

SOCIAL TRANSFORMATIONS AND SOCIOLOGY OF DEVELOPMENT

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RC09 Co-Chairs:
Ulrike Schuerkens
Habibul Khondker

RC09 Secretary:
Brian Dill

RC09 Newsletter Editor:
Ilona Wysmułek

RC09 Webmasters:
Almendra Orbegoso
Devparna N. Roy

~ ~ ~

Twitter: @RC09_ISA

Facebook: rc09isa

Special Issue: RC09 Pandemic Diaries

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Remarks from the RC09 Co-Chairs: Ulrike Schuerkens and Habibul Khondker

Dear Colleagues,

Thanks to Ilona and the authors for this great Newsletter who contributed interesting pieces from around the world. As we all suffer from the same pandemic, the suffering reminds us that we are members of a common humanity. All over the world, countries have been exposed to lock-down of their societies to protect their health with huge socio-economic consequences. Populations by and large all over the world have respected these measures that limit individual freedoms and rights not only in democratic countries but also in less democratic ones. We are still in the middle of the pandemic with changing numbers of cases from the North to the South. Political and economic elites have been united in common measures from the system of the United Nations organizations but also from regional and national welfare and economic programs. Scientists all over the world are working on the medical, public health, socio-economic, and societal consequences of the pandemic. In fact, although the disaster unites the world and its populations in common endeavors to overcome the pandemic, the responses are not fully uniform. Some countries have executed their smart measures timely and have seen better results, others dragged their

feet and wished that the pandemic would disappear mysteriously, which did not happen, and a huge number of lives were lost as a result. Moral philosophers and sociologists in the days to come will scrutinize the morality of those uneven responses.

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Globalization has become a more understandable word for humanity even though politicians and policymakers are designing scenarios that create fear and depression around the world by closing national borders.

Globalization has become a more understandable word for humanity even though politicians and policymakers are designing scenarios that create fear and depression around the world by closing national borders. Economic globalization may experience in the short term a broken system of supply chains with relocation of enterprises and industries to other regions as it has been already done for the industries directly concerned with the pandemic (masks, medicine, etc.) that have been produced locally because of closed borders. International travel is still mostly limited as regions close themselves from one another according to the outcomes of

the pandemic. Students and researchers have difficulties to conduct field studies and international research projects are often at a standstill. University staff around the world have learned online teaching and students have accepted the remote learning, pursuing courses in a digitalized form.

Remarks from Ulrike Schuerkens and Habibul Khondker...

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As research for COVID-19 vaccine is at the human trial stage, the next challenge will be the distribution of the much-needed vaccine. What would be the basis of allocation? How would big pharmaceutical companies and governments decide? Purchasing power or needs? We hope a sensible and humane framework will guide the availability of the vaccine to all who need them. All these difficult times and the “new normal” are the beginning of a huge transformation of our societies. We are living through one of the greatest challenges of history and are supposed to create the future in this unique world that for the first time unify us against a common enemy. People are looking to science for a possible solution to overcome the crisis. But in this world of uncertainty, many are also turning to faith and spirituality that may assist them to overcome the pains and trauma of the pandemic.

Wishing you (for those in the geographic North) a pleasant vacation in the remaining days of the summer. Stay safe and healthy so that hopefully we can meet again at the time of the Brazil congress in February 2021.

Ulrike Schuerkens

Habibul Khondker

RC 09 Co-Chairs

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# RC09 Pandemic Diaries - NIGERIA

## Pandemic Diary from Nigeria: Of Intellectuals, Politicians and Inequalities of Now and Later

by Kudus Oluwatoyin Adebayo

Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria

On June 13, 2020, Nigeria had 15,181 confirmed COVID-19 cases, the second-highest rate in Africa after South Africa. In the middle of the pandemic, the Nigerian state and the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) have been at loggerhead with each other over unresolved labour disputes. Although the dispute predated the pandemic, the current disagreement has renewed engagement with the debate of education as a public good, and how improving higher education could help in correcting entrenched inequalities.

The latest dispute, which resulted in a nationwide strike by university lecturers and coincided with COVID-19, ensued following the failure of the state to fully implement the agreements it freely entered with academics between 2009 and 2017. ASUU criticised that “Nigerian rulers are insensitive to the plight of the poor, especially on quality of life matters such as education and health.” The union challenged the commercialisation and privatisation of public higher education. It also opposed the introduction of principles it believed would impinge on the ideals of the university as a public good, which ought to be funded by, but autonomous from, the state. These agitations were a critical factor in past and current strikes on university campuses.

Rebuking and condemning the strike action was the primary response from the state to ASUU’s charge. The state had insisted that striking amidst a pandemic is ill-timed and unpatriotic. It expected universities to lead the fight by finding

a cure. The Minister of Labour even derided academics as playing the game of Ludo. However, the state ignored the unfavourable condition within which Nigerian academic had worked for decades, such that not striking during COVID-19 may not have changed much of anything.

