

Newsletter

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MESSAGE FROM RC09 PRESIDENT

Dear colleagues,

I am pleased to present the December 2024 newsletter of RC09, which summarizes the main publishing and research activities of our members. I hope this period has brought you immense satisfaction in your work, and I want to thank all of you who shared your results for inclusion in this newsletter.

Over the past six months, RC09 has demonstrated a positive dynamic, primarily focusing on organizing the 5th ISA Forum of Sociology, which will take place in July 2025 in Rabat, Morocco. As we approach the end of the year, we see the rewards of this collective effort, with more than 200 proposals accepted within the sessions organized by RC09. On this occasion, RC09 has also established an Award for the Best Post-Graduate Student Paper at the RC09 5th ISA Forum in Rabat. This award will stimulate young researchers' interest in Social Transformations and the Sociology of Development. I extend my congratulations and gratitude to all RC09 Board members who actively contributed to organizing this important meeting, all session organizers, and all colleagues who submitted papers and plan to participate in next year's ISA Forum. A special thank you goes to the Forum's RC09 Program Coordinator, Ulrike Schuerkens.

I sincerely thank Lutfun Nahar Lata, the RC09 Online Communication Manager, for her efforts in editing this newsletter, which I hope you will enjoy.

This year, we have also welcomed several new members to the RC09 family. I want to thank them all for choosing to be part of our research group, and I hope their collaborations with RC09 members will bring them professional fulfilment and success.

Finally, I take this opportunity to wish you all a happy holiday season with your loved ones and a prosperous New Year 2025!

Kind regards,
Dorina Rosca
RC09 President



NEW PUBLICATIONS: BOOKS

Villette, M., Branine, M. and Wade, M. E. B. (Eds.). *Entreprises Africaines. Vingt projets pour sortir du néo-colonialisme et du sous-développement*. Paris: Presses de l'Ecole des Mines. ISBN: 978-2-38542-521-0

Abstract

In the 21st century, Africa is a continent in full transformation where local entrepreneurs are developing businesses by following unique paths, still poorly understood by the academic world.

The result of the work of a collective of African and European researchers, this book analyzes the journey of twenty companies born in Africa. Some have become national champions, even pan-African multinationals, others have been bought by European multinationals, and still others have collapsed after a brief period of glory.

By applying the same analytical methods used to study European and North American companies, the authors show both strong similarities in the way businessmen accumulate capital, and the singularities of African contexts. Major differences emerge, such as the dependence of large African companies on their international business partners, and the role of family, political and religious influences. It is observed that in these countries, economic activity is even less separated than elsewhere from other aspects of life in society.

This book is a valuable tool for better understanding businesses on the African continent.



NEW PUBLICATIONS: ARTICLES & BOOK CHAPTERS

Daniel, A. and Neubert, D. (2024). Development as Utopia? Road to a Better Future between Fiction and Lived Utopian Practice. *Forum for Development Studies*, 51(2): 1-21. DOI: 10.1080/08039410.2024.2314279

Abstract: Development as presented in the MDGs/SDGs is a well-planned step-by-step enterprise. If we dig deeper into the development debate, it is clear that the dilemma of eradicating poverty and achieving sustainable development is still unsolved, despite all efforts. Thus, development seems to be fictional in the sense of an unreachable utopia. Against this background, it is helpful to connect the development debate with utopian studies. We learn from utopian studies that there are not only fictional utopias as a vision of a just world, which may never be realised. There are also lived utopias that unpack alternative approaches to overcoming inequality or meeting ecological challenges, and which can be realised at least within a limited space. This applies to concepts from in the Global South, such as swaraj, buen vivir and ubuntu, or ecovillages and solidarity economies that present themselves as models for alternative development. As lived utopias, they follow future practice in a defined area in which the desired future becomes part of the present. These concepts are new models in the critical development debate. They are particularly successful in communities that share a common vision and common values. At the same time, there are doubts whether these models may be realised at the national or global. With regard to the fictional character of development goals, it is obvious that we still lack a feasible global strategy with a vision for the future that is attractive enough to gain global support and that can really be accomplished.

