



## On Abortion, Revolution, and Marxist Analysis

By: Sandra Ezquerria

Daniel Ortega became Nicaragua's president for the second time when he won the presidential elections in November of last year. Ortega's return represented for many the hope to increase a genuinely leftist opposition to neoliberal policies and U.S. imperialism in the Latin American region. In his first speech after regaining the presidency, Ortega denounced the effects of neoliberal policies in Nicaragua and announced the country's adhesion to the Bolivarian Alternative of the Americas (or ALBA, *Alternativa Bolivariana de las Américas*).

Ortega had formerly led the country between 1979 and 1990, both in the National Reconstruction Board and as head of state under the Sandinista National Liberation Front (SNLF) or *Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional*. The Sandinista Movement, founded in 1962, was inspired by the guerrillero Augusto Sandino, who wanted to free Nicaragua from U.S. occupation (1927-1933) and was killed by the National Guard led by Anastasio Somoza. The Somoza family maintained a repressive and corrupt dictatorship in the country for 40 years and was a strong ally of the United States. When asked about Somoza once, Roosevelt answered: "He may be a son of a bitch, but he is our son of a bitch." The SNLF had been founded to fight Somoza's dictatorship and North American influence in the region. It also aimed to establish a socialist regime. The Revolution saw its triumph in 1979.

Ortega conducted industry nationalization and land reform during the Sandinista decade. During that time, Nicaragua suffered a U.S. embargo as well as military sabotage in the form of the Contras. It also faced increasing international isolation, especially after Perestroika. Despite the important achievements of the movement, the Sandinistas lost power in the 1990 election. There is no doubt, however, that the Sandinista Movement has represented for many one of the most emblematic and successful revolutionary attempts at building socialism at the international level. Its leaders and social basis, Ortega among them, managed to create a multiplicity of social alliances that often included partners such as women's organizations and the Church itself. Ortega and many of his comrades became important icons of the revolutionary 80s in Latin America and symbols of what social struggles used to look like before Fukuyama pronounced the sentence of the End of History.

What became of Daniel Ortega since the glorious 70s and 80s? What became of Nicaragua? According to many, on his way to the Nicaraguan presidency Ortega became everything but a Sandinista. Besides building alliances with the corrupt right wing, embodied by convicted former president Arnoldo Alemán, and counterrevolutionary archbishop Miguel Obando, he isolated the dissident voices within his own party. The former revolutionary has been accused by many within Nicaragua of totalitarianism, corruption, and opportunism. Although we could spend pages discussing all the controversial issues

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#### FROM THE LEFT SEEKS SUBMISSIONS FOR ITS (LATE) WINTER ISSUE.

Please send proposals or texts by email to Hannah Holleman at [holleman@uoregon.edu](mailto:holleman@uoregon.edu)

Deadline: February 15, 2008

that have arisen since Ortega took office, I want to focus on one that affects women and, more often than not, in Nicaragua, working-class and indigenous women: that is, abortion.

The legislative Nacional Assembly approved last month a law that makes therapeutic abortion illegal. This means that those who practice it can face punishments of between four and eight years of prison. This political decision was made in the turmoil of political campaign previous to the November 5th Election. The recently passed law that penalizes abortion under any circumstance, including when the mother's life is in danger, is one outcome of the current, somewhat artificial, "left-right" coalition blessed by the Church. The "abortion issue" has never had the unified support of the Sandinista movement. And Ortega's support of this law has angered both leftist and feminist organizations.<sup>1</sup> For Doctor Ana María Pizarro, from the Nicaraguan Society of Gynaecology and Obstetrics, the law is "a crime against the poorest women and an open violation of universal human rights and the Constitution."<sup>2</sup> According to many, the law will create an increase in female and child mortality and possibly a flight of doctors to countries where they can practice freely. Current mother mortality rates in Nicaragua are 83.4 deaths for every 100,000 babies born alive. Maternal mortality represents 4% of all deaths in Nicaragua; more than 70% are registered in rural areas, and mostly among women between 20 and 34 years old.

Far from justifying this law under some kind of socialist or revolutionary rhetoric, Ortega's legitimization of such a decision has been articulated around moral and religious arguments. The following is Rosario Murillo's, Ortega's wife, statement on the law:

"We are deeply committed to faith; we think that religious values console and shelter; faith is the way in which human beings find peace; religious values are the strength that we need to cope with everyday life, which in recent times has been hard enough. Everyday life obliges us to face really hard challenges and, with

the console and shelter provided by faith, people get nourished and get up again. Precisely because we have faith, we have religion, because we are believers, because we love God above everything, we have been able to bear so many storms, without getting perturbed! Just learning from every difficulty, what the Lord has wanted to send our way as a lesson, as a learning process. It is because of all this that we defend, and we coincide in this with the Church and the Churches, that abortion is something that affects, fundamentally women, because we can never get over the pain and trauma that an abortion leaves! When people have or have had to resort to it, they never get over it. And, we do not wish such a pain to anyone. Besides, it is an offence against faith; against life."<sup>3</sup>

The big irony in this statement, first of all, is that it is taking a stand that Liberation Theology, which had a significant presence in the Nicaraguan revolutionary movement back in the 70s, debunked decades ago: We do not need to pray to God to overcome our hardships but rather, we need structural changes to address our hardships which, at the end of the day, are structural themselves. Murillo's statement is a surprise not only for its moralistic content but also for her ultra-conservative interpretation of the Gospel, which expired long ago in Latin American.

Walden Bello noted that when politicians start talking about morals it means that they stopped doing politics.<sup>4</sup> This position was definitely true in the U.S. 2004 election and applies to probably most countries and moments in history. If we treat abortion as a moral issue it may be possible to relativize, denounce, and demonize it. If we look at it as a political one, where issues of power, gender, race, class, oppression, and violence are considered, the picture becomes more complex. We already know that politics are always more complex than morals, especially when the latter are Judeo-Christian.