Besides finding a cure, the state also expected universities to sustain higher education while the country is on lockdown. If there was no strike, the thinking goes, university activities would have continued via internet-based systems. That was the expectation of the Minister of Education of Nigeria too until ASUU called his attention to the fact that there is not much investment in ICT infrastructure and resources for online education. Besides, access to the Internet is limited on most campuses. Where the Internet access is available, poor electricity had remained a barrier.

Despite ASUU's reservation, though, some universities – some state-owned and private – continue to offer lectures and conducted examinations online. However, the continuation of higher education online has only revealed the underbelly of inequalities ingrained in Nigeria’s educational system. It has exposed how the digital divide between the haves and have nots is a growing source of inequities in educational access. Indeed, when all of this is over, children from wealthy homes would reach the labour market before public university attendees who went through the lockdown without an opportunity to continue their studies.



# RC09 Pandemic Diaries - NIGERIA

## Pandemic Diary from Nigeria... by Kudus Oluwatoyin Adebayo

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The state-academic union dispute in Nigeria would not end with COVID-19. Nevertheless, striking in the middle of a pandemic has called attention to the looming crises that continued underfunding and interference in university education would cause. More so, the pandemic has become a window into understanding future inequalities in education and labour market in Nigeria. COVID-19 is a proof that the Nigerian state must treat higher education as a public good.

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RC09 Pandemic Diaries - BRAZIL

Pandemic Diary from Brazil

by Vanessa Boanada Fuchs, Prof. Dr.

Executive Director, Institute of Management in Latin America

Assistant Professor of International Development and Sustainability

We are stationed in Brazil, working for the Latin American regional hub institute of the University of St.Gallen (Switzerland). Keeping a balance between work and family life has been quite a challenge. The different time zones in which we operate, combined with the fact that our very active son is also currently being homeschooled, makes for an 18-hour daily shift. Adapting the content and format of courses to the online environment has consumed considerable energy and time. Research has also been severely affected, especially for those with caring obligations. We don't know when things will go back to normal, nor what the new normal will be; this is cause for additional anxiety. Those relying on fieldwork have lost the year (and maybe more?). Especially the women I have spoken to have also reported a feeling of lagging behind in terms of academic production. How will we ever make up for that? Should we even attempt to?

As a positive note: many more people have opened themselves to the idea of online teaching, and hosting academic and business meetings virtually. In recent years we have witnessed increased mobility and a corresponding inflation of in-person events. Making use and valuing connections and collaborations supported by online means could have the potential to reduce emissions while still keeping us connected. We just need to be consequent about following up and improving those forced (but somehow positive) changes imposed on us alongside the tragedy that we are currently facing.

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# RC09 Pandemic Diaries - CYPRUS

## Some Remarks on the COVID-19 Pandemic, 2020

by Victor Roudometof  
University of Cyprus

Thanks to an impressive array of post-apocalyptic images there is hardly an element of surprise. The simulacrum of the Apocalypse has been in circulation in movies, TV series and books for several decades. Unsurprisingly, it has robbed the element of awe from life itself. The COVID-19 pandemic is an occasion where the veil of normalcy is lifted as the virus becomes the “crack in everything” (to use Leonard Cohen’s phrase) that allows truth to be rendered painfully visible: some people cannot survive without an ongoing paycheck even in affluent societies; some cannot afford to get sick; and underfunded and underprepared health systems experience collapse in the face of the pandemic. The pandemic becomes a looking glass mirror through which we see ourselves, our societies, our institutions and structures in the cold light of a crisis that reveals the failings we have learned to ignore under the façade of cozy convenience. Perhaps its most important public dimension concerns the worldwide official promulgation of new protectionism and localism through the actions of various states. We witness aggressive state intervention, closing of borders, physical movement restriction, “social distanc-

ing”, the collapse of the travel industry, and so on. But there is still a deeper and more emotional revelation that pertains to the so-called micro-level, the universe of our interpersonal relationships that form the “life-world”, the social web ourselves depend on. The misnomer of 2020 might also be a candidate for “word of the year”: “social distancing” instead of the far more accurate “physical distancing”. We are told to practice social distancing – for the Others are potentially dangerous or even lethal to our very existence. Perhaps they are. In Cyprus (and in other countries), once the quarantine was imposed there was a reported 30% increase in instances of domestic violence.

\* This is a slightly edited fragment from a larger commentary forthcoming in the European Sociological Association’s Newsletter “European Sociologist”.

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RC09 Pandemic Diaries - INDIA

COVID-19 and Domestic Workers in India: A Dairy Note on Their Agony and Sufferings

by Manoj Kumar Jena, Dr.

