PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dear RC02 Members,

Since our last newsletter, the ISA Assembly of Councils met and decided to postpone the World Congress to June 25-July 1, 2023 (originally scheduled for 2022). The current aspiration and plan is to have the conference be in-person in Melbourne, Australia, with accommodations for those unable to travel due to COVID. The decision was preceded by consultations across ISA as well as lengthy deliberation within the Assembly of Councils. Although very strong arguments were made in favor of not postponing the conference—and moving it online—the majority across the ISA were in favor of postponing the conference. In the ISA-wide survey, 72% were in favor of postponing the Congress, with similar percentages from both the global North and South. These polls were roughly consonant with my own surveys within RC02.

Linked to the decision to postpone the conference, the ISA also decided to extend the tenure of the RC/WG/TG elected officers for an additional year because the responsibilities of elected members (and the election cycle itself) is tied to activities conducted in the World Congresses. For example, most of the groups within ISA, including our own RC02 Bylaws, are tied to the temporal cycle of the World Congresses. This is a good opportunity to ask each of you to consider thinking of ways to provide service to our community, including elected office. Regardless of the uncertainty regarding whether the World Congress will ultimately be held in-person, on-line, or in a hybrid format, I am committed to ensuring that our next round of elections will continue to be transparent and as inclusive as possible.

In the near future, the ISA will be experimenting with having a fully online major conference, not only as a response to COVID, but also due to concerns of environmental sustainability and an attempt to enable greater global participation in ISA. Following a split vote of the Research Council (in which I represented RC02), the decision was made by the ISA Executive Committee to have the V ISA Forum of Sociology be held entirely online, most likely in 2025. The Executive Committee's vote was almost evenly split, but with two more votes in favor of an online Forum.

In Melbourne prior to the World Congress, RC02 is currently making plans to hold a multi-day pre-conference as well as an international mentoring laboratory for junior scholars. However, the capability to hold the Congress and these events remains tenuous because the state of COVID remains uncertain and dynamic. As I write this, Australia continues to prohibit travel unless one is in a narrow range of exempt categories or is eligible to be granted an individual exemption. Even within this narrow range of exempt travelers, in reaction to the recent global circulation of the Omicron variant,

Australia has begun barring any travelers—including its own citizens—who have in the previous 14 days visited South Africa, Lesotho, Eswatini, Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique or Malawi. I think it is self-evident that the viability of holding a genuinely international conference in Melbourne is conditional on the trajectory of the COVID pandemic over the next half year and the Australian government's dynamic response to it.

I also have one potentially momentous bit of news to share. If you have organized sessions, had questions about your ISA membership, or other diverse matters anytime over the past four decades, you may have corresponded with the ISA General Secretary, Izabela Barlinska. She has announced that she will be retiring in 2023. Truly, Izabela's departure marks a significant milestone and challenge for the ISA at every level. I can attest from working with her in many capacities over the past decade to her efficiency, expansive knowledge, and level headedness in often stressful situations.

In closing, these are challenging times for many of us, both personally and professionally. How can we help each other publicize your research or make connections with colleagues? RC02 can help. Please send your research citations and abstracts to Dustin Stoltz (dss219@lehigh.edu) for publicity in our Friday broadcast or newsletter. Please send your proposed ideas for public sociology to promote your research in the public sphere to Karen Shire (karen.shire@uni-duisburg-essen.de). Please send your idea for conferences, as well as any ideas you have on RC02 activities to myself (Aaron.Pitluck@IllinoisState.edu). I look forward to hearing from you in the weeks ahead.

In aloha and solidarity,

Aaron Pitluck
President, Economy & Society Research Committee (ISA RC02)
Associate Professor of Sociology
Illinois State University

PS: Since this letter was written, Australia's travel restrictions have eased.

ARTICLE

Please send essays to the Secretary and Newsletter Editor, Dustin Stoltz (dss219 [at] lehigh [dot] edu).