Genov, Nikolai (2024). Commercialization: A hatch in the sociological diagnosis of our time'. *Sustainable Social Development*. 2(4): 2549. DOI:10.54517/ssd.v2i4.2549

Abstract: Max Weber feared a social future dominated by rational specialists "without spirit". He considered this development a possible outcome of the interplay between all-embracing commercialization (marketization, monetization) with the rationalization (bureaucratization) of structures and processes in industrialized societies. Another observation of Weber concerned the ongoing replacement of medieval religious values with secularized-rationalist and profit-oriented ones. The predominance of such values usually fosters work productivity but also raises profound questions about the changing specifics of money. They have become central to the value systems at local, regional, and global levels. Weber was pessimistic concerning the fate of commercialization. Edward A. Ross substantially contributed to the study of commercialization as part and parcel of his efforts to put a sociological diagnosis on American society after WWI. He selected and analysed a dozen constructive and destructive cases of commercialization. Talcott Parsons studied the phenomenon in detail and called it "instrumental activism". George Ritzer's study on McDonaldisation as a rationalization process is an effort to put a sociological diagnosis on global society. There are open questions concerning the capacity of contemporary societies and individuals to manage innovations for coping with commercialization. The empirical reference for the discussion is SpaceX, led by Elon Musk.

NEW PUBLICATIONS: ARTICLES & BOOK CHAPTERS

Genov, N. (2024). Conceptualizing Global Trends. World Futures. The Journal of New Paradigm Research. DOI: 10.1080/02604027.2024.2402040

Abstract: Numerous publications contain high-quality descriptions of causes, processes, and effects of global trends. However, very few of these publications are theoretically guided or aim at theory building. This is a handicap preventing most publications on global trends from developing high-quality explanations and prognostications. This article contains an attempt at developing a conceptual framework for resolving the issue. The attempt is based on the paradigm of social interaction and includes arguments in favor of four global trends: upgrading the rationality of organizations, individualization, spread of instrumental activism, and homogenization of culture. The decomposition of the trends makes it possible to identify their structures and dynamics. The analyzed examples usually refer to constructive processes and effects. In reality, the global trends are internally controversial and bring about both constructive and destructive processes and effects. The most challenging task for future studies concerns the interplay of the internal dynamics of each global trend with the dynamics of the configuration of global trends. The conceptualization of the dynamic configuration of interacting global trends is the core of the diagnosis of the global situation.

Lata, L. N. (2024). Digital Labour Platform, Resistance and Labour Protection in Bangladesh. In Shahidur Rahman & Md. Masud-All-Kamal (eds.), *Social Transformation in Bangladesh*. London: Routledge.

Abstract: Digital labour platforms are the newest technological wave that is reshaping and reconfiguring the economic and labour landscape. Digital platforms, often known as the gig economy, are increasingly adopting app-based models to connect consumers with workers to complete their on-demand tasks. Existing research on the gig economy and its regulation has mostly been conducted in the Global North, whereas little is known about the emergence of the gig economy in the Global South. In particular, there is a gap in the literature on how the gig economy is regulated in the Global South and what the gig workers' working conditions and resistance opportunities are. In this context, this chapter explores the nature of gig work and gig workers associations in Bangladesh using the case of ridesharing drivers in Bangladesh as well as the implications of the digital labour platforms for labour regulation in Bangladesh and the potential applicability of existing laws and regulations to platform work.

Neubert, D. (2023). Social inequality in Africa. In: Surinder S. Jodhka/Boike Rehbein (Eds.), *Global Handbook of Inequality*, pp. 1-21. Cham: Springer International Publishing.

Abstract: Our sociological concepts and theories have been developed in the context of Europe and North America. The post-colonial debate reminds us that they need to be provincialized. For the analysis of inequality, simple measures such as the distribution of per capita income are still helpful. But we cannot take for granted that our standard concepts can be applied unchanged to other parts of the world with different societies and economies. For an understanding of inequality in Africa, we have to go beyond classical concepts and consider other scholarly debates. As shown by empirical studies, in Africa socio-economic positions are more vulnerable and volatile than in Europe and North America. People often combine different sources of income and their social position cannot be clearly defined by occupation or control of the means of production. Due to weak social security systems, semi-formal and informal networks play a decisive role in coping with shocks. These networks have a considerable influence on social position and patterns of inequality. The intersectional debate reminds us that inequality is also an outcome of socio-cultural factors (usually discussed are gender and race/ethnicity). In Africa, in addition to gender, we need to consider ethnicity, neo-traditional authorities and patron-client relationships, which all play a role in shaping inequality. At the same time, individual decisions make a difference in how people deal with neo-traditional structures and with semi-formal and informal networks. The resulting differences in behaviour create socio-cultural distinctions that can be captured by using a milieu concept adapted to African contexts.

NEW PUBLICATIONS: ARTICLES & BOOK CHAPTERS

Neubert, D. (2023). How political is the middle class in Kenya? *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*. 4(1): 44-59.

