

Abstracts RC 01

NOTE: ALL THOSE WHO HAVE NOT PAID ISS MEMBERSHIP, RC MEMBERSHIP SHOULD SO IMMEDIATELY (Last Date 20 December 2016)

RC 1: Theory, Concept and Methodology

AISC, Tezpur Central University 27-30 December 2016

Transgressing Academic Boundaries in Writing Ethnicity and Identity

Aparajita De, Assistant Professor, Department of Geography, Delhi School of Economics, University of Delhi & Rajib Nandi, Research Fellow, Institute of Social Studies Trust, IHC, Delhi

The practice of modern “Indian” academia has been under pressure to produce knowledge that were ‘scientific’, unbiased and objective. This trope and processes of modernity, albeit European/western in origin, in our practice of academics also reflects a tacit acceptance of the superiority of Western forms of knowledge production. Thus, at every turn the Indian academic not only adapts western tools and theories but trains himself to see his ‘own’ field as would have been seen, documented and analyzed by an ‘outsider’. The Indian academic goes to great lengths to create an objective distance between himself and his field but in doing so we argue in this paper he overlooks his own experiences of the contexts but entire fields of experience. Experience, here viewed rather dubiously – a perception that was not everyone’s fact. Experience was seen wholly within the domain of personal and private mired with and entangled in subjectivities. The attempt of the paper is to bring within the fold of Indian sociology and academics – the personal, the private and the subjective as a form of knowledge production. In other words, the paper examines experience as a tool as well as a form of embodied social knowledge about the everyday world around us. We specifically look at the auto-ethnographic methods and literature in our field in North Bengal to engage how local experiences can contribute to the making of rich academic debates and open dialogues between the academia and non-academia, facts and experiences and public and personal knowledge.

Locating the Self, the Field and Theories: A Reflexive Account

Niloshree Bhattacharya, Post-doctoral research fellow, IIM Calcutta.

As a student of sociology we encounter several theories from which we select certain theoretical frameworks, to both, find answers to some questions that our 'fields' throw at us, and also to critically assess the theory. Theory becomes a lens with which we make connections between the world we see, from our different locations and what we think of it. Thus, our engagement with theory is at multiple levels – we receive, we select, we apply, we critically assess with the aim to contribute to a particular body of theoretical knowledge. In this paper I attempt to unravel these different ways of engaging with theory and the challenges and the questions that confront us in this process. This is a reflexive account of my engagement with theories of social movements during my doctoral research on a farmer's movement from Karnataka.

Much scholarly work has pointed out the geo-politics of academic knowledge production, the complex development of the discipline of sociology in post-colonial India and a propensity towards ethnographic accounts rather than theory-building. Looking back, I recall the initial period of navigating through the maze of literature, and for organizational purpose, how I kept two separate folders for 'theories of social movements', and 'social movement studies in India'. While I incorporated insights from the vast number of case studies in the field of social movement studies in India, the theoretical framework was based on concepts of political opportunity, resource mobilization and framing for my research. Time and distance from my doctoral research allows me to ask, why as a researcher, I (with my physical, social and spatial locations) preferred a particular theoretical framework and what implications did it have for my research?

The location of the field, the way we conceptualize it, is related to the kind of theories the researcher engages with. Do we imagine and conceptualize the location of a field in terms of the physical location defined by territories and characterized by specificities of the place, or in terms of interconnections with and as part of spaces which transcend such territories? Moving beyond such binaries and taking into account the constantly evolving dynamics of place/space has become imperative to imagine a social science that neither erases voices from the margins, nor does it get caught in the indigenous and nationalist frame alone. During my research on a taof the field became crucial. Here I try to account the ways in which the location of the field, the self and theories get intertwined in such a process.

Performative Electoral Democracy In India: Thinking Aloud on Conceptual Trope in Political Sociology

Amiya Kumar Das, Tezpur Central University

Conventionally, the focus of the Political Sociology in India has been based on Power and Authority, Political Systems, relationship between State and Society, Movements and Resistance, Polity and Identity

etc. Off late in western part, social scientists like John Gaffney and Robert Elgie along with others have studied the political leadership applying the performance perspective. But sociologists in general and political sociologists in particular have not given much attention to the aspect of the performative politics in India.