While it is necessary to acknowledge that abortion has never been an "easy topic" anywhere, I think that it is especially important here to emphasize Ortega and

<sup>1</sup> EL PAÍS, Tuesday September 18<sup>th</sup> 2007, p. 4. Article written by Francesc Relea.

<sup>2</sup> <http://ipsnoticias.net/nota.asp?idnews=39174>. Original in Spanish. Translation by the author.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.bolpress.com/art.php?Cod=2006110901>. Original in Spanish. Translation by the author.

his party's revolutionary past. It is important to insert the passage of this law in a historical context where the Church, the owning classes, and the military have faced strong resistance for decades and where millions of Nicaraguan people managed to start building, not very long ago, a society where exploitation was put to an end and where resources were to be redistributed. Women, who were socialist and/or catholic, were key actors in this moment in history, both as its creators and its recipients.

As we know, resources can take many forms and shapes, and these can go from bread and water to the ability to make decisions about one's body, especially in a context where women die during birth due to insufficient medical attention, access to medicines, geographical isolation, and lack of care during pregnancy. To deny the right to interrupt a dangerous pregnancy, for millions of women, means to exclude them from three key resources: The ability to plan the size and form of their families (which is often a survival and economic strategy), the ability to control their own bodies and health, and the ability to live. Although the concept of exploitation is key in order to undertake any Marxist analysis of social dynamics, let us not forget that not all power is based upon the classic definition of exploitation, and that women suffer oppression, often invisible, because it happens at the level of their bodies. It is important to remember the work of socialist feminists in this country and all over the world, who for decades now have been theorizing the intersectionality of capitalism and patriarchy.

During my first year of graduate school in Oregon, one of my professors in a theory seminar noted the tendency among many so-called Marxist sociologists to use a critical and dialectical approach to analyze U.S. society and denounce its contradictions, while demonstrating an inability to do the same when it came to analyzing so-called socialist countries (i.e. Stalinist USSR). In an era where media and public opinion in the United States are controlled by conservative views and functionalist explanations, it can be seen as irresponsible to criticize governments, politicians, and countries who claim to be posing an alternative to U.S. savage neo-liberalism and imperialism. However, I think that it is our responsibility, as serious

and rigorous Marxist social scientists, to raise our voices against those who, under the mask of socialism, are reproducing capitalist and patriarchal oppression. We cannot be dialectical in the U.S. and functionalist in Nicaragua just because we don't like Bush.

Latin America needs to continue to create real alternatives and opposition to U.S. influence in the region. It needs brave politicians who do not yield to Washington's imposed and abusive trade agreements and the IMF and World Bank's absurd debt payment and structural adjustment programs. It also needs progressive support from U.S. soil to fight the delegitimizing attacks that they continue to receive. What it does not need, however, is that we progressive voices favour such opposition in whatever form and shape it takes. Our eventual and most important goal is human liberation, and we are not serving it by pretending that Daniel Ortega is fine just because he claims to be fighting neoliberalism or because of his stellar past. We would betray our goals and our politics and, by doing so, millions of Nicaraguan women who will suffer the effects of the new policy. Redeeming Ortega and what he represents might actually mean buying into Fukuyama's sentence: The End of History. The End of Socialism. The End of Alternatives.

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## Teaching Sociology from a Marxist Perspective

A great teaching resource, available from the ASA, is *Teaching Sociology from a Marxist Perspective* (Second Edition). This wonderful compendium is edited by Martha E. Gimenez and Brian V. Klocke, in cooperation with the Marxist Sociology Section. It features an introductory essay and brief statements that discuss how Marx and Marxisms inform an array of course syllabi, including Marxist Theory, Sociological Theory, Feminist Theory, Class/Race/Gender, Population/Environment, Political Sociology, Methods, Political Economy, Colonialism /Development/ Globalization studies, Social Stratification, and Sociology of Art. Includes over 30 syllabi in both graduate and undergraduate courses. A separate section provides charts and diagrams, film resources, articles from *Teaching Sociology*, and classroom exercises, projects, and lectures for teaching Marxist concepts. 252 pp., 2002. Stock #330.T02.

The following was submitted as a potential teaching resource. It is written as a provocative essay for undergraduate students and includes thought questions near the end. *From the Left* editors encourage further contributions, suggestions and insights from readers and section members interested in teaching Sociology from a Marxist perspective.

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### The Hidden Injuries of Capitalism

*To our students: This article argues that capitalism spurs some of the most common problems people experience in the modern world. It is inspired by how little capitalism appears in popular discourse about social problems outside some classrooms, and by how quickly any critique of capitalism, when raised, is dispensed with facile references to human nature, the virtues of capitalism, or the imperfections of all economic systems. May this article be of use as a stimulating supplement or primer for your courses in sociology.*

#### The Problem No One Will Name

In her classic book, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), feminist thinker Betty Friedan begins with

“the problem that has no name” – the discontent and depression countless post-war American housewives reported, many with guilt, for wanting more than to be a wife and mother. When considering the public’s consciousness of capitalism, at least in the United States, it seems one could pose the issue somewhat differently: capitalism is not the problem that has no name but rather the problem that no one will name.

Of course, there is a long and deep history of critiques of capitalism, stretching at least from Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels to Rosa Luxemburg, Vladimir Lenin, Antonio Gramsci, Georg Lukacs, Louis Althusser, Herbert Marcuse, E.P. Thompson, and contemporary Marxists of various stripes like Erik Olin Wright, Michael Burawoy, Eric Hobsbawm, and Antonio Negri, to name just a few. But there is arguably a vast difference between how Marxists talk about social problems, and how the vast majority of people on earth, and more certainly how government and business elites who dominate official public discourse, talk about social problems.

The modern world is plagued with many social problems, and not all of them can be associated with capitalism per se. For instance, industrialization appears to be more responsible than capitalism for global warming, and the taken-for-granted division of labor (or at least the most common form of labor division, in which each specializes their labor, rather than sharing in specialized labor) is a powerful engine for the perpetuation of inequality in modern economies of all kinds. But many problems can be linked to capitalism...indeed, more than most people imagine. The trouble is that few see through these many social problems to their source in capitalism. Instead, the more common culprits fingered are either human nature, or a few “bad apples,” i.e., selfish or malevolent individuals who ruin things for everyone else.

