

Call for Papers: Conference of the GSA section History of Sociology
9th /10th November 2023 | Goethe University Frankfurt
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Diversification – Decentralization – Decolonization (In)visibilizing the History of Sociology

Recent debates on diversifying, decentering, and decolonizing sociology's modes of knowledge (production, distribution, and consumption), methods, and institutional structures have put the discipline under pressure. A key position in these debates is held by scholarship concerned with the history of sociology: it acts as the cultural memory of the discipline with both identity-forming and exclusionary effects generated through the canonization of authors and works. Walking through sociology's ancestry hall illustrates the privileged position held by a few sociological thinkers at the intersectional crossroads of cultural, ethnic, geopolitical, linguistic, class, and gender criteria. The heroization of a few thinkers also comes with the generalization of and from limited horizons of experience as well as with the theoretical and methodological assumptions thus derived: a relatively homogeneous group from a relatively small part of the world implicitly or explicitly claims interpretive primacy over the entire world and the humans and non-human beings inhabiting it.

As noted by Teresa Koloma Beck (2018: 90), nothing less than the relevance and future of sociology depends on coming to terms with the history of the discipline and the conclusions to be drawn from it: "The diversity-sensitive transformation of the discipline is a scholarly task. It requires a thorough self-reflection [*Selbstaufklärung*] of sociology about its colonial and imperial legacy, but it also demands theoretical and methodological creativity, which is indispensable if this legacy of sociology is to be overcome constructively."

The upcoming conference of the GSA section *History of Sociology* is dedicated to this scholarly task, continuing the theme of the past conference: "From the present of the discipline, we look back on a history of forgetting," stated the previous call for papers of the section *History of Sociology*, which addressed critical contributions countering the historical erasure of women in sociology. This gender-related amnesia can be extended to contributions, concepts, theories, and terminologies beyond the limited range of experiences in world regions commonly called the Global North(s) and center(s). The conference thus aims at developing a historical perspective on sociology starting from the "silences" (Trouillot 1995), "absences" (De Sousa Santos 2002), and "peripheries" (Bueno et al. 2023) reproduced to this day. It addresses scholars who, in the face of these intra- and interdisciplinary power structures, excavate "diverse sociological traditions" (Patel 2009) and challenge the "coloniality of memory" (Boatcă 2021) in their works in sociological history.

Firstly, the remembering and forgetting of sociological contributions can be identified at a personal level: This approach is increasingly demonstrated by studies that mobilize long-silenced authors of the Global South(s), European peripheries, or racialized and migrantized authors in the Global North: Ibn Khaldun, W.E.B. du Bois, Frantz Fanon, Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy, and several others have achieved near-canonical status in subdisciplines (Morris 2015; Bhambra/Holmwood 2022), and have in turn been partly placed in two waves of postcolonial thought (Go 2016). This simultaneously raises questions around new exclusions concomitant to an expansion of the canon – and the concrete, substantial, and structural conclusions (to be) drawn from these selected re-inscriptions into the discipline.

Secondly, a reflexive sociological-historical program beyond forgotten individual authors focuses on collective scientific practices and relations of exchange: The Atlanta Sociological Laboratory, the Subaltern Studies Group, the New World Group, the Combahee River Collective, the Bielefeld Feminist Sociology of Development, South African Labor Studies, the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, and many other institutionalized or non-institutionalized groupings or loosely structured networks offer exemplary inspiration for a critical reappraisal; this also includes reciprocal references and demarcations (i.e., Keim 2015; Ransby 2018; Wright 2017). Furthermore, the conference addresses the exchange relations between individual actors and/or groups that are relevant for a global history of sociology: studies on the connections between Max Weber and W.E.B. Du Bois (McAuley 2019) or early French and Brazilian sociologies (Merkel 2022) represent recent examples of a doing a history of sociology focusing on interdependence, as does the transcontinental, transtemporal interweaving of Black sociologists (Kelly 2016).

On a third, methodological level, several challenges and questions emerge in the light of global, transregional, and transnational constellations. National histories of sociology are increasingly being replaced by connected sociologies that combine their critique of standard historiography with the global embedding of key sociological concepts (Bhambra 2014; Randeria 1999). A critical engagement with the history of the discipline requires the discussion and development of common conceptual ground: for instance, are processes of oblivion and hierarchization captured in North-South or center-periphery models? Which approaches can be used to conceptually grasp mechanisms of suppression as well as partial and/or delayed remembering: are these processes of reception, transfer, interaction, or circulation? How can we understand the social beyond the modern, sovereign subject (Dries/Morikawa 2019)? Which conceptual vocabulary such as dependency, autonomy, and extractivism can be used to describe the geopolitics of writing histories of sociology? We would also like to offer space for these and related questions, inspired by existing works on the topic (i.e., Alatas 2022; Beigel 2016; Costa 2014; Dufoix 2022; Keim et al. 2016; Ruvituso 2020).

We would like to discuss these and related subjects at the next conference of the GSA section History of Sociology. The event specifically targets early-career scholars (docs and postdocs) and serves as a platform for networking by presenting and discussing (interim) results, findings, and proposals of theoretical, empirical, and methodological nature. Presentations can be given in **German or English**; however, basic knowledge of the other language is expected for active participation in the entire program.

We look forward to receiving paper proposals (**approx. 350 words**) and a short biographical note in either language by **April 30, 2023**. Please send your submission to all three organizers:

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