On W.E.B. Du Bois, Double Consciousness, and Racialized Modernity. An Interview with José Itzigsohn

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Abstract: The February issue of Transilvania journal hosts an interview with professor José Itzigsohn focusing on his activity within the field of sociology and his latest book with Karida L. Brown, on *The Sociology of W. E. B. Du Bois. Racialized Modernity and the Global Color Line* (New York University Press, 2020). It delves into Du Boisian sociology, "double consciousness" and racialized modernity, alongside contemporary decolonial perspectives and new studies and researchers in the field.
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Ștefan Baghiu, Vlad Pojoga: Professor José Itzigsohn, it is a great privilege to have you as a guest in our journal, especially now when global issues need context more than ever. Your expertise in migration studies, decolonial theory, and the sociology of W.E.B. Du Bois is, in our view, of particular and high distinction in the international research community. The contradictions of late capitalism and the racialized construction of identity in modern history have gained a lot of academic attention, especially during the crisis generated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the earlier cultural and social actions that sparked the recent racial justice movements and gained worldwide momentum. We are fortunate to delve into your work and try to scrutinize the way you see the social sciences and humanities today. We would like to start with an idea you recently talked about in a panel discussion, about the "rethinking of sociological theory" through "provincializing Eurocentric sociological theory" and teaching "alternative perspectives to the Eurocentric male canon."[1] In your view, what is the main thrust of this rethinking process?

José Itzigsohn: The main thrust of the decolonizing sociological theory effort is twofold: On the one hand, to understand that European social theory is not universal but grounded in a specific historical experience and perspective, a perspective that allows European social theory to think through certain issues and not see others. At the same time, it is to bring into sociological theory and practice the work, thought, and methods of a large number of thinkers that have been exiled from the discipline. Of course, this is not a new effort in sociology. There is the work of Anibal Quijano on modernity/coloniality,[2] the work of Raewyn Connell on Southern Theory,[3] the work of Gurminder Bhambra on connected sociologies,[4] the work of Manuela Boatcă on decolonizing approaches.[5] Also, the work of young scholars like Ali Meghji and Ricarda Hammer on decolonial and postcolonial sociology.[6] And sociology is of course much behind other disciplines and fields of study. Sociology has been hiding behind an ahistorical empiricism to avoid asking questions about knowledge, history, theory, and methods.

My contribution to this effort to decolonize sociological theory has been to recuperate the sociological theory and methodology of W. E. B. Du Bois. Aldon Morris demonstrated beyond any doubt that Du Bois was the founder of American empirical sociology and that he was excluded from the discipline due to racism in the discipline.[7] In our days, many sociologists in the U.S. are starting to think about Du Bois only as a precursor of contemporary empirical sociology. Many people think about Du Bois as someone who was doing what people in the department of sociology in the University of Chicago did later, but not as well. This is problematic because Du Bois wasn't just doing what Chicago did later, but he developed a theoretical approach and an empirical methodology that was different and better than anything that came out of Chicago. Furthermore, the discipline insists on continuing to ignore that Du Bois was not only the founder of American empirical sociology, but he was also a social theorist, one of the most important if not the most important of the classical theorists.

In our book, *The Sociology of W.E.B Du Bois*, Karida Brown and I argue that Du Bois developed a theoretical approach that understood modernity as racialized modernity and capitalism as racial and colonial capitalism.[8] That is, the color line is at the center of modernity and colonialism and racism are at the core of historical capitalism. Of course, we can debate whether in theory capitalism is possible without racism, but historically (and in the present) capitalism has been intrinsically tied to racism and colonialism (and today coloniality and neocolonialism).

In bringing the theoretical and methodological contributions of Du Bois to the center of the discipline, we hope to change theoretical thinking in the discipline but also research practices. Karida Brown and I propose a methodology for a contemporary Du Boisian sociology that addresses the problems of coloniality in the discipline: metrocentrism and analytical bifurcation, as Julian Go argues in his *Postcolonial Thought and Social Theory*,[9] and, I would add, the atheoretical and ahistorical character of contemporary sociology.

To sum up then, the thrust of the decolonial effort in sociology is to criticize the colonial forms of knowledge upon which the discipline rests, recuperate the work of numerous thinkers from the margins that have been exiled from the discipline, and think about new methodologies and practices of research that address the problems of coloniality in the discipline (i.e., eurocentrism, analytical bifurcation, ahistoricity, and lack of theory).

Ș.B., V.P.: We would like to provide our readers with an insight into your new book, co-authored with Karida L. Brown, *The Sociology of W.E.B. Du Bois. Racialized Modernity and the Global Color Line*. What is your personal history with W.E.B. Du Bois' writing? How did his work influence your critical perspectives over time?