N=1 or: 50 YEARS WORLD SOCIETY AS ANALYTICAL CHALLENGE

BY Patrick Ziltener

From International System to World Society

Long before the notion of 'globalization' went viral in the 1990s, different analytical approaches came to the conclusion that binding the term 'society' to nations based on states and using it as a central analytical term in sociology is untenable, even misleading. Certainly, the concept of the world as 'international system' has a long tradition in disciplines such as International Relations. In *Power Politics* (1951), Schwarzenberger uses the term 'international society':

> *Modern international society is a reality for the reason that in it groups co-exist which are both interdependent and independent of each other.[...] The bond that holds world society together is not any vague community of spiritual interests. It is power. (Schwarzenberger 1951:251)*

However, the dominant perspectives saw (and see) the 'international system' as a simple consequence of the incidental interaction of its independent units, similar to the concept of the 'market' in mainstream economics. Only a few social theorists have undertaken steps to go beyond the GISN-model. GISN stands for 'global interaction system of national societies / nation-states'. Since the 1960s, several theoretical lines explored a thinking of the 'world' beyond GISN, driven by a cascade of unavoidable consequences of theoretical reasoning and / or empirical research.

In his presentation at the convention of the American Sociological Association in 1965, ASA-president Moore called upon to develop "global sociology," a "sociology of the globe, of mankind", facing the "growing ubiquity of similar problems and similar solutions in the world of events" (Moore 1966:475).[1] He traces global thinking back to a "grand tradition," including thinkers as Polybius and Ibn Khaldun, assuming the unity of mankind. Since antiquity, the metaphor of mankind as one 'body' has been used frequently, e.g. Seneca's "membra sumus corporis magni" ("we are members of a big body", cf. Motto 1955).

Having been a student of Talcott Parsons, Moore ended in 1965 his address with "we must rediscover super-systems" (Moore 1966:482). Since then we have witnessed the development of influential strands of thinking beyond GISN. World-systems analysis was a breakthrough in the search for the proper "unit of analysis" (Wallerstein 2002). Bargaining (1982) observed "the emerging science of the world-system", while John Meyer (1980) and others focused on the emerging "world polity", based on a "world culture."

---

[1] In view of the "rapidly spreading sociological enterprise", Moore (1966:476) expressed his "hope, not that sociologists will themselves help unify the world, for they can scarcely unify themselves, but rather that the common features of human existence will be increasingly documented and otherwise verified along with the undoubted variability that makes human experience so challenging..."

There are several strands of theorizing the world beyond the GISN-model, at least since the 1970s, but as far as I see, only two sociological approaches have consequently and consistently put the term 'world society' into the core of their analytical thinking and empirical research. German sociologist Luhmann (1982) defined "modern society" as "a world society in a double sense. It provides one world for one system; and it integrates all world horizons as horizons of one communicative system."[2] The other one is the world society approach going back to Peter Heintz at the University of Zurich, Switzerland. The following section will go into the details of the Zurich approach. In conclusion, there has not only been a "parallel discovery" of world society (Greve/Heintz 2005), but there is a still ongoing evolution of a "global sociology" as interaction of empirical research and theory formation.

World Society: The Zurich Approach

In the early 1970s, Peter Heintz, the founder of the University of Zurich's Sociological Institute, was still using an 'international system' concept. For example, in his 1972 Switzerland's Position in the Structure of the International System: A Sociological Analysis, he introduces his approach to develop a statistical world model–thereby clearly going beyond the GISN-model–in this way:

---

[2] Bauer (2014) argues that similar insights have been made in nineteenth century by early social theorists like Albert Schäffle in Germany or Guillaume de Greef in Belgium, "who likewise focused on communicative media and used the concepts of *organism* and *system* widely and interchangeably to think through the fate of modern society" (ibid.:53).

"This analysis is based on the assumption that the structure of the international system decisively co-determines the chances nations have to realize the values of development. The notion of structure, i.e. institutionalized power and prestige, implies a differential distribution of chances, or even a distribution governed by different laws for different regions, as for instance, for the region of the developing countries and for that of the highly developed nations. The structure of the international system is thus conceived of as representing the distribution of nations' chances to realize the values of development." (Heintz 1972a:81)

For the title of a popular piece for a newspaper in the summer of the same year, 1972, he chose "the world society and its citizens" (in German). In the journal of the University of Zurich, he published 1974 an article on "the structural transformation of world society from the perspective of sociology." In the second half of that decade, he consequently and consistently based his analyses on the concept 'world society'. From 1976 on he announced university seminars on 'world society', and from 1979 on, he titled university lecture series with "on the sociology of world society."