Associate Professor at Center for the Study of Social Systems,
School of Social Sciences, JNU, New Delhi

The present scenario of agony and sufferings of domestic workers force me to write a note on them, as they are an embedded aspect of our urban social life. Since lockdown the urban metropolitan species has been cold-hearted mere spectator of their trauma and pain, not helping them in such a distressed situation - they are standing alone at a dangerous threshold of their life. These workers have compensated their labor value with happiness in our life yet we are unable to accolade their significant contribution. They cleaned each and everything, made our house dirt-free and have taken care of our near and dear ones. Because of their hard labor our marble floor is twinkling, our toilets and bathrooms are spick and span, our utensils are glittering, our clothes are shining, our food tastes delicious and our children are smiling.

Now they are struggling with life and death, no job, no money not a piece of bread. They are on the streets; we have to listen to them. They are in the time of gaping crisis in their life. We can see their tears and hear their wailing voices. They are really helpless - we have to help them. They are dying - we have save them. Now it is our turn to return the same smile to them with interest. It is a fact that most of the domestic workers in India are from marginal communities comprising of Women, Minority, Dalits, Tribals and Other Backward Communities. Ever since their birth, location and social position, they have not only faced discrimination, stigmatized practices, even in the

work they have suffered due to lack of access to social protection and negation of work rights. Now, in a phase of troublesome pandemic COVID-19 crisis, it has opened up a pandora box of their agonies and anguish. They are fighting with multiple enemies including their past, present and future to survive in time of Corona crisis.

It is another worry that reverse migration trend from urban to rural space will further generate crisis for decent and sustainable employment in village. There is possibility that it will lead to a survival crisis disrupting the socio-economic conditions as well as caste and gender conflict in village India. They are in a critical situation - we have to rescue them. It is not only for the State but each one of us to come forward and save them. This is the time to repay happiness to them.

This is a testing time for all of us as an individual, as an institution and as State to make sense of this ambivalence and angst of domestic and migrant workers in and around us and one should ponder over the question as earliest as possible on ways of addressing in the time of deep crisis in their life.

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## COVID-19 Tests Government Solidity and Middle Class Solidarity

by Mohammad Hidayaturrahman  
Wiraraja University, Madura, Indonesia

As one of the three largest democracies in the world, Indonesia faces problems with governance in the face of COVID-19. Especially problems relating to policy making, and also coordination and communication about implementing the policies made. These problems can come from the overlapping authority between one ministry or department at the central level with another ministry or department. There are many officials who disagree and argue with each other in the mass media about the policy of handling COVID-19. In addition, communication and coordination with local governments are still not solid. The central government sets policies that cannot be implemented in the regions. Then the regional head sues the policy made by the central government. It seems that the central government does not communicate about the intended policies to the regional government before the decision is made public.

Supposedly, the government at all levels is more solid in its handling. The COVID-19 pandemic era indeed necessitates humans to limit themselves in meeting and interacting physically. But coordination and communication can be done virtually. Video conferencing technology such as Zoom and other platforms can be an alternative that facilitates government coordination and communication at all levels and sectors. The minister's and regional head's office can be changed into a meeting and coordination room that can be connected during working hours. Considering the extremely fast development and dynamics of the spread of COVID-19 as well as its impact, the way of working and intensity of government co-

ordination in a pandemic and crisis situation should be improved. On this occasion, data from the local government can be used as a reference for making central government policies, or improving and updating policies that have been made, if they are not in accordance with the reality in the regions. Especially because these are the regional, local and village governments, who deal directly with people in the field.

COVID-19 is also a test of a middle class solidarity in Indonesia. Although they feel the impact of COVID-19, the middle class still has the ability to survive amid the economic difficulties that arise. Among them: savings can be used to survive to meet the needs of life until the pandemic ends. This solidarity can be realized in the form of donation contributions. It does not need to be large. If every person from the middle class who has a savings fund allocates IDR 1,000,000 (= around USD 68), then the amount could reach IDR 24 trillion (= around USD 1,634,640,000) - assuming that Indonesia's population is 240 million, and 10% of them are middle class or have savings. This is a large enough amount to be distributed to the poor or who became poor due to the economic impact of COVID-19. The fund can be managed by social institutions that have been engaged in social and community service.

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COVID-19 and Africa

by Ulrike Schuerkens, the RC09 Co-Chair
University Rennes 2, France

Let's say: I'm not a doctor, but a university professor who is also interested in the socio-anthropology of health. I have been observing for weeks the development of COVID-19 around the world and particularly in Africa where the ManaGlobal project that I coordinate is taking place.

What I have noticed are border closures in the South and North which have prevented a certain number of contaminations triggered by travelers, especially in the countries of the South. Rapid political reactions in Senegal, Cameroon, Ghana and Morocco (where the ManaGlobal project is taking place), which I believe have largely prevented the spread of the disease. The treatments adopted, influenced by the proposals of the university professor and director of the Institut Hospitalo-Universitaire Méditerranée Infection in Marseille, Didier Raoult, have helped to keep the number of deaths relatively low compared to the many deaths in Western countries. Senegal and also Morocco have adopted the protocol suggested by this controversial doctor in France where his treatment is only allowed for serious cases in hospitals. These serious cases show in the West certain common characteristics: advanced age beyond 65 years, co-morbidities such as obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular problems etc.