Abstract: The current debate presents the middle class in the Global South as a driver of democratic change and the core of civil society. The activities of NGOs, or student protests, for instance, seem to support this notion. However, these examples should not be overstretched. Before confirming the idea that the 'middle class' is a carrier of political protest and a driver of democratic change, we need to answer at least two questions. Is the 'middle class' really a class in the strict sociological sense, with a common class consciousness or just a group with a middle-income: 'middle-income group'? And are the protests really representative of the middle-income group? Taking Kenya as an example, we cannot identify a 'middle class' in the strict sense of the sociological class concept. Neither does the political commitment of the middle-income group follow socio-economic differences. More important are patterns of socio-cultural differentiation that can be conceptualised as socio-cultural 'milieus'.

Reddel, T., Lata, L. N., Young, C., Yates, M., & McDaid, L. (2024). Addressing (in) equity through public policy and local governance systems: A case study of Queensland, Australia. *Australian Journal of Public Administration*. DOI: [10.1111/1467-8500.12675](https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8500.12675)

Abstract: Equity is a core social value that is widely debated in its conceptualisation and inclusion into policymaking and service delivery. Policymakers and street-level actors often disagree about or have limited interest in defining (in)equity, leading to a lack of consensus about how to make measurable and long-lasting impact for populations and communities experiencing disadvantage. Within this context, this paper draws on governance concepts such as hierarchy, market dimensions, and network dimensions to analyse key insights from in-depth stakeholder interviews (N = 25) with government and non-government actors in Queensland, Australia. The paper (1) examines the extent barriers to equity are created, reinforced, or reduced by centralised and street-level public governance approaches and (2) determines what (and where) the opportunities are to address these barriers and build a systemic approach to achieve equity. The paper highlights important tensions for actors tackling issues of inequity, including centralised or distant policymakers and government and non-government street-level practitioners operating within disjointed systems for policy, delivery, and funding. Notwithstanding the increasingly prevalent 'partnership' narrative, the foundations remain anchored in policy and management practices that have been built on longstanding neo-liberal market mechanisms or the 'contract state'. A more integrated and adaptive approach that aligns high-level policymaking with street-level practitioners and local communities should be an important pillar in navigating these competing priorities and challenges.

Points for practitioners

- Equity is debated both conceptually and in policymaking and practice, leading to a lack of consensus about how to design and implement effective solutions.
- Many universal policies and programs are designed and implemented in rigid silos, are not joined-up, and have limited impact on the economic and social policy drivers of inequity and entrenched disadvantage.
- A more adaptive and collaborative approach that aligns high-level governance and policymaking with street-level practitioners and local voices is possible but challenging to sustain.

INTEGRATIVE SESSIONS AT THE 5TH ISA FORUM OF SOCIOLOGY

Solidarity and Justice in the Anthropocene: Global and Local Perspectives

Participating research committees and their presidents:

RC 02 Economy and Society, Karen SHIRE

RC 07 Futures Research, Markus SCHULZ

RC 09 Social Transformations and Sociology of Development, Dorina ROSCA

RC 24 Environment and Society: Jo LINDSAY

Session organizers: Ulrike Schuerkens (RC09) and Habibul Khondker (RC09)

How do we know justice in the Anthropocene? Solidarity is not only a feeling of unity between populations all over the world who have common interests and goals and who ask for justice in the Anthropocene but also a normative value. Confronted with a shared threat such as climate change, people will refer to solidarity to address this danger. The Anthropocene requires actions and cooperation between groups to reduce inequities within societies. Inequality within societies functions as a driver of consumption that damages the planet's resources. Addressing the challenges of the Anthropocene requires solidarity between populations and institutions. Institutions should be accountable and fair. Solidarity among nations is also needed. Climate change is largely linked to activities done in wealthy nations, but more recently, it has been linked to activities in China and India. However, the burden of climate change falls on low- and middle-income countries. Needed funding must be given to poorer nations to undertake adaptation actions. Climate refugees from the global South must be welcome in the global North. By failing to accept these different tasks, we may transfer the negative outcomes of climate change to our children and grandchildren. The Integrated session will thus discuss the current and near-future situations and suggest global social dynamics and collective actions to navigate the Anthropocene safely. Which sort of socio-economic development is needed? How do we respect local cultures and favour sustainable lifestyles and consumption behaviours? How can our professional organizations support these endeavours? How can we create opportunities to attain solidarity in the economy, society, politics, and culture?