Heintz disseminated the concept also through international conferences in Zurich, e.g. a symposium Report on World Society and Educational Code in January 1976. Four years later, in November 1980, he was invited to an international seminar on Diversity and Change of World Society Images at the University of Zurich. His research program at that time was, quite ambitious, to develop "a sociological code for the description of world society and its change." As introductory remark, Heintz noted

a current spread of 'world society' as topic, especially in the context of research modeling:

> "*The topic of world society has recently given rise, within the science community, to the construction of world models, in particular to economic and resource-oriented models and to international relations models. An enormous amount of valuable work has been done, and many meetings on world modeling have taken place.*" (Heintz 1982:11)

He then takes it much further, to the level of world society being a basic social fact and therefore a fundamental sociological concept. This sociological shift "emphasizes the idea that world society is a fact of life, i.e. people live with this fact, and in order to do so they produce or simply adopt an image of world society as a means of orientation." (ibid.)

> "***World society is the whole social reality in which we are embedded.***" Peter Heintz (1982:11)

Heintz understands world society as "the worldwide field of interaction whose smallest units are its individual members," a concept, therefore, that is more comprehensive than the concepts of an international or intergovernmental system and than the sectoral concept of a world economy.

> "***Clearly, the individual members of this society mostly behave as members of national or subnational societies, especially with regard to the wider world.***" Peter Heintz (1982:12)

While a world society "whose individual members behave like true citizens of the world by sharing the world society's identity" is imaginable, the existing world society for Heintz is obviously different, he sees nationalism prevailing, and there is no "common culture to span the economic disparities at the world level." But Heintz (1982:14) also saw a "world culture" emerging, in particular after the Second World War, that has become more and more institutionalized, especially with the help of United Nations organizations.

Heintz argues that—"although individuals may act or react according to their structural position within world society" through protest or by comparing other political regimes with their own–most individuals have a "rather vague, unstructured, poor and inconsistent image of world society." This is a consequence of the socialization process which has shaped the outlook of today's living individuals, putting emphasis on their immediate neighbourhood and loyalties to the family, the local community, the nation. Heintz sees this as "no less imperative than class divisions" (ibid.).

Heintz's World Society Concept: Stratification, Development, Tensions

We can characterize Heintz' conception of world society as a hierarchically structured international development system shaped by unequal positions of individual nations on interrelated stratification dimensions such as income, education, urbanization, industrialization and tertiarisation. The integration of world society is not only and primarily based on economic interactions as in the "world system" or "world economy" approaches or on political factors as in the "world politics" approaches. Heintz's analyses are closer to the "world polity" approach, since he emphasized the diffusion of cultural values, norms and societal institutions as the principal integrating forces of world society.

As primary factors for integration and stability of world society, Heintz considered consensus on the value of social and economic development and the existence of mobility channels regulating access to hierarchical positions within the multidimensional stratification system. Crucial aspects of this approach are structural and anomic tensions caused by incomplete status configurations or imbalance of positions held by the social actors–either individuals or nation states–based on different status dimensions of the stratification system.

According to Heintz, structural and anomic tensions occur between different system levels of world society, that is, between global, national, regional, organisational and individual levels. He predicted increasing contradictions and tensions within world society resulting in a general loss of legitimacy and increasing tendencies towards disintegration.

Studying World Society: Reasons Pro and Contra

"If I study world society I study a subject that is common to all social scientists wherever they are located, whatever the culture to which they belong, etc." Peter Heintz (1980, 97)

In a short, but remarkable contribution to the Festschrift of Johan Galtung in 1980, Heintz critically reflected "reasons pro and contra" for studying world society. His main arguments in favor of studying world society are:

"If I study world society I am concerned with the only truly global society, and I do not submit to the social pressures impelling me to study other societies, which are socially defined as global in spite of the fact that, in structural terms, they are not, for example national societies."

"If I study world society I study a subject that is common to all social scientists wherever they are located, whatever the culture to which they belong, etc. Thus, doing so I can define myself as a member of a very loose kind of world–wide community of social scientists."

"If I study world society I investigate a subject that has been highly neglected by social scientists. The marginal utility of such studies may be high even if they are carried through on a modest scale."