Since last two decades, politicians have professionally tried to convince their audience and voters with the performance. They try to pursue their audience mostly through pathos in the Aristotelian sense. They try to blend the charismatic authority with the pathos. Political leaders create a special aura to bind the voters. They construct their persona among the voters and try to play and perform in the imagination of the voters. So the whole political communication is an act of performance. The politics is performed within an influential way with the voters in a given cultural context. Performance in electoral democracy is an essential part. But this concept of performative politics in political sociology or in sociology of governance has not been studied seriously in the context of India. On the idea that politics is also performed in the Indian context, there is a dearth of material, though we find enough studies on common elections and politics of various regions. In this context it is pertinent to see that conceptual categories on politics and performance have not been taken seriously.

Through a series of ethnographic studies on electoral politics in Assam, this paper tries to relate some special events during the polls to the everyday life in the vernacular society. It will try to raise some questions and see what kind of methodological innovations are possible and should be evolved to enrich the political sociology and sociology of governance in the context of India. Can everyday political culture of the margins provide us the possibilities to conceptualise a better understanding of the lived experience.

The paper aims to identify and analyse the interplay of leaders and voters within a performative politics framework. It will also try to explore the conceptual issues, which might lead to a theoretical development in the political sociology in general and in Indian context in particular in the field of performative politics.

Sociology Through Images & Folklores: De/Constructing 'DolaPratha' in Bihar

SumitSaurabhSrivastava, University of Allahabad

By now, owing to Foucault and similar others, we have come to an understanding that knowledge and the process of knowledge creation is the offshoot of the power struggle both at the epistemological & pedagogical levels. In this regard, the feminist interpretation of knowledge as well as its critique towards its 'androcentric' base has been heralded by Foucault as 'insurrection of subjugated knowledge'. Consequently we have arrived at various writings on feminist methodology and epistemology primarily in the 'West'. However, as and when these readings enter into the Indian terrain, the social identity of the

one who is engaged in the feminist interpretation of the 'lived reality' becomes core to the knowledge 'production, dissemination & consumption' processes. It seems that there emerges another layer of 'mis-interpretation'. Drawing upon the fieldwork conducted in rural hinterlands of Bihar, the present paper attempts to 're-read' the 'lived experience' of the Dalit & Dominant women within the context of their respective understandings on the practice of *DolaPratha* which pertains to the appropriation of Dalit women's sexuality. We arrive at multi-faceted 'reading' of the singular incident. Furthermore, in doing so the paper also explores how it is 'represented' & 'imagined' at the regional level through folklore and/or visuals.

Conceptual reimagining of Diaspora: In Between Homeland Nationalism and Beyond

PriyashaKaul, Assistant Professor Sociology, Ambedkar University, Delhi

This paper seeks to re-examine the theoretical conceptualization of the relationship between diaspora and homeland nationalism through an analysis of the strategic employment of diaspora as a category in the construction of a seamless nationalist discourse in post-liberalisation India. Most existing scholarly work on diaspora and homeland nationalism have taken mainly two ways: either an analysis of diaspora's actual economic and/or political intervention or involvement in the homeland, or secondly, the theoretical path to study of the relationship between diaspora and the homeland by focusing on the processes through which diasporic groups establish a stable identity for themselves in a foreign land by creating imagined homelands that have been left behind as mythical points of return. This paper turns the spotlight away from this usual manner of scholarship to highlight how just like the diaspora, the homeland too is capable of creating an imagined mythical diaspora to negotiate its own nationalist project, as I demonstrate in the case of post-liberalisation Indian nationalism. It presents an analysis of postcolonial nationalism in India since liberalisation through mainstream cinematic representations, and the manner in which diaspora as an imagined category has been constructed from within the homeland for the purposes of ironing out the domestic nationalist discourse.

Rethinking Ethnography: Is Global Ethnography Important in Studying International Labour Migration?