However, if we understand capitalism, at its core, as the *private, market-based pursuit of profit* (key principles: private property, profit, and markets) – from which develops a wide range of institutions that shape and spur human behavior along certain channels, from your local pizza parlor to the global McDonalds Corporation, to malls, advertising agencies, casinos, stock markets, and regulating institutions

like the U.S. Federal Reserve and the International Monetary Fund – we can better trace the capitalist origins of many social problems. From this vantage point, do you see capitalism fueling the following social problems? Note: The following list includes more consumer than producer examples due to my own interests, and by no means exhausts the number of social injuries that can be associated with capitalism. Can you think of others?

### Five Hidden Injuries of Capitalism

1) Calamity: It is often said that capital hates disorder, and there is indeed some truth to this, but there is another, less comfortable truth less often told: calamity sells. As anthropologist Helena Norberg-Hodge explains, under capitalism, “A nation’s balance sheet looks better, for instance, if all its forests have just been cut to the ground, since felling trees makes money. And if crime is on the increase and people buy more stereos or video recorders to replace those stolen, if we put the sick and elderly into costly care institutions, if we seek help for emotional and stress-related problems, if we buy bottled water because drinking water has become so polluted, all these contribute to the GNP [Gross National Product] and are measured as economic growth.” (Norberg-Hodge 1991: 145). Norberg-Hodge’s list may be extended to include other timely examples, like: hurricanes, floods and tornados, which stimulate demand for food products and home construction<sup>4</sup>; wars, which accelerate demand for weapons and coffins; and terrorism threats, which spur demand for television news and security technology.

2) Splurging & Dieting: Some calamities, like natural disasters, capital cannot manufacture, but others, like overweight and obesity, it can, and for good reason. The current crisis of overweight is more often connected with its direct and obvious causes – lack of exercise, and overeating – than with these causes’ antecedents. Of course, overweight is due in part to modern technologies that have made it easier to do more with far less physical exertion. But overweight is also

due to a vast economy of desire. Capital thrives on desire, and few desires are more universal, persistent and pliable than the human desire for food. People in capitalist nations are typically bombarded with ads urging splurging (“indulge yourself!”), price deals encouraging consumption (perpetual sales, all-you-can-eat, two-for-the-price-of-one, etc.), and food products made more to stimulate appetites than to nourish bodies. Once overweight occurs, capital (sometimes the same companies) then thrives on discontent, as consumers become customers for countless dieting and exercise peddlers.

3) Sensationalism: The media obsession with sensationalism is rarely connected with capitalism, but thinking practically, how do profit-minded news companies cut costs and increase revenues? They increase ad space/time, lay off investigative reporters, and turn to programming that is cheap, politically safe (to avoid lawsuits and reprisals), and attracts viewers, e.g., sex scandals, crime, accidents, weird or funny happenings, and tawdry stories about famous people. Given such business imperatives, that most precious function the press can serve in a democracy – investigative reporting on public problems – tends to shrivel because it is too costly, and potentially threatening to powerful interests.

4) The Vicious Cycle of Work & Spend: Human beings have not always worked more to consume more. As Max Weber noted in *The Protestant Ethic* (2002), peasants were long indisposed to working more than that necessary to live. Yet economist-turned-sociologist Juliet Schor remarks that many Americans, and one might add, many people in contemporary capitalist nations, are caught in a consuming cycle of work-and-spend (Schor 1992). Surrounded and influenced now less by the Joneses next door than pervasive media coverage of the lifestyles of the rich and famous, younger consumers want more what is on TV, than in the neighbor’s yard (Schor 1999, 2004). The more one wants however, (usually) the more one must

<sup>4</sup> In her more recent book, *The Shock Doctrine* (2007), author Naomi Klein notes the emergence of companies that offer luxury getaways for the wealthy who wish to flee natural disasters in style.

work. The more one works, the more one earns and spends. The more one spends, the more one must work to maintain one's lifestyle, and finance any resulting debts. This vicious cycle would be less noteworthy if it were not for the widespread yet often unrecognized injuries to social relations, and free, uncommodified time. One salient example: holiday rituals in countless homes center around capital's commodities – e.g., television, movies, gifts purchased – rather than around what, for many, seem now comparatively unexciting family and/or religious rituals – e.g., cooking or playing together, story-telling, lighting of candles, prayer.

5) Planned Obsolescence: Is it natural for people to buy clothes, and only wear them once, or to throw them away when they tear or develop holes? Not if we look at the long span of human history. The rich have perhaps always wasted. But under capitalism, two distinct phenomena occur to help ensure sales and profits: products are deliberately made not to last, and consumers are made to quickly dispense with their purchases. Thus, planned obsolescence is built-in not only to the manufacturing process, but also to the consumption process so that consumers incline to faddism with regard to clothes as well as cars, computers, walkmen/ipods, video games, foods, books, etc. The resulting injuries are not only material (e.g., accelerated environmental destruction, more life-harming pollution), but personal-cultural (e.g., loss of the ability to repair things, under-appreciation for old things and old people, which/who are deemed hopelessly antiquated).

### Concluding Questions

Of course, no economic system is perfect, contrary to Marx and other utopians' thought. All have their strengths and weaknesses, and often, the strengths entail weaknesses and vice versa. Any judgment which ranks one system as better than another presumes a set of values, whether these be productivity, conservation, efficiency, innovation, human development, private profit, public goods, or else. The core questions then

become what kinds of values do we want our economy to have, and accordingly, what will its strengths and weaknesses be? Are capitalism's strengths – prodigious productivity and wealth, rapid innovation, etc. – worth the injuries they entail for some and all?