"If I study world society I am studying a very particular type of society, the knowledge of which promises to be fruitful for theory construction. This society has no identity, and it is not perceived by most of its members. In other words, I am studying a stateless society of immense complexity." (Heintz 1980:97)

Among the many reasons not to study world society, he mentions:

"Nobody has ever asked me to study world society. World society seems to be no social problem at all. Thus, I am not justified by trying to answer questions that other people have formulated and put to me."

"If I study world society only a very small elite who, for professional reasons, are interested in the topic (foreign policy makers, managers of multinational corporations) may be interested in my findings. But I may not like to strengthen the power of this elite by providing them with additional information whose usefulness is not perceived by anybody else."

"If I study world society I act as if I could overcome all kinds of perspectives that are inherent in the loci I occupy in this society. There may be few social scientists who believe that this is feasible at all."

If l study world society I investigate a subject that produces a lot of information, but I know that this information is very biased. Such information, as for example government statistics and mass–media news, has not been produced for the purpose for which I am using it, and no other information is available." (ibid.)

In conclusion, Heintz called for an exploration of the "possibilities of shaping world society on the basis of solid knowledge shared by different groups," in spite of "strong social and cultural forces" preventing such an exploration. For him, "a meaningful world society can only result from a commonly shared knowledge revealing action spaces and making people true participants in this society; without, of course, by any means denying the continued existence of antagonistic interests" (Heintz 1982:20).

Contemporary Research on World Society

Heintz continued his research on world society until his untimely death in 1983. His late work focused on codes and images describing world society and the structure and evolution of political regimes at the periphery (Heintz 1982). Inspired by the work of Heintz, his students, collaborators and colleagues, have further developed research on world society at the University of Zurich's Sociological Institute into the 21st c. (Suter 2005). Today the *World Society Studies* series spans 15 volumes, from the first volume in 1990 edited by Volker Bornschier and Peter Lengyel with the title *World Society Studies*

to *The Middle Class in World Society* (2020) and *African-Asian Relations* (2021, at www.worldsociety.ch).

In the course of the globalization surge of the last decades, the notion of world society has been picked up by different authors in various contexts. However, it has been used in general in an a-theoretical, sometimes casual manner, and has not been substantially further developed. At the same time, it has inspired research in all directions to adopt a more global perspective.

The establishment of the World Society Foundation by Peter Heintz in 1982 was an important step towards increasing steadiness and interlinkedness of world society-related research. The Foundation, now in its 40th year of its activity as "world observatory," is supporting social sciences scholars and scientific research all over the world, but particularly those from the Global South, to investigate into the various processes of global integration and disintegration, (re)structuring and (re)configuration. Doing this, the Foundation has sponsored more than 150 research projects of scholars from about 40 countries worldwide — a valuable and sustained contribution to establishing an international network of researchers and experts on world society.

Advancing World Society Research

Now, in the fortieth years of its existence, the Foundation wants to bring the discussion on the groundbreaking notion of 'world society' to an advanced level, in the context of analyses of the ongoing trans-formative processes shaping the future of world society. A Call for papers has been launched for a global online conference in 2022 with the broad topic *After Globalization: The Future of World Society*

(www.worldsociety.ch). A selection of papers will be published in a conference volume in the *World Society Studies* series.

A special focus will be on world society concepts: origins, theoretical development, usefulness in empirical research; the practicability of studying world society; the future of the development paradigm. How to further develop the notion of world society as an analytical tool? Especially younger researchers are invited to relate their sociological imagination and empirical research to this concept.

```
Patrick Ziltener is Assoc. Professor
at    the    University    of    Zurich,
Switzerland,   and   the   organizer   of
the World Society Foundation's 40th
anniversary   conference   in   2022:
www.worldsociety.ch
```

References

Bauer, Julian. 2014. "From *Organisms* to *World Society*: Steps toward a Conceptual History of Systems Theory, 1880–1980" *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 9(2):51-72.

Bergesen, Albert. 1982. "The Emerging Science of the World-System." *International Social Science Journal* 34:23-36.