However, the populations in the four countries where the ManaGlobal project is taking place are characterized by their youth and thus often healthier – despite poverty – than the serious cases in the West with high morbidity rates. The re-

search found that children and adolescents are affected by relatively few cases of COVID 19 or – in case of contamination – they develop benign forms. Can it be concluded that the pandemic will instead have severe effects and high mortality rates in Western countries with different consumption patterns from those in the South and organisms exposed to very different food? The health effects of the pandemic in the South should certainly not be underestimated but the exposure to other pandemics such as malaria appears to protect African populations. Moreover, it seems to me that the limited rate of COVID-19 cases in China – although they are certainly underestimated for political reasons – gives a small glimmer of hope for the health consequences in the South, at least in Africa. The good choices made by doctors in several African countries in the face of the pandemic are compounded by the fact that the drugs proposed by Professor D. Raoult can be administered without the side effects expected in severely affected elderly patients in the West. Moreover, these are the medicines available in Africa (Sanofi Maroc) and known to the populations.

There remain the socio-economic consequences in countries characterized by populations often working in precarious and informal conditions. International and regional solidarity is beginning to be activated in the face of this situation, which exposes populations to famine and subsequently to hunger revolts that will not be long in coming if governments do not react. Con-



RC09 Opinion Column

COVID-19 and Africa .. by Ulrike Schuerkens

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finement has not been applied in Cameroon but in Morocco; in Senegal, a curfew reigns at night in the face of populations who work during the day to meet their immediate needs. Wearing masks has been demanded in Cameroon, Morocco and Senegal and is being suggested in Ghana.

In conclusion, I would say that there is hope in the face of the health consequences of the pandemic in the countries of the South, at least in Africa. The socio-economic consequences are likely to be enormous in the face of countries of the North whose economies are at a standstill and whose importance for the socio-economic systems of African countries is well known.

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# NEW RESEARCH PROJECTS

## Surfing Yesterday and Today, Here and There: Shifts in Meaning

by Khelifi Lilia, PhD Candidate  
Sorbonne University

### 1. Introduction. Why study surfing?

My current thesis project continues the reflections initiated during my Master thesis. I work on the role of body practices in the construction of individual and collective identities and their influence on the interactions with the environments. I chose to study surfing since it is a practice hard to categorise. Surfing will be an Olympic discipline for the first time in Tokyo 2020, which contributes to promote surfing into a sport. But surfing is far from the conception conveyed today, due to the way the Western world has appropriated this practice and has transformed it into a lucrative market during the last century (Guibert, 2006; Sayeux, 2005; Lemarié, 2016; Guibert & Coëffé, 2016). Inhabitants from the Pacific islands have been surfing since 1500 B.C. (Lemarié, 2016; Sayeux, 2005). This old localised practice is now multi-located through the world. The exploration and conquest of “new” territories during the XVIIIth century from Western countries and at the meantime the homogenisation of practices like football amongst others tend to the spread of an unity edicted by the Western world (Vigarello, 1988; Terret, 2016). All the surfwear companies were created after the 1960s and they are all located in California or Australia. Besides, most of them are now transnational firms (Guibert, 2006; Lemarié, 2016). Surfing is today famous and conveyed through the world by many visual supports, like films, photos, maga-

zines, etc., asserting the hegemony from the Western world of the surfer's figure (Benassi, 2018; Guibert, 2011).

### 2.1. Empirical research 1 (MA thesis): Main research questions, fieldwork and results

Since a lot of research works deal with the contemporary history of surfing (Ford & Brown, 2006; Guibert, 2006; Sayeux, 2005; Lemarié, 2016), I noticed that there were very few research concerning “developing” countries. So I decided to study how surfing spread and is appropriated by people from a big island, categorised as a poor and insecure country : Madagascar. I led direct and participant observations among small groups of surfers between September and October 2017, inspired by the ethnographic method used by L. Wacquant (2002) during his three years study in a boxing gym in a Black ghetto in Chicago. I also conducted interviews with surfing and tourism actors, from national institutions (Ministeries) to local surfers in villages. I focused on a village on the East coast, Mahambo, and a city in the South-East, Fort-Dauphin. The first surfing school, and the only one, is located in Mahambo, while Fort-Dauphin is strongly connected with La Réunion, causing mobilities of surfers from this small island to Madagascar. The main results demonstrated how the ocean is repulsive for inhabitants, and their non recreative perception of the beach and the ocean. Besides, the investments are concentrat-



