

Call for Papers

Fourth ISA Forum of Sociology, July 14-18, 2020, Porto Alegre, Brazil. Session: Population Censuses: Preconditions and Alternatives

Population censuses have become part of the indispensable epistemic infrastructure of modern statehood and seem to be equally indispensable for holding governments accountable through analysis and critique when they fail to deliver on their declared public policy aims. While national statistical systems have been designed more and more systematically also because the United Nations have promoted population censuses worldwide since the 1950s, the census is by far not a global model that travels without translations. First, some states have never managed to implement a consistent system of population statistics leading to various problems of invisibility and exclusion for vulnerable groups. Others, often multi-ethnic states, have strategically refrained from collecting systematic statistics on their populations for decades in order to avoid possible conflicts about political power distribution among population subgroups. What are the challenges and risks of introducing systematic forms of population statistics? Second, increasingly population registers are becoming a primary source of official population statistics replacing or transforming traditional, questionnaire-based censuses, either by themselves, or in combination with other data sources. Why do we see this search for alternative methods of counting populations? Third, increasingly more states from every world region engage in highly innovative experiments of data collection on their populations partially in response to the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data. How are alternative data for key population indicators generated and used?

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