Greve, Jens, and Bettina Heintz. 2005. "Die 'Entdeckung' der Weltgesellschaft. Entstehung und Grenzen der Weltgesellschaftstheorie" (The "Discovery" of World Society – Emergence and Limits of the Theory of World Society). *Zeitschrift für Soziologie, Sonderband 'Weltgesellschaft'* 89-119.

Heintz, Peter, 1972a: Switzerland's Position in the Structure of the International System: A Sociological Analysis. *Bulletin of the Sociological Institute of the University Zurich*. Zurich: Sociological Institute of the University Zurich

– 1972b: *A Macrosociological Theory of Societal Systems. With Special Reference to the International System*. Vol. I and II. Bern: Huber.

– 1980. "The Study of World Society: Some Reasons Pro and Contra." Pp. 97-100 in: *Social Science–For What? Festschrift for Johan Galtung*, edited by Hans-Henrik Holm and Erik Rudeng. Oslo/Bergen/Tromsø: Universitetsforlaget.

– 1982. "A Sociological Code for the Description of World Society and its Change." *International Social Science Journal* 34(1):11-21.

Heintz, Peter and Werner Obrecht. 1977. "Structure and Structural Change of World Society." *International Review of Community Development* 37(18):1–18.

> For many scanned texts and a complete bibliography of Peter Heintz see: www.worldsociety.ch/doku.php?id=about_wsf:founder:bibliography

Luhmann, Niklas. 1982. "The World Society as a Social System." *International Journal of General Systems* 8(3):131-138.

Meyer, John W. 1980. "The World Polity and the Authority of the Nation-State." Pp. 109-37 in *Studies of the Modern World-System*, edited by Alfred Bergesen. New York: Academic Press.

Moore, Wilbert E. 1966. "Global Sociology: The World as Singular System." *American Journal of Sociology* 71(8):475-482.

Motto, Anna Lydia. 1955. "Seneca, Exponent of Humanitarianism." *The Classical Journal* 50(7):315-318+336.

Schwarzenberger, Georg. 1951. *Power Politics: A Study of International Society.* London: London Institute of World Affairs. 2nd edition.

Suter, Christian. 2005. "Research on World Society and the Zurich School." Pp. 377-384 in *The Future of World Society,* edited by M. Herkenrath, C. König, H. Scholtz, and T. Volken. Zurich: Intelligent book production.

Immanuel Wallerstein. 2002. "The Itinerary of World-System Analysis; or, How to Resist Becoming a Theory." Pp. 358–376 in *New Directions in Contemporary Sociological Theory,* edited by J. Berger and M. Zelditch, Jr.. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield.
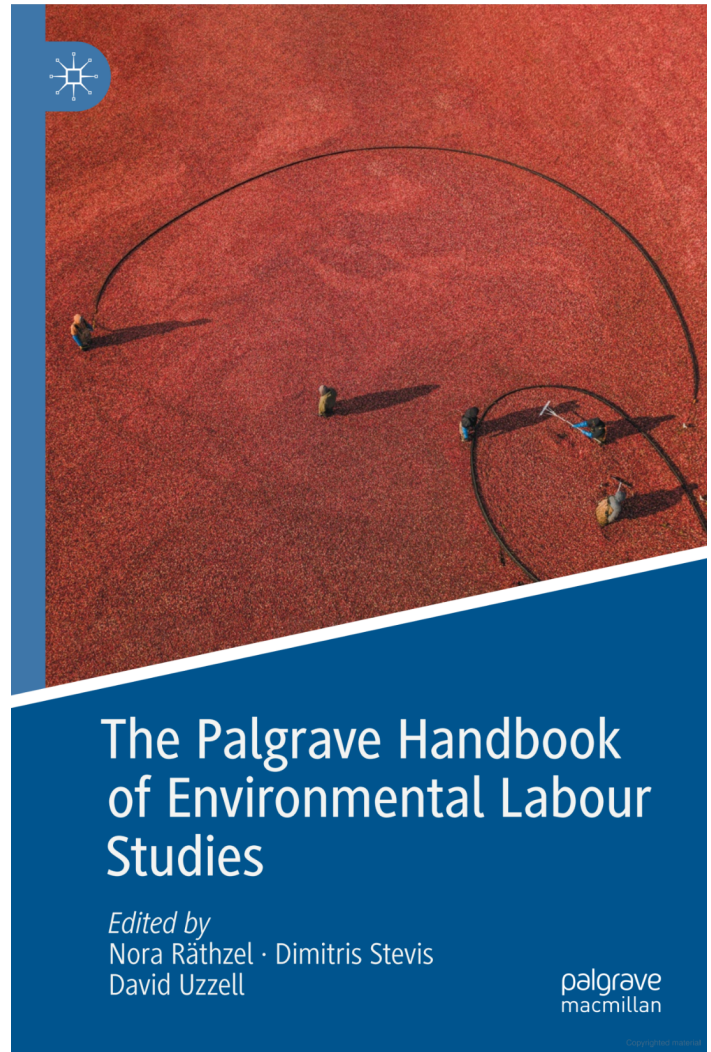
The Palgrave Handbook of Environmental Labour Studies edited by Nora Räthzel, Dimitris Stevis and David Uzzell