## Surfing Yesterday and Today ... by Khelifi Lilia

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ed in the highlands, whereas the coastline is neglected (Fournet-Guérin, 2009). Yet it seems that there is a reversal in the geopolitics of surfing for about two decades, since people from “developing” countries organise themselves to promote and to appropriate in their own way this widespread practice. Indeed, Malagasy children begin to surf on pieces of wood from damaged fishermen's pirogues. It reminds the way inhabitants from Pacific islands used to practice surfing: J. Lemarié (2016) describes the art of making carved wood planks in Hawai'i until the Western colonisation at the end of the XVIIIth century. What was in the beginning a lack of economic resources from Malagasy inhabitants surveyed can become an argument to enhance a connexion with surfing creators. Some respondents claim to be the descendants of the Austronesians, a people from today Indonesia who settled in a lot of islands through the Pacific ocean up to Madagascar during Antiquity (Vérin, 2000). Their presence and their high mobility through the many islands in the Pacific and Indian oceans have influenced the language and the culture in this area. Besides, the use of outrigger pirogues by Austronesians is still widespread through the Pacific and Indian oceans.

### 2.2. Empirical research 2 (PhD thesis): New research questions and fieldwork plan

Individual actors try to organise the coastal development through surfing to provide tourism income. This idea was the main one of the respondents' speeches. A new fieldwork planned for soon (from July to September 2020) would allow to evaluate the evolution of actions and ideas from surfers. The evolution of the relationship between in-

habitants and the coastline is central to understand how surfing is not only an individual body practice, but also covers an influential cultural aspect. Indeed, surfers spend more time on the beach to observe the ocean, to enjoy moments with their friends (eating, talking, playing music) and to rest, than they do in the water, due to the exhausting and dangerous game with the waves (according to my observations and interviews led in Madagascar). The interconnected relation between game, culture and sport is one of the new research questions I will develop. The role of body practices is essential to understand the construction of human societies (Elias & Dunning, 2006; Vigarello, 2004, 2014; Pype, 2007). Surfing is quite specific in the landscape of body practices. The game aspect seems obvious since the purpose of the practice is pleasure, while the surfing (sub)culture is wide and contributes to the collective imaginary (Lemarié, 2016; Guibert, 2006, 2011; Benassi, 2018). Finally, surfing is not really accepted as a sport and keeps its marginal image (Finnegan, 2017). Its first attendance in the next Olympic games results from a long struggle by the International Surfing Association (ISA). A lot of actors are implied to promote surfing and enjoy the ambiguity of the practice to reach most people across the world and generate capital gains. Furthermore, I would like to develop how the local knowledge to decrypt the functioning of the ocean is learned and transmitted among the inhabitants.

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# NEW RESEARCH PROJECTS

## 'In the shadows of autonomy': Decentralization, municipal decision-makers and local contexts in Ghana and Rwanda. A new project and new challenges

Prof. Dr. Alexander Stroh-Steckelberg, Political Science: African Politics & Development Policy

Prof. em. Dieter Neubert, Development Sociology

Dr. Matthew Sabbi, Development Sociology, Contact: [Matthew.Sabbi@uni-bayreuth](mailto:Matthew.Sabbi@uni-bayreuth)

[www.politik.uni-bayreuth.de/en/research/shadows-of-autonomy](http://www.politik.uni-bayreuth.de/en/research/shadows-of-autonomy)

Development agents expect municipal authorities in sub-Saharan Africa, as elsewhere, to respond to local needs, fight corruption and hold government officials to account. The autonomy of elected officials to make local decisions is a premise for such behaviour. In the decentralization debate, Ghana and Rwanda represent successful cases and therefore promising examples for the analysis of local autonomy in decision-making in the context of international efforts to promote decentralization.

In a research project funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) starting in July 2020 at the university of Bayreuth we will take a deeper look into the daily practice of decentralization.

In theory, local councillors and mayors are supposed to take charge of crucial decisions for effective service delivery and the fight against poverty. However, the usually strong focus of current research on formal structures and its political control overlooks the local context that significantly influences everyday decision-making processes. The influential everyday life in and around the councils remains neglected. Councillors' incentives and rationale for running for office are largely ignored.

The social relations between local actors in and outside the administration are hardly considered. Contrarily, this project suspects the particular local situation and its interface with international decentralization promotion to play a crucial role in shaping challenges, options for and the success of reforms.

Building on a preliminary Ghana study, our aim is to highlight local realities through a comparative study with Rwanda. The everyday life of decentralization is contingent on sets of relations between the state, its local representatives, municipal councillors (as decision-makers), and the local context. Therefore, the project seeks to, firstly, analyse the logics of actors who run for office in municipal councils.

Secondly, it explores how councillors take the opportunity to influence decisions in their local contexts and how these councillors are, in turn, influenced by the particular local setting. Only the contextualization of decentralization efforts will offer the necessary inside view to understand and plan effective decentralized administrative structures, equally taking into account external interferences with decentralized decision-making.



