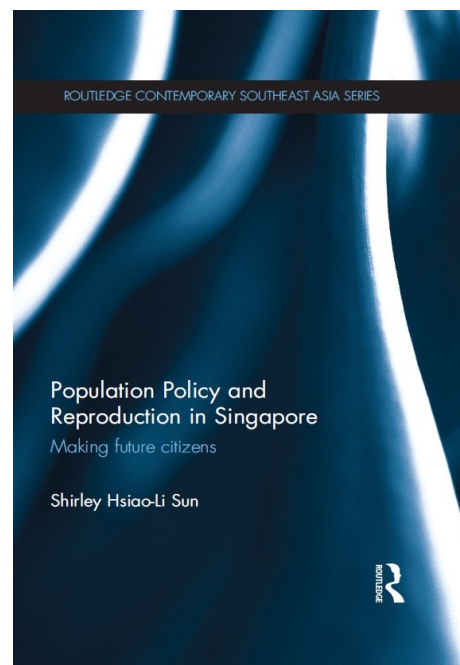
Ulrike Schuerkens (ed.) (4/2012): *Socioeconomic Outcomes of the Global Financial Crisis: Theoretical Discussion and Empirical Case Studies*. New York: Routledge.

This book originates from a comparative research project involving extensive collection and analysis of primary and secondary materials (scholarly literature, statistical data, and interviews with key actors) on socioeconomic outcomes of the global financial crisis in all major world regions during the last years. Offering analytical and comparative insights at the global level, as well as an assessment of the overall social globalization phenomenon, this book will be useful for scholars, students, NGOs, and policy makers.

Wehrli Angelica L. L. 2011: *Filles à éliminer au Vietnam?* In : Castelli, Bernard et Bernard Hours: *Enjeux épistémologique idéologiques de la globalisation pour les sciences sociales. Collection questions contemporaines, série globalisation et sciences sociales*. Pp.239–265 Paris : L'Harmattan.

Shirley Hsiao-Li Sun, (2012) *Population Policy and Reproduction in Singapore: Making Future Citizens*. London and New York: Routledge. 208 pages, ISBN: 978-0-415-67068-5. Routledge Contemporary Southeast Asia Series.

This book examines the relationship between population policies and individual reproductive decisions in low-fertility contexts. Drawing on personal interviews and focus groups with more than 200 Singaporeans, it demonstrates that the effectiveness of population policy is a function of competing notions of citizenship, and the gap between seemingly neutral policy incentives and their perceived and experienced disparate effects. The need to take individuals' perceptions of state policies seriously gains greater urgency in the context of potential conflict of interest between the state and citizens regarding human reproduction. Should citizenship status confer rights independent of an individual's economic standing? Who is the idealized citizen and idealized by whom? What is the relationship between a particular conceptualization of citizenship and the nation-state's challenge of confronting the global order? This book answers these questions and offers a significant contribution to the literature on population studies, sociology of reproduction, citizenship and development, social policy, East Asian and Southeast Asian studies.



Special Issue of Current Sociology - Culture and Values: The Social Shaping of the Future

Edited by: Reimon Bachika and **Markus S. Schulz**

The editors' introduction discusses sociology's renewed interest in values and the general approach on which the contributors converge despite diverse theoretical backgrounds, areas of focus and social settings. It explains how the studies in this publication contribute to the understanding of the formation and operation of values on micro, meso and macro levels in an increasingly globalized world.



News on publications

Abstract on the Special Issue of the International Journal of Sociology, “Political Inequality in Latin America”

Joshua Kjerulf Dubrow

Polish Academy of Sciences
dubrow.2@osu.edu

Political inequality can be defined as structured differences in influence over government decisions. Because political processes govern resource distribution, political inequality has profound consequences on the welfare of people. This special issue of the International Journal of Sociology (IJS), “Political Inequality in Latin America,” draws together in one volume empirically based articles by Latin American scholars on the form, causes, and consequences of political inequality in Latin America. Topics include (a) poverty, social networks, and access to public services, (b) social capital and support for economic redistribution policies, (c) relationships between civil society and the State, (d) mass engagement with political and non-political organizations, and (e) the political rights of migrant workers in MERCOSUR countries. We hope this special issue of the IJS serves as the beginning of greater efforts to bring Latin American scholarship on political inequality of social transformations to global audiences.

Citation: Cortes, Soraya Vargas and Joshua Kjerulf Dubrow. 2011. Special Issue: Political Inequality in Latin America. International Journal of Sociology 41 (2).

New Titles in the Field

Castelli, Bernard (ed.) (2011) *Enjeux épistémologiques de la globalisation pour les sciences sociales*. Paris : L'Harmattan.

Cicchelli, Vincenzo and G r me Truc (2011) *De la mondialisation au cosmopolitisme*. Paris : La Documentation fran aise.

Harrigan, Jane and Hamed El-Said (eds) (2011) *Globalization, democratisation and radicalisation in the Arab world*. Basingstoke, New York : Palgrave Macmillan.

Juin, Herv  and Gilles Lipovetsky (2011) *L'Occident mondialis  : controverse sur la culture plan taire*. Paris : Librairie g n rale fran aise.

Koop, Kirsten and Anne-Laure Amilhat-Szary (eds) (2011) *Mondialisation et circulation de concepts scientifiques entre nord et sud*. Paris : Armand Collin.

Leung, Suiwah, Ben Bingham and Matt Davies (eds) (2010) *Globalization and development in the Mekong economies*. Cheltenham, Northampton, Mass. : Edward Elgar.

Lowy, Vincent (2011) *Cin ma et mondialisation : une esth tique des in galit s*. Lormont : Le Bord de l'eau.

Mihelj, Sabina (2011) *Media nations : communicating belonging and exclusion in the modern world*. Basingstoke, New York : Palgrave Macmillan.

O'Byrne, Darren J. and Alexander Hensby (2011) *Theorising global studies*. Basingstoke, New York : Palgrave Macmillan.

Reddy, Prasada (2011) *Global innovation in emerging economies*. New York, London : Routledge.

Ren, Xuefei (2011) *Building globalization : transnational architecture production in urban China*. Chicago, London : University of Chicago Press.

Singh, J.P. (2011) *Globalized Arts : the entertainment economy and cultural identity*. New York : Columbia University.

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ments !**

**Send submissions for the next
issue of RC09 newsletter to:**

**Kuang-chi Chang,
kcchang@uwm.edu**

Visit the RC09 website at

<http://www4.uwm.edu/letsociology/rc09/>