J.I.: I received a good training as a mainstream sociologist at Johns Hopkins. I got very good training in research methods and research design, and basic knowledge on sociological theory, but I never read or heard of Du Bois. My first job was a teaching post-doc at the University of Massachusetts – Amherst, and the Du Bois archives are located there. The library is named the W.E.B. Du Bois library. Being a curious person, I asked who Du Bois was, and that is how I learned about him and his work. I was fortunate that I had previously read C.L.R. James *The Black Jacobins* in my undergraduate studies and Fanon's work on my own. I considered (and consider) that both of them are relevant to sociology and that sociologists should read them. So I could immediately see the relevance of Du Bois work for sociological theory and practice.

From then on, I started to read and learn about Du Bois work and to teach him in my graduate and undergraduate courses. The process of incorporating Du Bois into my own understanding of sociology was a long and very lonely process. The idea that Du Bois is central to sociology was not widely accepted until very recently. The only person I could talk about this was my colleague Paget Henry who has done a great work of recuperating the work of C.L.R. James, Sylvia Wynter, and Caribbean Philosophy in general. [10] It was Paget Henry who encouraged me to write my first article about Du Bois' relevance to sociology. It was a discussion of Du Bois' *Black Reconstruction* and James' *The Black Jacobins* as models for historical sociology.

The process of learning Du Bois' work and bringing it to sociology culminated, so far, in the book I wrote with Karida Brown on Du Bois' sociology and Du Boisian

sociology. Writing the book was also a process of learning and discovery. After reading and teaching some of Du Bois' main works I thought that I knew him quite well. But reading the full scope of his work for the book, and discussing it with Karida Brown, taught me that there was a lot that I didn't know. Of course, that led me to rethink how I understand the discipline. I was not happy with the ahistorical empiricism of the discipline. I was attracted to World Systems Theory because I saw this as the only approach that tried to systematically incorporate history and theoretical thinking into their methodology. But reading and working through the work of Du Bois gave me the possibility of imagining a different way of doing sociology.

That is what our last chapter, titled "A Manifesto for a Contemporary Du Boisian Sociology" aims to do, to propose a Du Boisian/decolonial theoretical approach and methodology for the discipline. This approach is an expansion of Du Bois' critique of racialized modernity, incorporating intersectionality and issues that Du Bois did not address or did not address enough, such as heteropatriarchy, environmental issues, and the analysis of settler colonialism and indigeneity.

The methodology we propose rests on four pillars: historicity, contextuality, relationality, and subaltern standpoints. Against the ahistorical character of mainstream sociology (including historical sociology), we argue that social analysis and theoretical concepts need to be rooted in history (seen as a contingent process, not a teleological one). Against the aim of mainstream sociology to generalize without accounting for different circumstances, we argue that social analysis must take account of local contexts and specificities. Against methodological nationalism and analytical bifurcation, we argue that local cases are part of a larger global-historical system, racial and colonial capitalism, and social analysis needs to trace these connections. And against the idea that the social scientist can analyze the world from a neutral and detached position, we argue that theory-building needs to start from the different experiences of multiple subaltern subjects.

We wrote the book so people in sociology could not keep ignoring the full scope of Du Bois' work and the fact that he developed his own original theoretical and methodological approach. And we wrote the book so current students and young faculty have access to Du Bois' work and have tools to justify their departure from the mainstream of the discipline and argue for a different way of doing sociology. We hope that the book contributes to generate debates about the future practices of the discipline.

Ș.B., V.P.: We are interested in the connections between Du Bois' writing and the evolution of sociological theory. Five years ago, you stated that "Du Bois is thought to be a scholar of race, and he is indeed that," but also argued that he is *more than* just that. You saw how his *practice* of sociology has been of interest, but his profile as a *theorist* longtime ignored. You emphasize throughout your work that Du Bois is essential for sociology itself, meaning that he overcomes the status of a specialized theorist and becomes fundamental for the science of the social. You write: "This body of work, we argue, makes Du Bois a theorist of racialized modernity and situates his work as central to classical sociological theory and to contemporary theoretical debates."[11] Given this assessment and the times we live in, do you believe W.E.B. Du Bois will become *the* pivotal figure in 21st-century sociology? Does the decolonization process of sociological theory and the perspectives it brings forward, such as the way you teach Eurocentric sociological theory through Anna Julia Cooper and W.E.B. Du Bois, inherently – and inadvertently maybe – mean a complete change in the hypercanonical configuration of the field?