Some say that capitalism is not the problem per se, but rather that there are better and worse forms of capitalism. Capitalism does indeed vary from nation to nation and locality to locality, but it varies because cultural norms, governments, labor unions, and other social forces shape capitalism, and constrain it to varying extents. Thus, variations in capitalism do not mean that there are better and worse forms of capitalism, but rather that there are more or less successful efforts to control capitalism, and lighten its injuries. Do these efforts work, or must capitalism be overthrown? If overthrown, what should replace capitalism? And, what will be the strengths and weaknesses of this alternative?

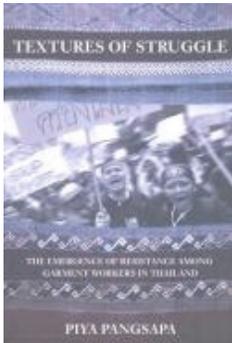
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*Paul Lachelier ([paul@paulachelier.com](mailto:paul@paulachelier.com)) this summer completed his Ph.D. in sociology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. His dissertation, entitled "Democracy, Individualism and the Civil-Civic Citizen: Young American Professionals Talk about Community, Politics and Citizenship," explores the meaning and limits of young Americans' public engagement in a world where what Americans do as voters, taxpayers, consumers and workers matters now perhaps more than ever.*

# Books/Film

## New/recent books or films of interest



***Textures of Struggle: The Emergence of Resistance among Garment Workers in Thailand (ILR Press, an imprint of Cornell University Press, 2007)***

**By Piya Pangsapa**

Based on intensive ethnographic fieldwork in Thailand, *Textures of Struggle* focuses on the experiences of Thai women who are employed at textile factories and examines how the all-encompassing nature of wage work speaks to issues of worker accommodation and resistance within various factory settings. Why are some women less tolerant of their working conditions than others? How is it that women who have similar levels of education, come from the same socioeconomic background, and enter the same occupation, nevertheless emerge with different experiences and reactions to their wage employment?

Women in the Thai apparel industry, Piya Pangsapa finds, have very different experiences of labor "militancy" and "non-militancy." Through interviews with women at two kinds of factories—one linked to the global economy through local capital investment and another through transnational capital—Pangsapa examines issues of worker consciousness with a focus on the process by which women become activists.

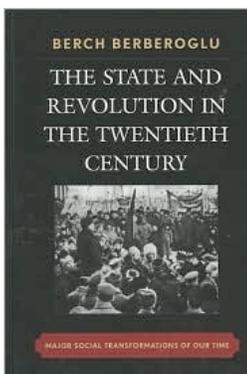
She explores the different degrees of control and coercion employed by factory managers and shows how women were able to overcome conditions of adversity by relying on the close personal ties they developed with each other. *Textures of Struggle* reveals what it is like for women to feel powerlessness and passivity in Thai sweatshops but also shows how they are equally able to resist and rebel.

This book knocks another few nails in the coffin of the reactionary stereotype of the timid, unmilitant, fatalistic woman sweatshop worker. Through insightful ethnography, Piya Pangsapa takes us into the lives of some bold, militant, and politically effective women workers and helps explain their successes and setbacks in the context of the political economy of Thailand and the Global South as a whole."

-Leslie Sklair, Emeritus Professor of Sociology, London School of Economics, author *Globalization: Capitalism and its Alternatives*

This book provides a much-needed analysis of the voices and experiences of women garment workers in Thailand about their accommodation and resistance amid economic restructuring before and after the East Asian crisis. Ethnographic studies of multiple rural and urban factories revealed how long-term women workers with comparable backgrounds and deplorable working conditions either intensified their intersecting work experiences and socio-emotional connections as a survival strategy and/or connected with workers from other factories and outside organizations to jointly resist their working conditions. These strategies may be time- and place-dependent, while generating directions for future research in different countries and regions on the continually evolving and shifting global assembly line."

-Kathryn B. Ward, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale



***The State and Revolution in the Twentieth Century: Major Social Transformations of Our Time (Rowman and Littlefield, 2007)***

**By: Berch Berberoglu, with James F. Petras and David L. Elliott**

This book deals with a topic that is central to the most important and decisive issues and events of our time--the state and revolution in the twentieth century. Social scientists have made numerous attempts to understand the causes of revolutions by examining the underlying factors that contribute to revolutionary uprisings. To further these efforts, this book addresses some of the key issues related to this process through both theoretical and empirical inquiry into the nature and dynamics of the state and revolution as a basis for an understanding of the major socialist revolutions of the twentieth century. The book provides a comparative-historical analysis of the state and socialist revolutions in Russia, China, Vietnam, Cuba, and Nicaragua. The thread that runs through each of the chapters that make up this book, especially the case studies of revolutions taken up for study, is

the class nature of the state and the class forces involved in the revolutionary process leading up to the taking of state power, as well as—and more importantly so— the class nature of the forces that have taken power and rule over society in the post-revolutionary period. Applying class analysis to the study of the state and revolution, this book helps us understand the nature and dynamics of class struggles in societies that have gone through a revolutionary process.

This book provides a theoretically sophisticated and empirically rich class analysis of the state and revolution that has been long overdue. Given the fast-paced changes taking place in Eastern Europe, the former Soviet republics, and now Latin America, the appearance of Berberoglu's book at this critical time makes us doubly fortunate.

-Martin Orr, Associate Professor and Chair, Department of Sociology, Boise State University

*The State and Revolution in the 20th Century* is an excellent example of the application of class analysis to the study of the state and major socialist revolutions of the past century. It provides a much needed comparative-historical perspective for studying key social movements that have succeeded in taking state power to effect change."

-Rhonda Levine, Professor of Sociology, Colgate University

Providing an incisive analysis of the state and social revolution in the twentieth century, this book brings to life the struggles of oppressed workers and peasants for state power with exceptional clarity, articulating the linkage between theory and practice in these revolutionary processes and offering essential lessons for building today's movement for global justice and equality.