# NEW RESEARCH PROJECTS

## 'In the shadows of autonomy' ...

By Prof. Dr. Alexander Stroh-Steckelberg, Prof. em. Dieter Neubert and Dr. Matthew Sabbi

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The project schedule includes intensive fieldwork. The unavoidable delay in field research due to COVID-19 related travel restrictions will be turned into an opportunity – though a sad one – to study municipal reactions and agency in this public health crisis. In Ghana and Rwanda, as in countries around the world, the governments, the local administrations and the public are reacting to the threat of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. Most of the regulations and precautions refer to everyday life and take place within the communities, and thus, at the local level. Municipal authorities are therefore centre-stage and partly officially in charge of health policies. The daily practice of implementing laws, by-laws, rules and general guidelines with regard to the pandemic is not only in itself a burning issue for research. It also offers a very instructive comparative case to study municipal decision-making in different local contexts under the same and almost synchronous global challenge. Meanwhile, the first and foremost academic challenge will be to exploit a new intensity of online-based research.

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Photo: Matthew Sabbi

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# NEW PUBLICATIONS

**Fuchs, Vanessa Boanada. (2020) Chinese-driven frontier expansion in the Amazon: four axes of pressure caused by the growing demand for soy trade. *Civitas-Revista de Ciências Sociais*, 20 (1), 16-31.**

<http://revistaseletronicas.pucrs.br/ojs/index.php/civitas/article/view/34656/19696>

## Abstract

Chinese demand for the world's commodities has the capacity to shape agricultural frontiers in many parts of the world, including the Amazon. This article is a preliminary report on findings concerning the expansion of the agricultural frontier in the Brazilian Amazon driven by increases in soybean production, extension of cropped area, cross-referenced with satellite data on deforestation rates at the smallest possible scale: the municipal level. The study identifies 21 municipalities forming four axes of frontier expansion in the Amazon, where soy crops may be the cause for displacement deforestation, as it is the case of cattle ranching. Despite the Soy Moratorium, frontiers in the Amazon keep shifting. The article advocates that fur-

ther research in those four axes is needed to better understand the relationship between those two industries in terms of land use as well as the socio-environmental on the ground impacts. Furthermore, the connections between those areas with present and future infrastructure development in the Amazon, many counting with direct Chinese investment, will be key to the expansion of the soy value chain, bypassing the initial goal of zero-deforestation.

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**Dieter Neubert. (2020). "The simplified assumptions of the global middle class narrative. Global middle income groups in Kenya." In: Suter, C., S. Madheswaran and B. P. Vani (Hg.), *The middle class in world society: Negotiations, diversities and lived experiences*. New Delhi: Routledge.**

<https://www.routledge.com/The-Middle-Class-in-World-Society-Negotiations-Diversities-and-Lived/Suter-Madheswaran-Vani/p/book/9781138609501>

## Abstract

The narrative of the global middle class presented by economic journals, marketing organizations or optimistic economists depict the middle class as "the" driver of change with regard to development and democratization. The relation between middle class, economic development and democracy seems to be taken for granted and the original authors who promoted this idea such as Moore or Huntington are hardly mentioned. The "middle class as drivers for change"-statement implies a general homogeneity and stability of the middle class. Without being mentioned either,

these assumptions refer directly to sociological class theory as presented by Marx and Weber. The people in the socio-economic middle of Kenya are in economic instable position and socio-culturally highly diversified. Neither the Marxian or Weberian class theory applies to Kenya nor do the Kenyan "middle class" fulfil the assumptions of the global middle class narrative.

# NEW PUBLICATIONS

**Somefun O. D. and Adebayo, K. O. (2020). “The role of mentoring in research ecosystems in Sub-Saharan Africa: Some experiences through the CARTA opportunity.” *Global Public Health*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17441692.2020.1776365>**

## Abstract

Mentoring is important for improving capacity development in population and public health research in sub-Saharan Africa. A variety of experiences have been documented since Consortium for Advanced Research Training in Africa (CARTA) admitted the first cohort in 2011. However, the experience of mentoring opportunities in CARTA has not been studied. Our study focused on the perceptions, experiences and challenges of mentoring among CARTA fellows. We adopted a descriptive design based on data collected from the fellows using an online semi-structured questionnaire. Out of 143 fellows in the programme, a total of 52 fellows from seven cohorts completed the questionnaire. Fifty-three percent of the respondents were females, more than half belonged to the health sciences while

35% were in the social sciences. Fellows received mentoring from CARTA graduates and experienced researchers in the CARTA network, but they also engaged in peer-mentoring with one another. Teaching, publishing, conference attendance and grant application were considered particularly important in mentoring, but mentors and mentees highlighted personal and social issues such as networking, work-family life balance, and managing stress and time, as challenges. There is a need for more formalised but flexible mentorship initiative in the CARTA fellowship to facilitate enduring relationships for career development.