Proposed speakers and themes:

- 1) Unruliness in the Anthropocene: Subjectivities and Political Possibilities for Change, Associate Professor Ms Andrea J. Nightingale, Oslo University, Norway
- 2) Climate Justice in the Anthropocene: An African Perspective on Equity and Transition, Professor Hassan A. Hamdy, Zayed University, United Arab Emirates
- 3) Bridging the Divide: Tackling Barriers in the Anthropocene for a Healthier, United Future, Associate Professor Ms. Kerry Ard, Ohio State University
- 4) Multispecies flourishing in Urban Spaces: More-than-Human Forms of Justice in the Anthropocene, Associate Professor Ms. Jenia Mukherjee, Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur, West Bengal, India
- 5) Mexican Solidarities between Extractivism and Green Transformation: The Scenarios of the New Sexennium, Professor Markus Schulz, FLACSO, Sede Académica de México, Carretera, Mexico

INTEGRATIVE SESSIONS AT THE 5TH ISA FORUM OF SOCIOLOGY

Scientific knowledge and social practice – high expectations, tensions and compromises

Participating research committees and their presidents:

RC02 Economic Sociology, Karen A. Shire
 RC09 Social Transformations and Sociology of Development, Dorina Rosca
 RC11 Sociology of Aging, Lucie Vidovicova
 RC17 Sociology of Organizations, Michael Grothe-Hammer
 RC23 Sociology of Science and Technology, Leandro Raizer
 RC31 Sociology of Migration, Loretta E. Bass
 RC41 Sociology of Population, Walter Bartl
 RC46 Clinical Sociology, Tina Uys
 RC55 Social Indicators, Joonmo Son

Session organizers: Walter Bartl (RC41); Karen A. Shire (RC02)

Scientific knowledge is usually seen as a crucial contribution to human progress. Frames of grand challenges, such as the metaphor of the Anthropocene, formulate desiderata of prospective research and, ideally, technical or social innovation. Funding programs regularly frame their calls for grant proposals by favoring research that can be expected to contribute to tackling these challenges and even to catalyze social change. This optimism is somehow reminiscent of Talcott Parsons' modernist assumption that the expansion of higher education would contribute to a professionalization of work and a rationalization of society. Beyond the classic professions, the implied connection between research and social practice was not always part of how academia and societal stakeholders perceived of the purpose of research. Instead, research for the sake of purpose-free knowledge creation was an important topic in establishing the (relative) autonomy of science. Indeed, ample evidence suggests that there is a gap between academic knowledge production and its application, indicating fundamentally different logics of action. Approaches how this gap could be narrowed are manifold, reaching from transformative research over transdisciplinary research to living labs and field experiments. Research policy tries to narrow this gap by measuring, monitoring and valorizing research impact. For sociology, the expectation of knowledge transfer implies new professional roles and modes of action that go beyond empirical research. This session aims to explore the (historical) constitution of societal expectations toward research-practice relations, as well as the challenges and opportunities that may arise from attempts of narrowing the gap between research and practice.

Proposed speakers and themes:

- 1) Maitrayee Chaudhuri, Delhi, India: Higher education and the social sciences in a “smart India”
- 2) Faeza Ballim, Johannesburg, South Africa: Translating Technology in Africa
- 3) Renan Leonel, Newark, United States: Designing an agenda for studying the crisis in scientific and technological systems
- 4) Manfred Stock, Halle (Saale), Germany: Academization and its consequences

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Award for Best Post-Graduate Student Paper RC 09 5th ISA Forum in Rabat

The ISA RC 09 is pleased to announce for the first time a competition for the award honoring the best post-graduate student paper related to sociological research on social transformations. The winner/s will present her/his/their paper in one of RC09's scheduled sessions at the V ISA Forum of Sociology in Rabat, Morocco, 6-11 July 2025 and their name(s) will be published in the RC 09 Newsletter. The award consists of a certificate with a citation and a monetary reward in the amount of up to Euros 500,00 or 500,00 Euros each in the case of a co-authored paper, which can be used toward expenses for attending the Forum. A summary of the finalist paper will be published in the RC 09 Newsletter.



For more information, please refer to the RC09 website [here](#),



Invitation to Participate in RC 09 Webinars

RC09 intends to host a series of insightful webinars focusing on topics related to social transformations and the sociology of development. These webinars aim to foster dialogue, share cutting-edge research, and explore diverse perspectives within the field. If you are interested in organizing a webinar, please get in touch with us at isa-rc09@isa-sociology.org.