-Walda Katz-Fishman, Professor of Sociology, Howard University

*Dr. Berch Berberoglu is Foundation Professor of Sociology, Director of Graduate Studies, and Chair of the Department of Sociology at the University of Nevada, Reno.*



## ¡Salud! (DVD, 93 minutes, 2006)

A timely examination of human values and the health issues that affect us all, ¡Salud! looks at the curious case of Cuba, a cash-strapped country with what the BBC calls 'one of the world's best health systems.' From the shores of Africa to the Americas, ¡Salud! hits the road with some of the 28,000 Cuban health professionals serving in 68 countries, and explores

the hearts and minds of international medical students in Cuba -- now numbering 30,000, including nearly 100 from the USA. Their stories plus testimony from experts around the world bring home the competing agendas that mark the battle for global health—and the complex realities confronting the movement to make healthcare everyone's birth right. <http://www.saludthefilm.net/ns/main.html> for more information.

Cuba established a highly regarded universal health care system decades ago, and has provided medical assistance and medical education to the less privileged in developing countries since the early 1960s. ¡Salud! shows us the latest chapter in this incredible story.

-Julie Feinsilver, Ph.D. Author of *Healing the Masses: Cuban Health Politics at Home and Abroad*



## The Killer Bargain (DVD, 57 min-

utes, 2006)

The killer bargain referred to by this documentary's title is the availability of cheap consumer goods, imported by Western companies, whose prices don't reflect the human and environmental costs of their production. This film could be used to talk about commodity fetishism, which this film exposes, if not in those terms.

Released by California Newsreel: <http://www.newsreel.org/nav/topics.asp?cat=49>

## Section Announcements

### Membership

As of September 30, 2007 there are 408 members in the section!

### Insurgent Sociologist and Critical Sociology

SAGE is digitizing the entire contents of the *Insurgent Sociologist* and its successor *Critical Sociology* back to Volume 1, Number 1. This material will be available on-line to subscribers (and to individuals working in institutions that subscribe) by the end of 2008. Soon classics in left scholarship will be available for classroom use and scholarly research. Please ask your university or institutional library to subscribe to the journal.

### Ten Days in Paris

The first reading for *Ten Days in Paris*, the play authored by Dianne Dentice that chronicles the ten day meeting between Marx and Engels in late August 1844, had its first reading by actors in the Stephen F. Austin School of Theatre on Sunday, October 14, 2007. The play was reviewed by theatre director, Scott Shattuck, early in the semester. Professor Shattuck made some very helpful comments and enlisted the help of director Kevin Scholtes to find student actors and direct the reading. SFA theory director, Tom Segady, used the play as a teaching tool in his undergraduate theory class. According to Professor Segady, the play was well received by his students and enhanced his lectures about Marx and Engels.

Dianne Dentice, Asst. Professor, Sociology  
Stephen F. Austin State University

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## Recent Publications

Clark, Brett, J. B. Foster and R. York. (2007). The critique of intelligent design: Epicurus, Marx, Darwin, and Freud and the materialist defense of science *Theory and Society* 36:515–546.

**Abstract** A new version of the age-old controversy between religion and science has been launched by today's intelligent design movement. Although ostensibly concerned simply with combating Darwinism, this new creationism seeks to drive a "wedge" into the materialist view of the world, originating with the ancient Greek philosopher Epicurus and manifested in modern times by Darwin, Marx, and Freud. Intelligent design proponents thus can be seen as challenging not only natural and physical science but social science as well. In this article, we attempt to explain the long history of this controversy, stretching over millennia, and to defend science (especially social science) against the criticisms of intelligent design proponents—by defending science's materialist roots.

Clark, Brett; York, R. (2007). The Restoration of Nature and Biogeography: An Introduction to Alfred Wallace's 'Epping Forest'. *Organization & Environment*, 20(2), 213-234.

Longo, S.; York, R. (2008, Forthcoming). Agriculture Exports and the Environment: A Cross-National Analysis of Fertilizer and Pesticide Consumption. *Rural Sociology*, 73(1).

Mancus, P. (2007). Nitrogen Fertilizer Dependency and Its Contradictions: A Theoretical Exploration of Social Ecological Metabolism. *Rural Sociology*, 72(2), 269-288.

Skladany, M. C., Clausen, Rebecca; Bolton, Ben. (2007). Offshore Aquaculture: The Frontier of Redefining Oceanic Property. *Society and Natural Resources*, 20(2), 169-176.

York, R.; Clark, Brett. (2007) The Problem with Prediction: Contingency, Emergence, and the Reification of Projections. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 48(4), 833-837.

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## Announcements from the 2007 ASA Conference

### Newly elected section officers for 2007-08

#### Chair:

- ◆ William DiFazio, St. John's University, New York

#### Chair-Elect:

- ◆ Judith R. Blau, University of North Carolina

#### Past Chair:

- ◆ John Bellamy Foster, University of Oregon

#### Secretary-Treasurer:

- ◆ Jacqueline A. Carrigan, California State University, Sacramento

#### Council:

- ◆ Warren S. Goldstein, University of Central Florida
- ◆ Thomas J. Keil, Arizona State University
- ◆ Lloyd Klein, Grambling State University
- ◆ Paul B. Paolucci, Eastern Kentucky University

## In the News

### Little Green Lies

Businessweek, October 29, 2007

"The sweet notion that making a company environmentally friendly can be not just cost-effective but profitable is going up in smoke."

This article exposes the difference between what a company spends on "green" advertising and what they actually invest in ecological renovation.

The informant in the article was a student of Amory Lovins at the Rocky Mountain Institute. Just antidote to the idea that ecological logic will somehow supplant or even complement the logic of accumulation under capitalism.

