In the last decades, and more insistently in the last few years, sociology has been worldwide characterized by various calls for, and attempts at, making it somehow “global” [Smelser 1997, Gallino 2007, Burawoy 2009, Bhambra 2013, Lawson and Go 2017], with the XVIIIth ISA World Congress, held in 2014 in Yokoyama, Japan, explicitly dedicated to explore the “Challenges for Global Sociology”. And, as a matter of fact, the historical social sciences as a whole have witnessed the emergence of many “global” fields of inquiry, even leading someone to characterize the umpteenth turn in social studies as “global” [Darian-Smith and McCarty 2017].

Beyond their understandable heterogeneity, what these approaches have in common is a theoretical and methodological emphasis on socio-historical interactions and connections on a wide, even if not necessarily worldwide, geographical scale, thus problematizing the relevant spatial framework for conducting social analyses. Still, and contrary to the image of the “global” circulated by mainstream discourse, these analyses do not limit themselves to investigate manifestly large-scale macro-level processes, being equally interested in revealing the “global” dimensions of what on the surface look like small-scale and localized processes. What makes an issue, and therefore its analysis, “global” is thus the kind of questions being asked.
Indeed, what this “global” orientation allows and invites to grasp is the epistemological close relationship between the formulation of conceptual categories at any different possible level of abstraction, thereby offering us new insights and opening new prospects of understanding in terms of both “meta”-theoretical reflections and the practices and analytical tools of empirical research.

What is also characteristic of most of, if not all, these analyses is their being, in different but connected ways, critical towards the prevailing approaches through which socio-historical theorizing and research has been conducted since at least the mid-XIXth century. Some common themes of critique can be indicatively singled out, and assumed as preliminary, broad issues for further reflection.

First, and most obviously, sociology, as well as the other historical social sciences, has been charged with having been, and still being, predominantly state-centered, or, to put it differently, methodologically nationalist, having assumed the nation-state, political expression of some version of a corresponding national society, as the basic theoretical unit and the framing context for their analyses and for the formulation of their conceptual tools. Alternatively, this critique has been directed towards analyses dealing with a supposed recent era of globalization, also associated with the idea of a second or radicalized modernity [Beck 2000], with the modern world emanating from the political and economic revolutions of the late XVIIIth and early XIXth centuries [Buzan and Lawson 2015], or with the entire five-century-long history of the modern world-system [Wallerstein 1974].

Second, assuming a “global” point of view has also brought to question the theoretical and even epistemological ambitions of the modern social sciences, which are now problematically depicted as the universalistic projection of a particularistic reading of the world. In fact, beyond the homogeneizing vision of history typical of a certain strand of globalization theory, most of these perspectives have ruled out the possibility of applying conceptual tools derived from the historical experience of the West to the rest of the world. Their emphasis on connections and interactions on a tendentially global scale has thus gone hand in hand with new discourses of locality and with a new assertion of a plurality of local identities. In a sense, recasted in the new terminology of the global and the local, we are here faced again with, having also a chance to explore in the direction of a possible recomposition – as suggested by the idea of the “glocal” [Robertson 1995] –, long-standing alleged oppositions, such as those between universal and particular, macro and micro, generalizers and particularizers, theory and history, structure and agency.

Third, and strictly connected to the previous critique, modern social sciences have also been charged for having been somehow “Eurocentric”, that is, for having asserted the epistemic priority, if not superiority, of Western – first European, then North-American – historical experience and knowledge. Different versions of postcolonial, decolonial,
Southern, non-Western and indigenous thoughts and theories [Chakrabarty 2000, Mignolo 2000, Boatcă et al. 2016, Connell 2007, de Sousa Santos 2018, Akiwowo 1988, 1999] have exposed the exclusion of the “voices” and the ways of knowing of the “minoritized” majorities of the world population from participating in the legitimate representation of the social world. Moving in the direction of a decentered and more inclusive production of knowledge has thus been one of the main themes common to most of this “global” literature.

Finally, these “global” perspectives have also disputed the heuristic usefulness of the familiar and well-established boundaries among the different social science disciplines, asserting even the necessity of moving beyond those multi- and inter-disciplinary approaches that, already since the 1950s, have been questioning the soundness of a division of the intellectual labor organized around autonomous disciplines. In that partitioning, economics, political science, and sociology were devoted respectively to the coexisting substantive and theoretical modern spaces of the economic, the political, and the socio-cultural, assisted by history for the study of the past of modern societies, and by anthropological and Oriental studies for researches on “other” peoples and civilizations. Not just adding up, and not even integrating, disciplinary approaches, but radically transcending them instead, is now seen as the appropriate attitude for an adequate understanding of “global” socio-historical processes of both past and present times.

This Call for Papers is therefore addressed to all those scholars interested in exploring, on (meta)theoretical and/or empirical grounds, the implications of conducting research in a “global” perspective, drawing in case inspiration from these streams of critique. Theoretical and theoretically grounded empirical papers are welcome on the following (but not exclusive) topics:

- The “global turn”: (meta)theoretical, methodological, and conceptual implications;
- Dynamics and practices of situated knowledge production in a global context;
- Classical sociology in global perspective;
- Contending visions of modernity;
- Global capitalism and inequalities;
- Varieties and coexistence of forms of government in a global system;
- Global welfare;
- Rights and global justice;
- Labor from a global perspective;
- Transnational migration, borders and global (dis)order;
- Local, national and global subjectivities, civil society and social movements;
- Gender perspectives in global studies;
- Religious globalisms;
- Environmental critique and social change;
- Global food politics;
- Standards and infrastructures in global perspective;
- Politics of scaling.

Deadlines and guidelines

Abstracts are due by January 15, 2020. All abstracts (500 words), with 5 keywords, should be sent as e-mail attachments (Word Format) to: maurodm@unior.it and pendenza@unisa.it
Decisions concerning the selection of articles will be given by February 15, 2020.
Submission of first versions of articles to the editors by May 15, 2020.
Articles, written in English, should follow the journal guidelines.
Communication from the Editors concerning the peer-review process by July 15, 2020.
Revised and language edited versions sent to the Editors by September 15, 2020.

References


***

When the project of this Call for Papers was already well in progress, news came in that, at the age of 88, Immanuel Wallerstein had died. Since the early 1970’s, he had been systematically elaborating a perspective of analysis on the social world known as world-systems analysis, whose themes and insights resonate in the current debate on the “global”.

Our initiative, of course, does not intend to be a tribute to his work, and not even just a call for mainly critically revisiting it, open as it has been conceived to papers inspired by any theoretical perspective forming and referable to the wide and varied field of inquiry we have here termed “Global Social Science”.

We nevertheless considered it appropriate here, in trying to further stimulate a debate on this issue, to remember him, and also the early and innovative contributions he has made in encouraging an analytical attitude to the understanding of socio-historical reality based on an idea of “globality”.