Scholars from across the globe explore the relationships between workers and nature in the context of the environmental crisis. They provide a comprehensive overview of a fast-growing field of research that bridges the social and natural sciences: Environmental Labour Studies. Environmental struggles of workers, Indigenous peoples, farmers and commoners in the Global South and North are presented. The relations within and between organisations that hinder or promote environmental strategies and forms of resistance are analysed, including the relations between local, national, and international trade unions as well as between workers' and environmental organisations, NGOs, feminist, and community movements

For more information, including overview, titles of chapters and endorsements please visit: www.palgrave.com/gp/book/9783030719081#aboutBook

The Palgrave Handbook of Environmental Labour Studies

Edited by
Nora Räthzel · Dimitris Stevis
David Uzzell

palgrave
macmillan

Precarious Asia: Global Capitalism and Work in Japan, South Korea, and Indonesia (Stanford Univ. Press) by Arne L. Kalleberg, Kevin Hewison, and Kwang-Yeong Shin

Precarious Asia assesses the role of global and domestic factors in shaping precarious work and its outcomes in Japan, South Korea, and Indonesia as they represent a range of Asian political democracies and capitalist economies: Japan and South Korea are now developed and mature economies, while Indonesia remains a lower-middle income country. With their established backgrounds in Asian studies, comparative political economy, social strati cation and inequality, and the sociology of work, the authors yield compelling insights into the extent and consequences of precarious work, examining the dynamics underlying its rise. By linking macrostructural policies to both the mesostructure of labor relations and the microstructure of outcomes experienced by individual workers, they reveal the interplay of forces that generate precarious work, and in doing so, synthesize historical and institutional analyses with the political economy of capitalism and class relations. This book reveals how precarious work ultimately contributes to increasingly high levels of inequality and condemns segments of the population to chronic poverty and many more to livelihood and income vulnerability.

www.sup.org/books/title/?id=27379
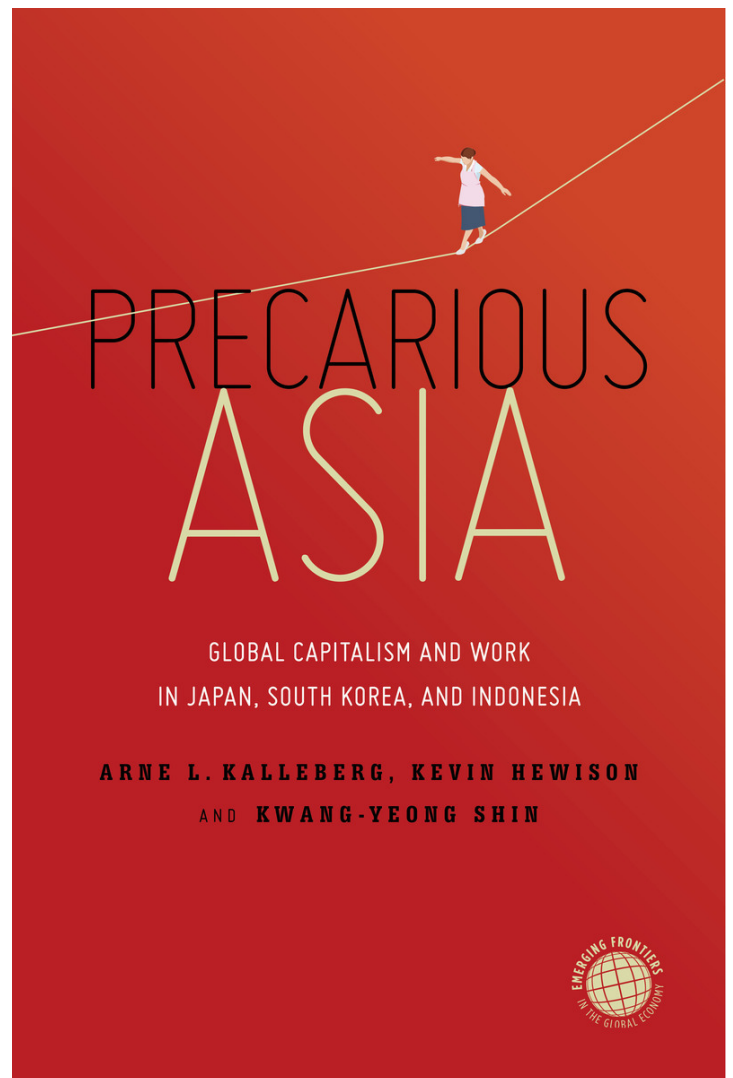
Rhomberg, Chris. 2021. "Work and Workers in the United States: an Historic Turning Point?" *La Nouvelle Revue du Travail,* Vol. 19, November.