Ms. Amrita Datta, CSSS, JNU

This paper would deal with the issue of studying Indian high skilled labour migrants in Germany as an ethnographer. As a part of doctoral thesis, I delve into the scope social exclusion of Indian high-skilled workers in Germany (IT, finance and banking professionals) within the larger context of economic globalization and international migration of labour. For this, I engaged with global ethnography in the

field. This paper would discuss the need, relevance and challenges of engaging with global ethnography as Michael Burawoy (2000) defines the term as an imperative in a postmodern context. This paper would also look into the possibilities of identifying newer ways of engaging with global ethnography.

Global ethnography emerges in response to massive globalizing forces that impacts the existing social relations. As an ethnographer, a researcher has to negotiate with new structures and considerations in a globalized world. As an ethnographer, I found myself in the middle of adapting to new ways of conducting ethnography while in the field. Such adaptations are not sans challenges. Also, through such adaptation emerges new possibilities of conducting ethnography that this paper seeks to unravel.

Navigating Imagined Boundaries: A critical Engagement with Sociology of City and Social Space

Anindita Tagore

Research Scholar, Centre for the Study of Social Systems, JNU, New Delhi

Email: aninditagore@gmail.com

History of the last hundred years has been witness to enormous speeding up in the mobility of people, information and various social processes in general. This brought the understanding and experience of the spatial-temporal horizons of human beings under constant stress. Hence the paper first tries to problematize the conception of city as an autonomous social reality which has a trans-historical cross-cultural essence. The argument here is for understanding city as a part of wider social formation under any given mode of production. The second aspect highlights the dynamics of the spatiality of contemporary capitalism are sought to be understood. Also, the ways the urban processes and urban spaces are integrated into this wider socio-spatial formation are analyzed. Finally the paper, in the end tries to engage with debates on how social space and cities differs culturally and socio-economically in developed and developing economies.

What does it mean to rethink sociological traditions? Reflections on New Sociologies

RitambharaHebbar

MahuyaBandyopadhyay

School of Development Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences

Email: mahuya.bandyopadhyay@tiss.edu, rhebbbar@tiss.edu

Paying obeisance to tradition is a carefully cultivated virtue in our academia. Does rethinking sociological traditions allude to such a practice, as this is not the first time that scholars have reflected on disciplinary

practices, research and pedagogy, fieldwork, theory building and professionalization with regard to sociology in India? Have we already moved beyond the post-independence traditions of sociological thought, practice and writings about and in India and are too diffident to consolidate and articulate the shifts theoretically? These questions imply that while there has been a critical engagement with our discipline, it does not reflect or translate into new ways of engaging with sociology in India. Some of these concerns are reflected in our recent book *Towards a New Sociology in India*. In this paper, we draw from this work to examine what it means to rethink our sociological traditions. We explore as to whether there is a way out of this paradox of compulsively returning to sociological traditions, even as we recognise and relate to the churning of hierarchies and the emerging prominence of subaltern thought and practice, as well as the forceful assertion of standpoint theorising. In the process, the paper also reflects on what constitutes the ‘frontier’ of the discipline, and on the various ways through which it challenges the linear disposition that dominates sociological practice in India.

An understanding of the ‘Social’: Food and Life amongst the Hindus in India

RituparnaPatgiri

Provisional Ph.D. Student

Centre for the Study of Social Systems, JNU, New Delhi

Email: missrituparnapatgiri@gmail.com

For much of human history, the specificity of the social was often defined by the region one lived in; the culture in which one was born to; and the class, religion, and gender that one was located in. In other words, the definition of the locale was often bounded and restricted. Much of sociology ‘traditionally’ saw both ‘community’ or ‘culture’ as bounded and fixed (Malinowski, 1960; Durkheim, 1995) - a point that has been critiqued since then (Hill Collins, 2010). Recent studies have argued that macrosocial inquiry has run up against cognitive and explanatory limitations in the face of globalization since nation-state conceptualizations are incapable of explaining phenomena that are transnational in character (Robinson 1998: 562). Such criticisms in some way, though not entirely, have stemmed from the processes that have been widely described as globalization.