- ◆ David Norman Smith, University of Kansas
- ◆ Talmadge Wright, Loyola University Chicago

#### Newsletter Editor:

- ◆ Hannah Holleman and R. Jonna, University of Oregon

## Awards

#### Student paper winner

#### **Matt Vidal, UCLA:**

"Manufacturing Empowerment? 'Employee Involvement' in the Labour Force after Fordism"

#### Book Award Winner

#### **Corey Dolgon, Worcester State College:**

*The End of the Hamptons: Scenes from the Class Struggle in America's Paradise*

#### Lifetime Achievement Award

#### **Marty Oppenheimer, Rutgers**

## Conferences and Calls for Papers

### URPE at ASSAs CONFERENCE

January 3 - 6, 2008, New Orleans

Every January the Union of Radical Political Economists organizes a series of panels at the Allied Social Sciences Meetings to provide a venue for the presentation and discussion of current research in heterodox economics. This coming year the meetings will be in New Orleans January 4-6, 2008. For this year's schedule visit:

<http://www.urpe.org/urpeassa-08.html>

*(please note that there are two announcements below from the International Sociological Association, ISA, and they each have different deadlines. Visit [http://www.isa-sociology.org/barcelona\\_2008/](http://www.isa-sociology.org/barcelona_2008/) for information about further research committees (RC)*

*involved in the conference and more information about the conference in general.)*

## **First ISA Forum of Sociology: Sociological Research and Public Debate**

**BARCELONA, SEPT 5-8, 2008**

[http://www.isa-sociology.org/barcelona\\_2008/](http://www.isa-sociology.org/barcelona_2008/)

### **RC 36 Alienation Theory and Research, Call for Papers:**

You are cordially invited to join us for the Barcelona meetings: Please send proposal to the appropriate chair, and copy me by Dec 20th. Thanks.

Hasta mas tarde.

Lauren Langman, President RC 36

## **ALIENATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

1. Migration and Alienation
2. Alienation, the body and transcendence
3. New directions in Alienation theory
4. Overcoming Alienation; Democratic Mobilizations in a Global Age
5. Nationalism in a global world: Alienation or Empowerment
6. Alienation and the Subaltern: Race and Class in a Globalized Economy
7. From the Workplace to Cyberspace: Situating Alienation in the 21st Century.

### **I. Migration and Alienation, Who? Where? When, Why? How?**

#### **Joint Session of RC31 and RC36**

The phenomenon of constantly growing rates of transnational migration has become a commonplace since the second half of the last century. Yet, statistics in the many receiving countries show that immigrants are likely to have to cope with exclusion and to undergo processes of alienation both in the country of origin and in the country to which they have migrated. For this session we invite researchers to present data on experiences of different groups of migrants, the situations they have to deal with, and variations in the acceptance of migrants in and from different countries, in light of the alienating consequences of migration. The final section of the ses-

sion will be devoted to a discussion of how sociology can point the way to overcoming the problems that arise both for the migrants and for the relevant host countries.

Please send abstracts of 150 to 200 words to both: Devorah Kalekin-Fishman, [dkalekin@construct.haifa.ac.il](mailto:dkalekin@construct.haifa.ac.il)  
Catherine de Wenden, [dewenden@ceri-sciences-po.org](mailto:dewenden@ceri-sciences-po.org)

### **2. Alienation, the body and transcendence**

As noted above, the explosion of concerns with the body has moved sociology in a number of new directions thanks in part to the work of Michael Foucault and Bryan Turner. If we just think about prostitution, pornography, plastic surgery, athletics, dance, fashion and adornment, we can note how the body can be the site of alienation or agency.

Please send abstracts of 150 to 200 words to: Marty Prosono [MProsono@MissouriState.edu](mailto:MProsono@MissouriState.edu)

### **3. New directions in Alienation theory**

Despite the passage of time since Hegel and Marx wrote about alienation, it has not only remained a vital concept, but we have seen a number of new ways of theorizing about alienation.

Please send abstracts of 150 to 200 words to both: Pirkkoliisa

Ahponen, [Pirkkoliisa.Ahponen@joensuu.fi](mailto:Pirkkoliisa.Ahponen@joensuu.fi), Warren Goldstein, [wgoldste@mail.ucf.edu](mailto:wgoldste@mail.ucf.edu)

### **4. Overcoming Alienation; Democratic Mobilizations in a Global Age**

Alienation is typically located within a matrix of domination and exploitation, but at the same time, more recent thinking about alienation has looked at ways that it acts to foster democratic kind of mobilization and/or mobilize social change

Please send abstracts of 150 to 200 words to Knud Jensen, [knud@dpu.dk](mailto:knud@dpu.dk)

### **5. Nationalism in a global world: Alienation or Empowerment**

One of the moments of "received wisdom" of globalization claims that Nation-State was an obsolete political formation with little impact in the world. But au contraire, the current world is plagued

by resurgent nationalisms and ethno-religions nationalisms from the USA to the Middle East and/or the Far East. To what extent do reactionary nationalisms today, like earlier forms in the 1930's, represent a response to alienation?

Please send abstracts of 150 to 200 words to: Lauren Langman, Llang944@aol.com

### **6. Alienation and the Subaltern: Race, Class and Gender in a Globalized Economy**

In the contemporary world, alienation can be seen a result of many factors beyond class, but never apart from class. This session will explore some of the sources and sites of alienation within the global economy.

Please send abstracts of 150 to 200 words to: Ligaya McGovern, Ligayako29@aol.com, Gerhard Schutte, agschutte@rcn.com

### **7. From the Workplace to Cyberspace: Situating Alienation in the 21st Century.**

For Marx, the primary sight of alienation was the 19th C. factory, the "satanic mills" that exploited, dehumanized and denigrated workers. But today, the issues are more complex, in many ways, modern technologies of production and communication foster new kinds of alienation, but at the same time, these same technologies allow new ways of overcoming alienation.

Please send abstracts of 150 to 200 words to: Matt David, mdavid@liverpool.ac.uk

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## **'Sociological research and public debate on Economy and Society'**

International Sociological Association

Economy and Society Research Committee 02

**FIRST INTERNATIONAL SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION WORLD FORUM OF SOCIOLOGY, BARCELONA 5-8 SEPTEMBER 2008**

Within the International Sociological Association's World Forum of Sociology, to be held in Barcelona, Spain, 5-8 September 2008, the Economy and Society Research Committee 02 will be hosting

its own panels. The theme for the Research Committee's panels echoes that of the conference as a whole 'Sociological Research and Public Debate on Economy and Society'. The sessions organised by RC02 address the big themes of Sociology in 'Economy and Society' and addresses them through the lens of their relationship to public debate. Economic Sociology can itself be considered a form of critique of the present structuring of economy and society. The sessions address changing nature of global processes, transnational corporations, interlocking directorates, global plutonomy, the knowledge economy and the variations in the form of gender regimes as well as capitalism. Each panel will address this theme via its own focus, as listed below, including an 'open' panel.