J.I.: I believe that Du Bois should be one of the pivotal figures in 21st century sociology. But I don't believe in adding him to any canon. In fact, when we started writing the book I did think that we ought to add Du Bois to the canonical trilogy of supposed founders of the discipline (Marx, Weber, and Durkheim). But as I read and thought more and more about his work I came to think that the goal is not to add Du Bois to the canon but to deconstruct the canon by bringing new theorists and new approaches that hail from the peripheries of racial and colonial capitalism. Du Bois is one of the most important scholars that we need to bring in. Anna Julia Cooper is another thinker that we need to recuperate for sociology. She was really the one who introduced an intersectional perspective to social analysis. And we need to do the work of learning their work as well as the works of others and learn who else was writing and thinking about the world throughout the late nineteenth century and the twentieth century. In this sense, the Global Social Theory website that Gurminder Bhambra put together (https://globalsocialtheory.org) is a very important tool to direct our attention to all the work we are not familiar with and we need to incorporate into the discipline in order to decolonize sociological theory and practice.

Ș.B., V.P.: You see his theory of Double Consciousness as "central to the analysis of the self within the context of the modern racialized world." We took this to mean that this theory might become a *mode of rereading* modernity, assuming more social action is taken on structural discrimination, because it challenges even the most successful theories of the formation of the self with his idea of "twoness". Du Bois' concept may be crucial in the global context of ongoing and growing migration, which means that the contemporary *formation of the self* may

already embed this "twoness". You emphasize the role of self-recognition within the formation of individuals, argue that this is often blocked by the "invisible veil" within racialized modernity. Is there a link between class differences and this twofold formation of the self within the contemporary world in connection to migration?

J.I.: Du Bois' theory of double consciousness is a model for theorizing racialized subjectivity. And if we think for example about later theorists of racialized subjectivity, such as Franz Fanon, what he says is very similar to what Du Bois argues, suggesting that the theory applies to colonized subjectivities generally. At the same time, if we want to extend its reach, we need to take into account the specificities of different subaltern experiences. For example, I sometimes teach double consciousness together with Gloria Anzaldua's "La Conciencia de la Mestiza."[12] Anzaldua, like Du Bois, analyzes consciousness in the frame of existing structural power differences. But her analysis addresses issues of gender and sexuality which are not present in Du Bois as well as the particular conditions of living in the borderlands. What Du Bois' theory of double consciousness does is to, on the one hand, provide a powerful analytical tool to think about the formation of racialized and colonized subjectivities. And on the other hand, it provides us with a methodology for phenomenological analysis that allows us to understand racialized and colonial subjectivities while taking full account of historical structures of power and exclusion. This methodology has been replicated in other contexts by other subaltern theorists accounting for the specificities of their experience. And it is this methodology that we should learn and apply.

Regarding the question of class and class consciousness, Du Bois' work addresses the intersection of class and race, arguing that class experiences and consciousness are fragmented by race and coloniality. He argues that race and colonialism trump class in everyday lived experience, and, as a result, in the political alliances of the dominant segments of the working class in racialized and colonial societies. This is relevant because we are seeing something similar in contemporary times in relation to migration, with the European and North American working classes, as well as the working classes of some countries in the global south, supporting right wing populist political projects that mobilize around antiimmigrant positions. This does not mean that left wing forms of populism, movements that unite immigrant and non-immigrant workers or white workers and workers of color are not possible. Those movements have existed historically, of course. But they demand a very systematic and protracted effort of political construction. Building solidarity across the different forms of subordination and exclusion of our lifeworld requires constant work. And solidarity is always subject to tensions that emerge in the everyday life of workers under racial and colonial capitalism.

Ș.B., V.P.: You have researched the presence of the Dominicans in the United States and the formation of the "Latina Panethnicity Identity."[13] They are in the most profound way connected to the work of W.E.B. Du Bois and the concepts discussed. Specifically, you suggest that – in our imagination – the *pan-ethnic* association may have functioned as both a helping representation for specific immigrants (in finding a larger category to belong to, in order to avoid a "lack of recognition" with a larger group than their national one), but at the same time as a racial construct that discriminates Latinos in the U.S. as a macro-group. We find this to be a completely path-breaking insight yet it also left us tempted to speculate on its uses for scholarship concerning our own European periphery and its relations with the European core. The case of Eastern European migration is quite different, as there is freedom of movement in the EU, yet we would still venture to draw a comparison. Although a lot of workers from "the region" go from the East to the West to work in agriculture, manufacturing or domestic services, they don't quite have a *pan-ethnic* identity to belong to. This, of course, results from the fact that there is no common language between Romanian, Polish, and or Serbian workers as immigrants. There is no "Latin" to connect them. Meanwhile, they *are seen* by the host societies as the same, much like the US society sees Latinx as the same. Here, stereotypes of "Eastern workers",[14] "communist mentality", etc. come to mind. Do you think that under these conditions the concept of pan-ethnic identity can be grafted onto the case of East European immigrants in any way?