Keeping in mind the theme of this conference, the purpose of this paper is to analyse the changing theoretical interpretations of the ‘social’. I intend to do this by using food as a lens to explore the social. The act of eating is one of the most ‘social’ biological actions. The production, preparation and distribution of food are all deeply social activities. In this context, I use the term ‘social’ to mean the interactive, relational, cooperative and communitarian nature of food that creates relationships between

people. However, since the scope of such a study is huge, I will be mostly focusing on India, with an emphasis on the Hindu population. India is a large and extremely diverse country with an amalgamation of various tribes, religions, communities and ethnicities. Hence, it will be fallacious to look at India from the point of view of a 'common gastronomic culture.' There are two reasons behind choosing the Hindus. Firstly, they constitute a majority of the Indian population, almost 80% and secondly, the diversity within the Hindus as a category itself presents us with an opportunity to understand the relationship between different kinds of people and food.

I will be looking at few selected important theoretical orientations within the discipline of sociology – functionalism, Marxism, structuralism and feminism – to see how the understanding of the social varies. However, a study of the social through food will be incomplete if the changes, if any, that have occurred in food practices, are not included in it. Since the scale and intensity with which the process of globalization has made its way to our society in recent times, I will also look at the way this process has affected food practices. By adopting a historical and comparative approach to the study of food. I will explore the location of food in both past and present works, looking at both continuities and changes in food practices. One of the methods that I will adopt to review this literature will be to use a 'food map' (Marte, 2007), that is, use food practices to trace the relations of people with state, society, economy and culture. It is a conceptual framework that enables one to understand the inter-connections between food and society. Another way that I will use to understand the relationship between food and society will be look at the 'social life' of food as a commodity. This understanding is borrowed from Arjun Appadurai's work on 'social life' of things (Appadurai, 1986). He argues that commodities have social lives like persons and a commodity must be understood in its total trajectory from production to exchange, distribution and consumption (ibid, 13). In this study, I will look at the 'social' life of food through these different theoretical traditions.

1. Appadurai, Arjun. 1986. Introduction: Commodities and the politics of value *in* Arjun Appadurai (ed.) *The Social Life of Things*. Pp. 1-15. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
2. Durkheim, Emile. 1995. (1912) *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Translated with an introduction by Karen E. Fields. New York: The Free Press.
3. Hill Collins, Patricia. 2010. The New Politics of Community. *American Sociological Review*. 75(1): 7-30. American Sociological Association.
4. Malinowski, Bronislaw. 1960. *A Scientific Theory of Culture and Other Essays*. New York: Oxford University Press.
5. Marte, Lidia. 2007. Foodmaps: Tracing Boundaries of 'Home' Through Food Relations. *Food & Foodways*. 15:261–289. Taylor and Francis Group, Llc.

6. Robinson, William. 1998. Beyond Nation-State Paradigms: Globalization, Sociology, and the Challenge of Transnational Studies. *Sociological Forum*. 13(4): 561-594. Springer.

Pursuing Happiness Through Credit Cards: A Critique of Indian Society

ManojChhaparia

K.S.SaketP.G.College

Ayodhya,Faizabad (U.P.)

Email: mkchhaparia1702@gmail.com

Credit cards are everyday economic phenomena that are of great significance to people both materially and symbolically. Credit cards and Fast –food restaurants were products of post world war II .In India there are 2,27,48,760 outstanding credit cards(RBI Concept paper, April 2016 & Card statistics , Dec.2015).Credit cards in India is becoming essential part of modern and urban life style ,but the other side of the coin is ignored. The rampant expansion of consumer culture and its attendant problems – consumerism and indebtness, fraud, invasion of privacy, rationalization and de- humanization and homogenization stemming from increasing Americanization. The present paper tries to explore various dimensions influencing the Indian society by using various theoretical perspectives; such as theories of C.W. Mills, George Simmel, Karl Marx & Max Weber as well as micro-macro, agency-structure theories. Credit cards and the problems they pose demands sociological analysis, rather than the more customary psychological analysis. Problems associated with credit cards and many other problems as well are not always the result of individual deviance. The present paper deals these issues with sociological approach, which deals with the relationship between individual behavior and larger social force.