Please send abstracts to the relevant Panel Chair by 10 December 2007.

### **Panels**

#### **Economic Sociology as Critique**

Organiser: Andrew Sayer, Department of Sociology, Lancaster University, Lancaster LA1 4YD, UK.  
sayer@exchange.lancs.ac.uk

This session is prompted by a concern that much of economic sociology has come to offer increasingly bland and uncritical analyses of contemporary economic arrangements – ones which fail to identify just how profoundly economic arrangements affect the quality of life. Old ideals of value-freedom may have been replaced by a more sanguine view of the inevitably value-laden nature of social science, but both positions share the questionable assumption that values are beyond the scope of reason or science, and are not forms of reasoning in their own right. More recently, heightened awareness of the dangers of essentialism and ethnocentrism has further blunted the critical edge of sociological inquiry. However, on the other hand, ideas that there are basic elements of human well-being, as argued in the capabilities approach, pioneered by Amartya Sen, imply that what is of basic value is not merely subjective or beyond reason and the scope of social science, nor merely a local cultural judgement. Participants are invited to give their own views on whether

economic sociology should be critical of its objects of study, and if so, how, and on what grounds.

### **Responses to the Emerging Global Plutonomy**

Organiser: Salvatore Babones, Department of Sociology, University of Pittsburgh, USA. sbabones@inbox.com

In Fall 2005 a team of Citigroup equity analysts introduced the term "Plutonomy" into the English vocabulary, defining Plutonomies as "economies powered by the wealthy." In Citigroup's analysis, "the earth is being held up by the muscular arms of its entrepreneur-plutocrats, like it, or not," and "the Plutonomy is here [and] is going to get stronger, its membership swelling from globalized enclaves in the emerging world." All of which prompts the sociologist to ask: are they right? Are there bases of resistance? And what are the appropriate public policy responses?

### **Varieties of Gender Regime; Varieties of Capitalism**

Organisers: Karen A. Shire (University Duisburg-Essen, Germany) and Monika Goldmann (University of Dortmund, Germany)

Contact: Karen Shire, Institute of Sociology, Institute of East Asian Studies, University Duisburg-Essen, Lotharstrasse 65, 47057 Duisburg, Germany. Tel: +49-(0)203-379-4048 / 4468 karen.shire@uni-duisburg-essen.de

The early 21st century has seen both the strengthening of regulations for improving gender-based equality of opportunities as well as a deregulation of protections and the privatization of risks. The outcome has been ambiguous for the integration of women in employment and the transformation from a domestic to a public gender regime. Improved equality between women and men seems just as related to the 'downward mobility' of men, while the advancement of educated women appears to be at the cost of greater inequalities among women. Renewed attention to the 'intersection' of gender-based inequalities with other divisions in the social structure promises a complex analysis of the consequences of political, economic and social transformations, but may too quickly skip over the origins of complex

inequalities and how they vary in comparative institutional contexts. Both the promise of gender equality and the privatisation of risk are matters of institutional and regulatory change, related to the future role of the public sphere in securing protections, the balance between states, markets, individuals and other possible 'third sector' actors in sharing the responsibility for economic risks and livelihood security. Papers in this session should take up comparative and gender theories, especially related to understanding institutional change, and may address specific institutions or regimes, ideally in comparison and in relation to supra-national and regional as well as country specific developments, including discourses of gender equality in public debates, comparisons of gender equality regulations, changing employment regulations and their articulation with social policy, issues of social exclusion and the individualisation of social risks, inequalities between women, the social (re-) organisation and regulation of carework, and the interaction between gendered organisations and institutions.

### **The Knowledge Economy**

Organisers: Joan Acker (Joan Acker, University of Oregon, USA), Susan Durbin (University of the West of England), Jennifer Tomlinson (University of Leeds, UK).

Contact: Susan Durbin, University of the West of England, Bristol, UK. Sue.Durbin@uwe.ac.uk

'Knowledge economy' is a developing, contested concept that is used as one explanation for changes taking place in the economy, knowledge having become an important source of production (Castells 2000; David and Foray 2002) and an increasing focus for public debate. What does this transition towards a knowledge-based economy mean politically, economically and socially? The panel will debate the implications of a knowledge-based economy, papers taking a critical perspective and engaging with a range of issues and questions that have been raised by the emergence of the knowledge-based economy.

## Open

Organiser: Alexius Anthony Pereira, National University of Singapore, Singapore socaap@nus.edu.sg

This "open" panel is designed to showcase new ideas, and new perspectives of existing ideas, in any field of economic sociology, or involving the macro and micro level analysis of how the economy affects society. We will hope to get a good mix of empirical as well as theoretical papers.

## Politics and Interlocking Directorates

Organizers: Josep A. Rodríguez, Julián Cárdenas, and Anna Ramon (Department of Sociology, University of Barcelona)

Contact: Anna Ramon (Department of Sociology, University of Barcelona) annaramon@ub.edu

Globalization and the consolidation of the network society are transforming the old relationship between economic and political powers into a relation between networks (political and corporations) often transcending the old national borders. Papers in this session should address the political effects of business executives/directors/owners of large corporations as well as the relations and clashes between political and economic networks, especially at the global level.

## Transnational Corporations: Villains or Heroes of Globalization?

Organiser: Judith Clifton, Departamento de Economía, Universidad de Cantabria, Av de los Castros s.n., Cantabria D39005, España. Tel: +34 942579918. judith.clifton@unican.es

Analysis of the Transnational Corporation (TNC) in public debate tends to fall into two main camps. On the one hand, TNCs are portrayed as encouraging worsening labour practices, responsible for a loss of a country's economic autonomy, and synonymous with the rise of a global capitalist class: TNCs are the "villains" of globalization. Other analysts view TNCs as acting rationally to further international trade, and therefore wealth: they are globalization's "heroes". Whichever perspective is adopted, TNCs are usually associated with firms in the industrial

sector, based in the US. At the beginning of the C21st, TNCs are also in the services, and other regions, including Europe, are becoming more important. This session, combining sociological-political economy perspectives, critiques the traditional view of TNCs as oversimplistic, and enquires which new perspectives are needed to better understand the role of the TNC in the C21st.