J.I.: A Du Boisian methodology guides us to contrast cases accounting for their specificities. I'd say that what is similar is how identity labels can work at the same time as sources of identification, recognition, and solidarity and as forms of exclusions of all kind. It is the fact that people are excluded on the base of certain shared characteristics that often makes those identities a source of affirmation. Du Bois understood the predicament of the Africana diaspora in those terms. For him, Black identity in the diaspora emerged from a history of enslavement and colonialism. And at the same time a central issue in his thought was how to build Black identity—that he based on a history of resistance and common cultural experiences. He also acted throughout his life to build Pan African consciousness.

In the contemporary United States, panethnicities are the result of the ways in which ethnoracial categories operate. The process of confronting racism in everyday life eventually generates new forms of identification and mobilization. Today, panethnic identities such as Latinx or Asian American are established and accepted by the people that are interpellated by them. At the same

time, there are always tensions based on the different national, racial, class experiences of different people and groups. Latinx people have a language and the idea of Latin American unity in common and that makes it somehow easier for them to build a panethnic identity. Asian Americans don't a have a language or a regional identity in common, but the experience of living in the U.S., and the constant interpellation by the state and society, leads to the emergence of a common identity, that means different things for different people. What I argue in my work is that panethnicity is by no means a given, it is the result of, on the one hand, constant engagement with the color line in everyday life, and on the other hand, a protracted process of identity construction and mobilization.

I am not very familiar with the case of Eastern European migrants in Western Europe, but it seems to me that the many ethnonational differences between immigrants and the fact that Europe is a union of different countries with different cultural politics (as opposed to the U.S. which is a single country with a strong ideology of assimilation that coexists with racialization) may make it difficult for panethnic identities similar to those we see in the United States to emerge. But if eastern European migrants are excluded and discriminated on a common base, one cannot discount the possibility of the emergence of forms of shared identities and organization that may resemble panethnicity.

The more general sociological point is that the categories of exclusion often can become the categories of identification and mobilization. But we need to investigate the processes of identity formation and political mobilization in their contextual specificity. It is also important to pay attention to what kind of demands are made. The decolonial project is not one of simply demands for inclusion. These are very important to improve the everyday life living conditions of immigrant groups and to gain them recognition. Historically, some groups have also been successful in getting included into the dominant category or achieving honorary status as good migrants. For the decolonial project, however, the goal is different. The goal is the undoing of coloniality and the categories of exclusion born of colonialism. On this point I would recommend Ricarda Hammer's excellent article "Decolonizing the Civil Sphere" (published in Sociological Theory).

Ultimately, to return to the first question, the thrust of the decolonial project is the undoing of the idea of Whiteness and the West as synonymous of civilization, culture and normative forms of knowledge, and to open up a democratic conversation about how we want to be humans. That conversation needs to address the full recognition of our shared humanity; the undoing of racism and coloniality; and a just distribution of resources and opportunities; environmental justice. It also needs to address settler colonialism, indigeneity, land and culture; the undoing of heteropatriarchy; and questions about what constitutes a good life. These are not simple or easy conversations, because they address different intersectionalities of subaltern positions, each of which encompasses different lived experiences and interests under racial and colonial capitalism. We gave up long ago the Marxian idea of a unitary and homogeneous emancipatory subject. There are many subaltern positions, subjects, and social movements and they see the world in different ways. But opening up a conversation between different subaltern movements that takes into account specific histories and experiences and also shared wounds and potential common interests and shared visions is the only way in which we can build hope for transcending racialized modernity for a more humane society.

Ș.B., V.P.: We would like to return to your new book on Du Bois, specifically because you mentioned "different subaltern movements." You emphasize in the book that the last years of his life were dedicated to "advocating Pan Africanism." You give several examples of his involvement in this movement, spanning from the First Pan-African Conference (1900) to the All African People Congress in Ghana (1958). You also describe the differences he had with Marcus Garvey on Pan-Africanism: while Du Bois was advocating for "integration and full equality in the United States," Garvey went for "Black separatism, the return to Africa, and the development of Black businesses." You also describe Du Bois's shift during his later years towards Garvey's perspective, not as "Black nationalism," but rather as a "strategy for community survival" (8). How have these two perspectives evolved after Du Bois, in academic research as well as in activism, and what do they tell us about subaltern positions in today's world?

J.I.: Du Bois was a pan Africanist from the very beginning of his scholarly and activist career. He was present at the First Pan-African Conference that took place in London in 1900 and he drafted the conference address to the nations of the world where for the first time he states that the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line. His position towards colonialism, though, changed throughout his life. Whereas in his early writings, in the late 1890s and early 1900s, he condemns colonialism but exhorts the colonial powers to help "modernize" the colonized peoples, later on, already by the time of World War I, he became an anticolonial thinker through and through. At the end of his life, in the late 1950s, he warns the newly independent states of Africa of the dangers of following a Western model of development.