**Adebayo, K. O. and Omololu, O. O. (2020). “‘Everywhere is home’: Paradox of homing and child upbringing among Nigerian-Chinese families in China.” *International Sociology*, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0268580920905461>**

## Abstract

Africa–China relations are facilitating different flows and inducing mobilities that have produced Afro-Chinese families in Guangzhou, China. This article examines how Nigerian-Chinese couples construct and embrace contradictory notions of home, as well as how their child upbringing practices manifest this paradox. The article uses data from life history interviews, repeated visits and in social hangouts involving both Nigerian-Chinese couples and individual Nigerian men in interracial marriages. Whereas Nigerian men tend to feel less at home, owing to problems such as perceived Chinese identity exclusivity, the uncertainty of life, and their experiences of discrimination and racism, their Chinese spouses, as internal migrants themselves, also

feel similarly unwelcome in Guangzhou. Furthermore, Nigerian-Chinese couples feel obligated to secure the futures of their Afro-Chinese children due to a suspicion that Chinese society may not accept them. The parenting styles, hopes and aspirations revealed by Nigerian-Chinese couples regarding their children show that they view home as an un-centred category.

## NEW PUBLICATIONS

Adebayo, K. O. (2019). “I don’t want to have a separated home’: Reckoning family and return migration among married Nigerians in China.” *Migration Studies*  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/migration/mnz052>

### Abstract

The growing ‘Africans in China’ literature has documented the extent and extensiveness of flows from Africa to Chinese cities. However, return migration has not received much attention, and even less is known about the role of the family in return consideration. The article focuses on how married Nigerians reckon return and family in Guangzhou city using data from ethnographic observations and interviews with 25 participants. While the family is central to how married migrants think about return, the dynamics vary among the participants. Migrants whose spouses/children reside in Nigeria complain about being distant from their families and the challenge of unification and ‘absentee fatherhood’. Nigerian couples that live in Guangzhou as a family consider the high cost of rais-

ing children and the future competitiveness of their children as ‘China-educated’ as factors in return calculations. Moreover, despite living with their husbands in China, some Nigerian women desire to return to Nigeria to improve their lives, but they did not embark on a return journey to avoid family separation. Among Nigerians in an interracial relationship with Chinese women, the feeling of (un)belongingness resonates in their return consideration owing to poor experiences with access to residence permit and social welfare. While integration issues impact on return migration of married Nigerians in Guangzhou, the transnational practices of the men suggest that a return behavior would probably accompany return consideration.

## AWARDS

Kudus Oluwatoyin Adebayo

has been awarded the 2020 African Humanities Program Postdoctoral Fellowship from the African Humanities Program (AHP) of the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) for from July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021. I would be doing research on the topic:

*Transnational livelihood, masculinity and family dynamics of Nigerian deportees from China.*

**Our sincere congratulations!!!**

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# CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

## ISA Forum in Brazil POSTPONED until February 23-27, 2021

ISA Executive Committee decided to postpone the IV ISA Forum of Sociology until February 23-27, 2021. Registration deadline for presenters has been extended to December 15, 2020.

“We cannot stress enough that you are all in our thoughts in this extraordinary period – across so many domains of crisis. Please stay safe and care for your families and friends so that we all make it through in good health and strong of spirit.”

Sari HANAFI, the ISA President  
Professor of Sociology, American University of Beirut

“On behalf of Habib and myself, we regret this necessary change. We hope that the tentative February date for the conference will both enable your participation as well as empower us as sociologists to have an even stronger conference on topics that are rising due to the crisis.”

Ulrike M.M. SCHUERKENS, University of  
Rennes 2 LiRIS EA 7481, France

Habibul KHONDKER, Zayed University,  
United Arab Emirates

RC 09 Co-Chairs and RC09 Program Coordinators at  
the IV ISA Forum in Brazil:



### UPDATED TIMETABLE:

#### 15 September – 15 October 2020

The authors of abstracts selected for the ISA Forum will be invited to confirm their participation to the Forum before October 15th, 2020. They may update their abstract and title, in consultation with their session organizers or RC program coordinators.

**15 October 2020** Final day to confirm participation by authors of the already accepted abstracts.

·The abstracts that have not been not confirmed will be automatically removed from the program

**16 - 25 October 2020** Publication of the calls for new abstracts proposals by the RC/WG/TG

**26 October – 12 November 2020** Submission of new abstracts proposals via online platform

**12 November 2020** Deadline for new abstract submissions

**24 November 2020** Authors are notified about the acceptance or rejection of their abstracts

**15 December 2020** Presenters final registration deadline (early registration fees apply).



# CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

## ECPR General Conference ONLINE, 24 - 28 August 2020

**Section:** Corruption Mechanisms and Anti-Corruption Agenda in the Digital Age: Continuity and Change

**Section Chairs:**

Roxana Bratu, University of Sussex

Ilona Wysmułek, Polish Academy of Sciences

Sofia Wickberg, Sciences Po, Paris

Endorsed by the ECPR Standing Group on (Anti-) Corruption and Integrity, we organize a section on corruption mechanisms and anti-corruption agenda at the ECPR General Conference Online event in 24-28 August, 2020. Our section consists of ten panels, listed below. Observer registration for the event is now open, with the deadline: August 12, 2020. It will be our great pleasure to e-meet you in our section!

