

Exploring the Commonalities, Solidarities and International Challenges for Global Sociology

Panel Abstract

Panel Chair: Shoba Arun

This panel brings together leading sociologists to examine the commonalities, solidarities, and institutional challenges shaping contemporary global sociology. Engaging debates on epistemic justice, methodological power, decolonisation and academic freedom, the panel reflects on how sociological knowledge is produced, institutionalised, and contested across unequal global contexts. Drawing on Bandana Purkayastha's call to "braid" diverse sociological traditions while resisting surveillance and data extraction regimes, Beáta Nagy's analysis of illiberal pressures on Hungarian sociology, and Maitrayee Chaudhuri's reflections on neoliberal metrics and parochial nationalism in India, the session foregrounds the political-economic conditions under which sociology is practised. Together, the contributions explore a field of global sociology that highlights the need for genuinely plural theory-building, ethical and solidaristic research practices, and comparative collaboration to sustain and democratise sociology in an era marked by authoritarianism, marketisation, and global inequality.

Bandana Purkayastha,
Braiding Global Sociologies

Over the past decades, sociologists continue to debate existing knowledge hierarchies, methodological approaches, and ways to build global sociologies. In my role as Vice President of National Associations for International Sociological Associations, I have been learning from several national associations of sociology (and sociologists). Based on these experiences, I will emphasize the critical need to consider histories of the discipline in different parts of the world, and the political-economic-social-cultural structures in which each version of the discipline unfolds in today's unequal world. These histories constitute different sociological braids (or tributaries of rivers) for building theoretical approaches and methodologies. At the same time, we are all subject to data mining, the intensive and invasive data extraction processes that work in tandem with surveillance systems nationally and globally. As compliance within the new systems becomes the norm, sociologies and sociologists, who emphasize power and inequality, are objects of suspicion in many societies. The challenge to build truly global sociologies begins with understanding the headwinds, and to respect sociologists' attempts to survive and build legacies based on their histories. Global sociologies will require both braiding distinctive strands of sociology and maintaining strategic distance to allow many sociologies to bloom.

Beáta Nagy

Illiberal Pressures on Sociology: Lessons from Hungary

In recent decades, Hungarian sociology has faced increasing political and institutional pressures. Political transformations, such as the rise of illiberal

principles, have resulted in attacks on academic freedom and significant institutional changes. Critical social sciences have become less tolerated and less popular under ideologically charged social and economic circumstances. Funds available within the country and coming from the European Union have also narrowed considerably, leading to less intense international academic cooperation. It has not left sociology education untouched either. Drawing on the Hungarian case, this paper outlines the key challenges facing sociology under illiberal conditions and reflects on their consequences for researchers and sociological research.

Maitrayee Chaudhuri, Global Metrics, Parochial Nationalism and the Challenge to Sociology: Notes from India

The institutional and political challenges to sociology stem from both neoliberalism and authoritarianism. Teaching and research institutions in India are increasingly governed by global metrics and triumphant cultural nationalism. Restrictions on academic freedom and critical perspective stem from both. This presentation explores how geopolitics, state and market impinge upon the everyday minutiae of teaching, research, classrooms and funding by looking at the intended and unintended consequences of market driven global metrics on one hand and state diktats on the other. While this impacts all disciplines, sociology in India is perhaps seen as a 'natural' fit for the state agenda, with the discipline's long association with the study of culture, tradition, religion, caste, family and kinship. This presentation draws from happenings in contemporary India. But this is not a unique story. The need of the hour is therefore to initiate comparative studies that document the divergences and convergences in the practice of sociologies. Such a process of scholarly engagement and collaboration would help build both sociological research and solidarity.