Concerning Black nationalism, during his well-known and bitter arguments with Marcus Garvey, Du Bois takes an integrationist position, close to the NAACP position,

in favor of activism for civil and political rights in the United States, against Garvey's nationalist and diasporic orientation. But Du Bois's argument with Garvey was as much about styles of leadership—the elite advocacy that Du Bois embraced at that time versus the mass politics that Garvey espoused—as it was about political positions. Later on in his life, Du Bois would take positions closer to those that Garvey defended, favoring the development of a Black community economy in the 1930s, and leaving the United States for Ghana at the end of his life. But Du Bois advocacy for Black community development and Pan-Africanism, was always embedded in a broader understanding of anti-colonial internationalism that focused on all people of color and all colonized people.

Since Du Bois' passing we have seen the failure of pan Africanism and anticolonial nationalism as political projects. And indeed, Du Bois warned that this was a concrete possibility if the newly independent countries tried to follow the path proposed by Western developed countries (similar warnings were issued by other anticolonial thinkers and activists such as Franz Fanon and Amilcar Cabral). Today, the failure of the post-colonial socialist and Third World solidarity political projects has shattered any illusion of national or global south unity. Furthermore, we witness the rise of China as a new power with a politics that can be described as a form of neo-colonialism in Africa, whereas Du Bois saw China as the country that could help Africa undo the wounds of colonialism. Still, the challenge that Du Bois posed of building global solidarity among the excluded of racial and colonial capitalism still stands as a paramount task.

Du Bois knew very well that a shared subaltern position does not imply a shared understanding of the world or a similar political position. Today we are even more aware of the heterogeneity of subaltern positions, of their multiple intersectionalities, and that they don't entail similar lived experiences and, even less, similar politics. Building solidarity means engaging in the continuous and difficult work of translation between different subaltern positions, lived experiences, and demands. We know today that solidarity needs to be built upon the recognition of shared humanity and the articulation of alternative views of a just society that account for the heterogeneity of subaltern experiences. The current COVID pandemic and the environmental crises show that we can't face the global problems that we confront without building solidarities and, at the same time, the difficulties in doing so.

In relation to your question about how Pan-Africanism or Black nationalism are addressed in the academy, it varies by discipline and areas of study. I prefer to talk about Sociology, because it is my discipline and it is the discipline I am trying to influence. In Sociology, unfortunately, questions related to the possibility of emancipation and what that may mean for different people have been pushed aside in favor of a neutral "professional" sociology that embraces analytical bifurcation—the occlusion of the global connections created by colonialism and coloniality—and reifies methods over substantive and normative concerns. Sociology aims to address social problems without acknowledging that what we define as a problem and the solutions we propose are tied to our normative positions. The challenge that Du Bois posed, of using existing knowledge to think about how to undo the color line, and how to think about inclusive democracies and economies, remains a major debt of the academic disciplines, at least of the social sciences.

Ș.B., V.P.: In this new book you underline the importance of Du Bois' view of the world/globe/planet and show the significance of his idea that "the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line, the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea." You follow the studies of katrina quisumbing king, who shows, as you explain, that "many people are aware of the first part of the phrase—the color line as the central problem of the twentieth century—but not of its continuation—that is to say, Du Bois's understanding of the color line as a global phenomenon" (31). What does "global" mean to Du Bois in different periods of his activity, and how does he translate from the local to the global state of affairs compared to other scholars of his time? We are interested in this aspect mainly due to the rise of World Literature studies in our field and the constant interrogation of what the "world" meant in different stages of modern history.

J.I.: In *Dusk of Dawn* Du Bois credits his experiences while studying in Germany in the early 1890s with providing him with the perspective and the understanding that the color line is global. From then on he understood the color line as a global historical structure linked to colonialism. And he developed a unique methodology for analyzing the relations between the local and the global. This methodology recognized the unique historical specificity of cases, and the heterogeneity of historical experiences, but at the same time saw heterogeneous cases and histories tied to global structures and historical processes. Individual cases needed to be analyzed in their particular specificities but also in their relationality to and embeddedness in global processes and structures. There was no room for analytical bifurcation or methodological nationalism in Du Bois's approach. It was the task of the historically rooted social sciences to investigate the concrete forms of the relations between the global and the local.

We can observe how Du Bois applied this methodology in his analysis of the United States society and politics in *Black Reconstruction*. In that book, Du Bois analyzes the U.S. as a specific case embedded in a broader world-

historical social formation that Karida Brown and I call racial and colonial capitalism. Du Bois argues that the U.S. has particular and specific historical characteristics but it is part of a broader global division of labor and cultural formation. And Du Bois analyzes the post-reconstruction political and economic regime in the United States as one that at the same time intensifies racism within its boundaries and imperialism externally. Du Bois shows that these two things—internal racism and external imperialism—go together.

