

Symposium on 'Thinking Social Sciences' (11-12 July 2016)

Concept Note

The idea behind the symposium was to initiate an enduring conversation between the social sciences communities in both India and Indonesia. Beyond the obvious benefit of sharing insights and building collaborations lies the belief that since both India and Indonesia are complex countries, where a layered process of social transformation is taking place, it is necessary to invest in social sciences thinking to aid and assist the policy interventions that necessarily follow. Both societies require a rich body of social explanations of the transformation process that is being driven by both democracy and by globalization. These drivers are both normative and processual. These need to be recognized, analyzed and debated. Comparisons need to be made to understand their dynamics.

India and Indonesia share many common elements from their internal diversity, to their population migration from rural to urban areas, to the rapid urbanization taking place, to the desire for education, to the anticipated demographic dividend, to ecological stress, and even with issues relating to their majority-minority relations. Before we embark on a more intensive discussion on any one of the particular themes for comparison it is perhaps appropriate to look at the general concerns and anxieties of the two social sciences communities. A start can be made around the following themes:

1. Imperialism of Categories

The challenge social scientists face in post-colonial countries, when seeking to conceptually represent their social realities, is twofold: (i) to escape the orientalist framing of the social problem for discussion, and (ii) to select conceptual categories to represent their social realities. Susanne Rudolph in her Presidential address in 2005 describes this problem thus after having spent nearly half a century on researching India. She complained that the methodological training given in the North left them quite unprepared for the experiences of data collection in the alien field of South India. 38 She wondered 'to what extent were those concepts and methods amenable to infiltration, adaptation, modification, and transformation by the forms of life and world view of the alien other? To what extent were the tool kits we brought with us from the United States capable of bridging differences between civilizations, cultures, and World-views between the Western observer and the non-Western observed?' Since concepts can be capacious, infiltration, adaptation, and modification may, in principle, be possible. The task before is to build up the 'inconvenient facts' that the concepts from the North have to confront so that they can be infiltrated. This involves hard intellectual labour.

2. Democratization of Higher Education

The expansion of Higher education in both India and Indonesia has had several consequences. These are (i) the changed classroom with respect to the access that is now available to hitherto excluded groups such as women and subaltern classes, (ii) the increasing voice of these groups with respect to the curricula and nationalist agendas, (iii) the changed attitude to politics of these groups from being observer to becoming participant, and (iv) the transformation that has taken place in the public sphere. These

changes have emerged because of the democratization of higher education since independence and, hence, it is necessary for us to map these changes and to study the consequences of this democratization of higher education.

3. Identities and knowledge production

In the politics of knowledge production the issue of interests is always present. Since the democratization of higher education has brought new perspectives into the public discourse it is important for social scientists to discuss the issue of knowledge protocols and representation. Knowledge advocacy is an important resource for particular groups as they seek to assert their identities in the public sphere and the social science landscape is, as a consequence, divided into many sub groups who are engaged in the production of such knowledge. How do we deal with the issue of validity in such a politics of knowledge?

4. The future of social sciences and social sciences and the future

The session discussed the support for social sciences in the educational policy of the state and also the teaching and research practices of social sciences within the institutions of higher education.

5. The conclusion was a panel discussion on **'The contribution of Benedict Anderson to Social Sciences in Indonesia and India'**.

Symposium on 'Thinking Social Sciences' was organized at IAS during 11-12 July 2016. Professor Peter Ronald deSouza, CSDS, Delhi and Dr. Radhika Krishnan, Fellow, IAS were the Conveners of the symposium. The welcome address was given by Professor Chetan Singh, Director, IAS. 39 Mr. Dalton Sembiring, Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia, New Delhi also addressed the participants. Professor Peter Ronald deSouza, Convener of the symposium gave introductory remarks.

PARTICIPANTS

- Shri Dalton Sembiring, Indonesia Embassy, New Delhi
- Professor Rukmini Bhaya Nair, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology, New Delhi
- Shri Harsh Sethi, XC-1, SahVikas, 68, I.P. Extension, Delhi
- Dr. Gangeya Mukherji, Flat No. C- 404, Block-II, Lotus Apartments, Allahabad
- Professor Chandan Gowda, Azim Premji University, Bengaluru
- Professor Tridip Suhrud, Sabarmati Ashram, Ashram Road, Ahmedabad
- Professor Peter Ronald deSouza, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi
- Ms. Idawati Hasan MuchyarYara, Jl. Taman Matraman Timur No. 17., Jakarta Pusat
- Professor Mayling Oey, Komplek Pejabaten Indah I / B4., H. Samali Ujung, Kalibata, Jakarta, Indonesia
- Professor Hasjim Djalal , Jl. Kemang IV No. 10 A, Jakarta Selatan, Indonesia
- Professor Taufik Abdullah, Jl. Widya Chandra , XIII / I D, Jakarta Selatan

- Professor Mohomad Amin Abdullah, Jl. Cupuwatu I, Rt/Rw02/01, Purwomartani, Kalasan, Sleman, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
- Professor Ujjain Bhattacharya, Department of History, Vidyasagar University, West Bengal
- Dr. Rakesh Pandey, Centre for the Study of Developing Studies, Delhi
- Dr. Manish Kumar Thakur, Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta, Kolkata
- Dr. Sanjeer Alam, Centre for the Study of Developing Studies, Delhi
- Dr. Hemachandran Karah, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Madras, Chennai
- Professor Pulapre Balakrishnan, Centre for Developing Studies, Trivandrum
- Dr. Arundhati Virmani, Guest Fellow, IAS, Shimla
- Dr. Radhika Krishnan, Fellow, IAS, Shimla
- Professor Nirmal Sengupta, National Fellow, IAS, Shimla
- Professor K.L. Tuteja, Tagore Fellow, IAS, Shimla
- Dr. Arpita Mitra, Fellow, IAS, Shimla • Shri Samir Banerjee, Fellow, IAS, Shimla
- Dr. Ratnakar Tripathy, Fellow, IAS, Shimla
- Dr. Gowhar Yaqoob, Fellow, IAS, Shimla