**Section abstract:**

While social movements are increasingly denouncing corruption, the first decades of the 21st century have also shaken many institutions and beliefs that liberal societies, and by extension anticorruption efforts, are built on. Populism and nationalism are weakening liberal internationalism. New existential threats such as climate change and terrorism are taking the focus away from democratization and fight against corruption, or at least they change how we view it. Public sector reforms increasingly blur the line between what is public and what is private. On top of that, digital transformations profoundly impact bureaucratic arrangements, business activities, models of action and citizens engagement practices. In this new political and social realities of globalized and highly digitized socie-

ties, novel forms of corruption appear alongside with the old ones. The rapid technological innovation contributes to the change in corruption and informal practices, potentially impacting also its causes and consequences. These new complexities are coupled with ever ascending corruption trends and a puzzling increase of perceived corruption in various countries despite the proliferation of anti-corruption measures. At the same time, technological developments, together with data availability trends and new computational capacities opens new possibilities for researching corruption and developing evidence-based anti-corruption policies. Artificial intelligence, machine learning, and e-governance seem as promising yet still underexplored tools on the way to transparency, accountability and integrity.

With increasing evidence on little effectiveness of traditional anti-corruption public policies based on extensive regulation, strict compliance and tough enforcement, the critical reflection on extant theoretical and empirical approaches is necessary. It requires scholars and practitioners alike to reconsider the very meaning of corruption and integrity, their mechanisms and manifestations in the public and private spheres. It also calls for re-examining the relationship between political parties, public's



# CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

## ECPR General Conference Section: Corruption Mechanisms and Anti-Corruption Agenda... by Ilona Wyszmułek

— continued

trust in state institutions, national governments and parliaments which are at the very core of representative democracy. Political party financing and elective democracy have started to be questioned heavily in the era of fake news. Furthermore, the role of civil society in tackling corruption needs to be unpacked. Bottom up forms of mobilization via digital media have increased in frequency but there is little knowledge about the challenges, opportunities and usage of algorithmic automation and artificial intelligence by grassroots social movements actors. The changing social reality offers new possibilities but also demands critical reflections on current and future approaches to concepts and methods of researching corruption mechanisms and anti-corruption agenda.

This Section is open to contributions that investigate corruption and anti-corruption in the contemporary context via theoretical innovations, methodological developments and empirical inquiry.

### Panels of the Corruption Mechanisms and Anti-Corruption Agenda Section at the ECPR 2020:

P051: Civil Society and Corruption: Changes and Challenges

P076: Corruption and Anti-Corruption in Empirical Research: Methodological, Ethical and Security Challenges

P094: Digital Media and Anti-Corruption from the Grassroots

P187: Integrity and Corruption: Conceptual Challenges

P228: Measuring Political Corruption - How to Hit a Moving Target?

P288: Political Parties and Corruption: Legal Responses and Accountability Mechanisms

P337: Reconsidering the Gender - Corruption Link: Policy Implications and Recommendations

P401: The International Factor in Promoting Good Governance

P454: What Went Wrong? The Relationship Between Transparency, Accountability, and Corruption

P476: Corruption and Anti-Corruption in the face of health and other societal challenges

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

The World Pandemic Research Network: A New Infrastructure on the Societal Impacts of COVID-19

<https://wprn.org>

„The **World Pandemic Research Network (WPRN)** is a platform serving research communities. It maintains a searchable global directory of the scientific resources available on the societal and human impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. It shows [who works on what, where](#), in real time, at global level.

Designed and maintained by researchers, WPRN is free, non-profit, public-funded, open (creative commons, open-source), GDPR compliant. It is steered by an international [Advisory Board](#) and supported by major [scientific institutions and scientific networks](#) worldwide.

WPRN is the product of a collective scientific intelligence, with validation by senior scholars who act as [referents](#) in their fields.”



World Pandemic Research Network

Societal Impacts and Aftermath of Covid-19:
A Global Searchable Directory



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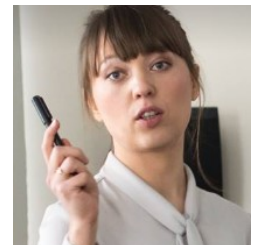


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DEVPARNA N.



Social Transformations and Sociology of Development