Similarly, in his analysis of the politics of European metropolis, Du Bois emphasizes how the colonial state is rooted in a class alliance between the White bourgeoisie and working class (an alliance that includes European social-democratic parties) to maintain colonial spoils. Du Bois therefore acknowledges that the local has very specific characteristics but those specific characteristics developed in the context of a global historical system and through specific relations—that need to be examined empirically—with other units and parts of that system.

Mainstream sociology, on the other hand, as Julian Go aptly points out, mostly developed along the lines of methodological nationalism and analytical bifurcation, that is, looking at nation states as independent cases and ignoring the historical and structural relations between the core of racial and colonial capitalism and its peripheries. The exceptions to this are dependency theory—that emerged in the peripheries of global capitalism—and World System analysis, that was developed by Immanuel Wallerstein, as a result of his experience researching post-colonial Africa. Today we are witnessing the call for relational sociologies, as Gurminder Bhambra asserts, and overcoming analytical bifurcation, as Julian Go proposes. Karida Brown and I argue for embracing Du Bois's methodology of analysis of the relationality of the local and the global described above.

Ș.B., V.P.: You emphasize Du Bois's biographical details in order to understand his "thinking about the world." You wrote about his struggle during the 50s, his federal trial, the revocation of his Passport, etc. Since *The Autobiography of W.E.B. Du Bois* was first published in Russian (1962), we would like to get more into his activity during the Cold War, linking his ideology with the global frame at the time. We believe this might prove insightful for understanding the place of the Global South within the Cold War and maybe open up some new perspectives on anti-colonialism and non-aligned movements.[15] Can Du Bois's work provide some new perspectives on the role of the Global South during the Cold War?

J.I.: After World War II Du Bois's activism focused on three issues. One of them was the continuation of his long-term activism for civil rights in the United States. A second issue was the global anti-nuclear weapons movement that developed in response to the use of atomic bombs at the end of the war. This activism is what lead to his indictment and trial in 1951, at the age of 83, as part of the red scare that swept over U.S. politics at the time. Du Bois was accused of being an agent of a foreign power (namely, the Soviet Union), and although the charges were dismissed, the indictment led to a sort of internal ostracism, whereas most civil rights organization distanced themselves from Du Bois, as they did not want to be linked to someone who was seen as a communist sympathizer. Du Bois wrote openly about how this ostracism hurt him personally. The third issue was a continuation of his anticolonial and pan-African activism. This indeed becomes the main focus of Du Bois activism in his late life.

Du Bois was hopeful about the Bandung conference and the process of Third-World collaboration that it initiated. He couldn't attend the conference because, after his indictment, the American government denied him a passport until 1958, but he sent a message of support. Bandung represented the kind of alliance and collaboration between Asia and Africa that he thought could constitute the base for the construction of a post-colonial world. During this time, he was increasingly in close contact with the rising anti-colonial movement in Africa.

Once the U.S. government finally gave him back a passport, he visited the Eastern bloc and China. He indeed sympathized with the socialist regimes, particularly Mao's China, but he was not a communist, even though his last act before leaving the United States for good was to join the Communist Party of the United States. Du Bois advocated for Pan-African socialism, which he understood—as he explained in a letter to Kwame Nkrumah—as an eclectic combination of elements of the economic planning of the Eastern bloc, the social policies of Western European welfare states, and African communal political traditions. Du Bois' views in this period are in line with the spirit of Bandung. And his view for a post-colonial Africa was one rooted on the possibility of agency—rooted in his long term thinking on law and chance, chance representing the possibility of free will, or relatively unconstrained action—and democratic action.

Ș.B., V.P.: In his 2000 article "Postcolonialism after W.E.B. Du Bois," Kenneth Mostern stated that Du Bois "is generally identified first of all as a writer engaged in a specifically American/postslavery political theory because he is always identified with his first, and most Americacentric, popular collection of essays,"[16] and that "[g]enerations of nonmarxist African Americanists, indeed, have found it convenient to reinforce this notion, as it has been more advantageous for liberal Americans to imagine integration in the United States, rather than third world proletarian solidarity, as a political project"

(76). This led Mostern to assert that "the absence of Du Bois's name from the contemporary discourse of postcolonialism" was a result, among other things, of the "rewriting of anti-imperialist history in a way that sidesteps Marxism." You also argue in your book with Karida L. Brown that "Du Bois's work prefigures contemporary postcolonial and decolonial analyses" through works such as *Black Reconstruction in America* and *The World and Africa*, and that one could better understand the limits of a class-based analysis through his writings, since "[r]acial difference and inequalities may have originated in the need to exploit labor, but they were perpetuated and constantly reproduced through social interaction and the construction of racial subjectivity" (78). Both perspectives suggest that postcolonial and decolonial studies were anticipated, in several ways, by Du Bois. What happened after? Did postcolonial theory truly "sidestep" Du Bois, and if it did, what were the losses for the field?