Knowing in contemporary society: engagement with public and theories

Aditya Raj

Humanities and Social Sciences

Indian Institute of Technology, Patna

Email: aditya.raj@gmail.com

This paper will contextualize different ways of knowing by spanning epistemologies from different traditions, historical time and space, and discourses. Different ways of knowing and being can create social vibrancy but it does create fissures and, therefore, a proper comprehension of different ways of knowing especially of the public will ease social relationships. Theoretical mooring along with the worldliness will be addressed for how it implicates knowing and what it means for social processes of

being in the world. Attempt will be made for synchronizing between the world as given and the world as intended, disembodied and situated epistemologies, and between “I am” and “I think” binaries of human subjectivities. The paper will pick up and work with a commitment of “thinking thought itself” along with the relationship between the places in which people live and the spaces in which they think. Different ways of knowing will be prioritized in relation to community, agency, identity, access to, and engagement with, new technologies, as well as possibilities of civic engagement and social justice in a multitude of social context.

What is child labour? Implications of a theoretical debate for the state policy

Sai Thakur

School of Rural Development

Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Tuljapur

Email: sai@tiss.edu, thakur.sai@gmail.com

The development and realization of full potential of children is a first step towards becoming a developed, just and equitable society. Existence of social conditions which force children to involve in economic activity at the cost of their education and overall development is a great loss not just for the children and their families but also for the nation. According to the 2011 census nearly 5 percent of the Indian work force is constituted by children (persons who have not completed 18 years of age).

The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 1986 prohibited children from working only in certain occupations and processes considered hazardous. The recent amendment (2016) however has prohibited children from working in any occupations and not just the hazardous ones. But, even the amended act prohibits child labour conditionally. Children working after school hours and in the family farm, home based work, forest gathering or attending technical institutions during vacations for the purpose of learning are exempted from the purview of the act.

Defining child labour has not been easy, not just in India but even internationally. Who will be categorized as a child labourer depends not only upon how 'child' or 'childhood' is viewed but also upon what is considered 'work'. This paper will make an attempt to revisit the debate around these concepts and discuss the implications it has for the policy on child labour in India.

Theory as an Implicit Method: Sociology in Institutional Context

AmitesMukhopadhyay

Department of Sociology, Jadavpur University, Kolkata

Email: amitesmukhopadhyay@gmail.com

Peter Berger in his *Invitation to Sociology* emphasizes upon Sociology's role in debunking the taken-for-granted or given assumption about the world. What often goes unnoticed is how as sociologists we are complicit in producing and reproducing certain assumption about what the discipline is and how it ought to be practised. Despite students of the discipline being exposed to ever expanding disciplinary horizon and wide ranging theoretical debates, Sociology is viewed as something of a social survey where technologies and tools of survey are often nomenclatured as methods of research. The discipline is found predicated upon a polarity between theories or perspectives rehearsed as part of disciplinary endeavour within class rooms or institutions of higher learning and set a tools and techniques taught as methods meant to equip students in confronting the larger society outside as a world of practical social problems. Every year dissertations (even MPhil and PhD theses) that are produced at the undergraduate and graduate levels are only demonstrative of this larger perception of the discipline. The present paper aims to explore our practices as sociologists. The paper does this with special reference to sociology in West Bengal with which author is most familiar.

The Applicationsof Dramaturgy in all walks of day to day life

B. Rama Murthy and Neeraja B

Tirupati

Sociology develops theories to better understanding and explaining the Social phenomena. A theory is a proposed relationship between two or more concepts. Sociological theory is developed at multiple stages from grand theory to contextualized and specific micro-range theories. Theories are focus on context and situations. Dramaturgy is one of the Sociological perspectives influencing from symbolic interactionism. Dramaturgy was first coined by Erving Goffman (1959) reflects in "The Presentation of Self in Everyday in place, audience and time. The Self is a dramatic effect arising from the immediate scene by Goffman's theatrical metaphor is defining the method in which one human being presents himself to another based on cultural values, norms and expectations. The aim of presentation of self is acceptance from the audience through manipulation. This is a micro Sociological theory. Dramaturgy is imbibed confessed and useful in everyday walks of life to understanding dramaturgy. This theory differs from other theories on which it does examine the context of human dramaturgy is a process which is determined by consensus between persons i.e., Social situations. Individuals are actors who covering their personal features and their intensions to others through performances.