## Additional co-sponsored session: The 'Knowledge-Based Bio-Economy': Critical Perspectives

Hosted by RC23, Sociology of Science and Technology; co-sponsored by RC02 and RC24. Organiser: To propose a talk, please contact: Les Levidow, L.Lavidow@open.ac.uk

Since the 2000 Lisbon summit of the EU Council, various policies have aimed to make Europe 'the globally most competitive knowledge-based economy' by 2010. According to this scenario, new scientific knowledge and technological innovation will be the driving forces behind wealth creation, if only society would adapt. Such accounts are not only descriptive and predictive but also normative, by justifying specific policies while pre-empting any critical public responses. Critical perspectives have been developed by a recent report, Science and Governance: Taking European Knowledge Society Seriously. The authors ask what knowledges are being privileged or marginalised by discourses of the 'Knowledge-Based Society'. Through master narratives, some possible futures are imaginable, while others are marginalised or excluded (Felt et al., 2007). Master narratives are illustrated by the 'Knowledge-Based Bio-Economy', the topic of a major conference (CEC, 2005). The KBBE concept pervades the Commission's Framework Programme 7, especially its thematic priority on 'Food, Agriculture, Fisheries and Biotechnology'. According to an OECD expert group, 'The bioeconomy is made possible by the recent surge in the scientific knowledge and technical competences that can be directed to harness biological processes for practical applications.' Potential benefits may be lost or delayed un-

adapted to those rapid advances, argue the group (OECD 2006). Given current policies for the 'Knowledge-Based Bio-Economy', how can critical perspectives generate public debate, while linking diverse academic approaches and stakeholder groups? How can such debate open up possible futures? Taking up those questions, this Panel aims to involve various Research Committees of the ISA and ESA (e.g. Science and Technology, Environment, Risk, Economy, etc.). Talks will critically analyse assumptions of EU policy.

#### References:

CEC (2005) New Perspectives on the Knowledge-Based Bio-Economy: conference report. Brussels:

DG-Research,  
[http://ec.europa.eu/research/conferences/2005/kbb/report\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/research/conferences/2005/kbb/report_en.html).

Ulrike Felt, rapporteur, Brian Wynne, chair (2007) Taking European Knowledge Society Seriously: Report of the Expert Group on Science and Governance to the Science, Economy and Society Directorate, Directorate-General for Research, European Commission. Brussels: European Commission, EUR 22700 OECD (2006)

The Bioeconomy to 2030: Designing a Policy Agenda. Scoping paper. Paris: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.

### The Conference overall

The ISA conference is being held at the University of Barcelona, Spain. Details of the venue, registration, fees and accommodation, can be found at: [http://www.isa-sociology.org/barcelona\\_2008/](http://www.isa-sociology.org/barcelona_2008/)

### Grants

A limited number of grants are available:

1. Travel/accommodation grants for individual members of ISA in good standing who come from category B or C countries, according to countries classification established by the ISA, and who play an active role in the Forum program, either as a session chair or a paper giver.

2. Registration grants, allocated to Research Committees (RC), Working Groups (WG), Thematic Groups (TG) to subsidize the participation of featured speakers and/or paper givers, individual members of ISA in good standing, chosen by them.

Applications should be made simultaneously to the ISA and the Chair of the relevant Panel. The Chair of the Panel should forward copies of the applications with comments to RC02 President along with the details of their panels.

Further information and details of how to apply are at: [http://www.isa-sociology.org/barcelona\\_2008/grants.htm](http://www.isa-sociology.org/barcelona_2008/grants.htm)  
 ISA RC02 Economy and Society

Web-site of ISA RC02 Economy and Society:  
<http://www.isa-sociology.org/rc02.htm>

ISA Membership details:  
[http://www.isa-sociology.org/memb\\_i/index.htm](http://www.isa-sociology.org/memb_i/index.htm)

### Deadlines

- 10 December 2007: Abstracts to be sent to relevant Panel Chair.
- 10 January 2008: Deadline for panel chairs to send details of their panels to RC02 President. Deadline for grant applications to be sent to Panel Chair and ISA.
- 31 January 2008: Deadline for submission of the whole programme to the ISA.
- June 1, 2008: Deadline for pre-registration and submission of abstracts to Cambridge Sociological Abstracts.

Sylvia Walby, President, ISA RC02 Economy and Society, Professor of Sociology, Lancaster University, Lancaster LA1 4YL, UK.

[S.Walby@Lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:S.Walby@Lancaster.ac.uk)

## Global Studies Association

### Nationalism and Globalization in Conflict and Transition

New York City, Pace University, June 6-8,  
[www.net4dem.org/mayglobal](http://www.net4dem.org/mayglobal)

We have a great line up, Saskia Sassen, Immanuel Wallerstein, Giovanni Arigghi, Beverly Silver, Craig Calhoun, Bill Fletcher are all confirmed as plenary speakers.

Please send proposal to me, Lauren Langman, ([Llang944@aol.com](mailto:Llang944@aol.com)) & Jerry Harris ([gharris234@comcast.net](mailto:gharris234@comcast.net)) by March, 2008

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\*\*If there are other calendars you are aware of that we should publish in *From the Left* so that members have access, please e-mail information to the newsletter editor.

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## Wartime Haiku

by Laura Earles

A soldier's email:  
Photos of guns and bodies  
Tour extended

America's wars  
Energy, land, and labor  
For the almighty \_\_\_\_\_ ?

Structure of it all  
Vast, overwhelming, deadly  
Re-made every day

\*\*You need a down-home pronunciation ("every") on that last line to make it five syllables—if you happen to be counting.