J.I.: Postcolonial theory is a broad field that has different expressions in different disciplines, more than a unified theory. I believe that it is true that postcolonial studies in the humanities focus mostly on ways of knowing and understanding the postcolonial world. This is an immensely important contribution, but it does sidestep structural critiques of racial and colonial capitalism as a historical social and economic system, including those rooted in Black Marxism. In this sense, post-colonial studies indeed sidestepped Du Bois. This is a loss because Du Bois' thought presents a form of anti-colonial critique that addresses both the cultural and the economic dimensions of racialized modernity.

Du Bois argued that the dominant ways of seeing and classifying human beings that we live with are a product of the historical need to legitimize colonialism and enslavement. But these forms of knowing and seeing became themselves structuring forces of the lived experiences of racial and colonial capitalism. Colonialism and enslavement put the question of the human (who is human?) at the center of historical capitalism. The question of the human, in turn, became the central issue structuring the economy and politics of modern times that are aptly described as racialized modernity. There is in Du Bois an analysis of knowledge and cultural formation that prefigures contemporary postcolonial analysis and that is, at the same time, tied to the analysis of social and economic structures of exploitation, oppression and exclusion without subordinating one to the other—rather, looking for their interconnections.

For Du Bois the task of emancipation meant struggling for the recognition of the humanity of the racialized and colonized and the achievement of more democratic and egalitarian forms of organizing society and the economy. The two tasks are intimately linked to one another as the forms of exploitation, oppression, and dispossession of racial and colonial capitalism were and are rooted on the color line—that is, on the denial of the humanity of the racialized and colonized. Building on Du Bois allows us to address both the economic forms of post-colonial capitalism and the knowledge and cultural forms of racialized modernity.

Sociology is a very late comer to post-colonial analysis. The prevalence of an ahistorical and atheoretical empiricism in the mainstream of the discipline on the one hand, and the reliance of most post-positivist sociologies on Eurocentric theoretical paradigms on the other, kept post-colonial and decolonial approaches at bay from the discipline for a long time. But sociology's affinity for structural thinking makes the current attempts to build a postcolonial sociology rely much more on Du Bois's work. In his book *Postcolonial Thought and Social Theory*, Julian Go includes Du Bois as part of a first wave of post-colonial approaches, and he builds on Du Bois in his own work. The connected sociologies that Gurminder Bhambra advocates for have a close relationship with Du Bois's methodology of linking the local and the global. And the growing ranks of post-colonial and decolonial sociologists—established and young scholars such as Zine Magubane, Moon-Kie Jung, Ali Meghji, Ricarda Hammer, Zophia Edwards, Alexandre White, katrina quisumbing king and others—rely on Du Bois's work. The Du Boisian sociology that Karida Brown and I propose in the final chapter of our book is an attempt to build a decolonial sociology (that is a sociology that centers and criticizes colonialism and coloniality) rooted directly in Du Bois' work, understanding it as a broad and flexible theoretical approach and methodology, not as an orthodoxy.

Ș.B., V.P.: Your book focuses mainly on the urban sociology project of Du Bois, since he was first and foremost interested in debunking some of the representations, and even methods of urban sociology. You give the example of his issue with "car window sociology," "by which he meant harmful studies whose findings were based on opinion, prejudice, and first-glance assumptions about entire populations of people" (111). You also delve into the "critical ethnography" he employed in "The Meaning of Progress," motivated by his experience as a schoolteacher in rural Tennessee. He was, you say, "perhaps the first to take this approach," that is to "humanize the poor and contextualize their behavior within their institutional and structural constraints" (58). How can Du Bois's thinking reshape the way we see the rural development/ underdevelopment in decolonial thought, within *combined and uneven* national, regional, and world frames?

J.I.: The question of rural development is central to the postcolonial imagination and human emancipation since the Haitian Revolution. The Haitian revolution was torn

between its leadership attempt to rebuild the plantation economy and Haiti's insertion in the world economy and the desire of the formerly enslaved people to become peasants and their demand for land. It was the Haitian revolution—not the French Revolution or the American one—the one that initiated political modernity by posing the two questions that beset our times ever since: the question of recognition of the humanity of the racialized and the colonized and the question of building a social and economic system that works for all humans. These are questions that Du Bois dealt with and they remain the challenge for post-Colonial thinkers today.

In his work, Du Bois paid close attention to rural communities. He conducted some of the first empirical studies of rural communities in the United States.[17] In these studies he documented the lives of rural Black communities, the changes they underwent and the constraints and limits they encountered in the post-Reconstruction South. He wrote an article on this topic for the journal Max Weber published—an article that has only been recently translated to and published in English in Nahum Chandler's excellent commentated compilation of Du Bois's early essays[18]—in which he describes how sharecropping became a new form of oppression of Black labor after Reconstruction. In *Black Reconstruction* he argues that the failure of reconstruction was the failure to give land to the formerly enslaved people in the southern states, which would have empowered them and freed them from dependency on White landowners and employers. In his exhortations to colonial powers, he also emphasized the importance of giving colonized people access to land. And, of course, the essay that you refer to in your question—which is one of the chapters of *Souls of Black Folk*—points to the poverty of progress in the rural south under Jim Crow. For Du Bois, access to land was necessary for emancipating colonial and racialized labor.