The extraordinary collision of crises in the United States in 2020 – biological pandemic, economic recession, and mass protests – presents a unique juncture from which to consider the development of relations of work in the United States in the first decades of the 21st century. In this article, I begin with a brief review of the peculiar institutional context of American labor and employment relations, as the setting for change. The discussion then follows along three dimensions: 1) labor markets, 2) the labor process, and 3) social reproduction. Finally, I consider the implications of recent trends for the current juncture.

DOI:

Rhomberg, Chris, and Steven Lopez. 2021. "Understanding Strikes in the 21st Century: Perspectives from the USA," *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change*, Vol. 44, pp. 37-62.

After decades of declining strike rates in the industrialized world, recent years have seen a surge of militant walkouts in the global South, political strikes in Europe, and unconventional strikes in nonunion sectors in the United States. This new diversity of strike action calls for a new theoretical framework. In this paper, we review the historical strengths and limits of traditions of strike theory in the United States. Building on the emerging power resources approach, we propose a model based on a multidimensional view of associational power, power resources, and arenas of conflict in the economy, state, and civil society. We demonstrate the utility of our approach via a case analysis of strikes in the "Fight for $15" campaign in the United States.

DOI:

Ivan Light, "An Undercapitalised Billionaire." *International Journal of Business and Globalization* 29 (2), 275-290.

"Undercapitalized" conventionally refers to firms at risk of failure because owners lack requisite human and financial capital. Are firms "undercapitalized" when owners lack social and cultural capital? Answering the question directs attention to owners who, even though abundantly equipped with human and financial capital, fail in business anyway. When we have ruled out adventitious causes, such as business cycle, technology change, even luck, we are left with "incompetence" to cover all such failures. However, "incompetence" is a label, not an explanation. To illustrate the distinction, this paper introduces a case study of Donald Trump's much-studied career in independent business. Deficits of social and cultural capital explain Trump's repeated bankruptcies and meager lifetime earnings.

DOI:

Dustin S. Stoltz and Aaron Z. Pitluck. 2021. "Resources in Relational Packages: Social Capital as a Byproduct of Relational Work." *Social Currents*.

Social capital theory offers a compelling explanation as to why people are committed to making resources available to others outside of formal institutions. In this article, we build on social capital theory to explain how actors overcome two practical problems endemic to these resource transfers. We present Viviana Zelizer's relational work theory as a complimentary framework which accounts for when an individual may act on commitments to offer resources and which commitments to act upon when they are in conflict. Drawing on our empirical work on almsgiving to social outcasts and resource transfers at mourning ceremonies in Azerbaijan, we describe how people identify and ascribe their relationships to others by relying on available cultural conventions to mark economic transactions and other media as appropriate or inappropriate. By conceptualizing social capital in this way, we also obtain a process-tracing methodology useful for social researchers and for community activists to generate ideas on how to expand social capital in their own or others' communities.