I don't think, however, that we can extrapolate directly from Du Bois's work a theory of rural development for our increasingly urban and global world where agricultural sectors are often controlled by corporations that rely on migrant and racialized workers and the subordination of the remaining peasants and farmers to corporate logics. What we can do is to look at the principles that guided Du Bois—the search for expanding human agency and economic democracy—and try to reflect on what those principles may mean for our times. The question today for a postcolonial social science, as it was for Du Bois, is one of imagining the organizational and cultural politics that can lead us in the direction of undoing the color line and the new forms of neocolonialism and coloniality, and building economic democracy.

Notes:

1. see *On Decolonizing Sociological Theory with Prof. Jose Itzigsohn*, https://youtu.be/e38Xwx0POkU.
2. Anibal Quijano, "Modernity, Identity, and Utopia in Latin America," *boundary 2* 20, no.3 (1993): 140-55; "Colonialidad del poder, cultura y conocimiento en América Latina," *Disposito* 24, no. 51 (1999) 137-48; "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America," *Nepantla: Views from South* 1 no. 3 (2000): 533–80.
3. Raewyn Connell, *Southern Theory: The Global Dynamics of Knowledge in Social Science* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007).
4. Gurminder K. Bhambra, *Rethinking Modernity. Postcolonialism and the Sociological Imagination* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); "Historical Sociology, International Relations and Connected Histories," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 23, no. 1 (2010): 127-143.
5. Manuela Boatcă, "Semiperipheries in the World-System: Reflecting Eastern European and Latin American Experiences," *Journal of World-Systems Research* 12, no. 2 (2006): 321-46; and *Global Inequalities Beyond Occidentalism* (New York: Routledge, 2016); Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez, Manuela Boatcă, Sérgio Costa, *Decolonizing European Sociology: Transdisciplinary Approaches* (London: Routledge, 2016).
6. Ali Meghji, *Decolonizing Sociology: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2021); Ricarda Hammer, "Decolonizing the Civil Sphere: The Politics of Difference, Imperial Erasures, and Theorizing from History," *Sociological Theory* 38, no. 2 (2020). 101-121.
7. Aldon Morris, *The Scholar Denied: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Birth of Modern Sociology* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015).
8. José Itzigsohn, Karida L. Brown, *The Sociology of W. E. B. Du Bois. Racialized Modernity and the Global Color Line* (New York: New York University Press, 2020).
9. Julian Go, *Postcolonial Thought and Social Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).
10. See for example Paget Henry, *Caliban's Reason: Introducing Afro-Caribbean Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 2000). For detailed bibliography and works see Jane Anna Gordon, Lewis R. Gordon, Aaron Kamugisha, and Neil Roberts, *Journeys in Caribbean Thought. The Paget Henry Reader* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016).
11. José Itzigsohn, Karida Brown, "Sociology and the Theory of Double Consciousness. W. E. B. Du Bois's Phenomenology of Racialized Subjectivity," *Du Bois Review* 12, no. 2 (2015): 231–248.
12. See Gloria Anzaldua, *Borderlands. La Frontera* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987).
13. José Itzigsohn, "The Formation of Latino and Latina Panethnicity Identity," in *Not Just Black and White: Immigration, Race, and Ethnicity, Then to Now*, ed. Nancy Foner, and George Fredricson (New York, NY: Russell Sage Press, 2004): 197-216.
14. During the pandemic, this concept was at the center of international debate for Romanian critical theorists since

certain measures designed specifically for migrant workers circumvented national lockdowns. For the Romanian critical interventions, see Costi Rogozanu and Daniela Gabor, "Are western Europe's food supplies worth more than east European workers' health," *The* Guardian (16 April 2020), online at https://www.theguardian.com/world/commentisfree/2020/apr/16/western-europe-food-east-european-workers-coronavirus; Paula Erizanu, "Stranded or shunned: Europe's migrant workers caught in no man's land," *The Guardian* (16 April 2020), online at https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/16/stranded-or-shunned-europes-migrant-workers-caught-in-no-mans-land; Cornel Ban, "Trods lukkede grænser flyves landarbejdere til Vesteuropa: Coronakrisen har vist, hvor afhængig Vesteuropa er af slaver fra Østeuropa," Politiken (2 may 2020), online at https://politiken.dk/debat/art7765115/Coronakrisen-har-vist-hvor-afhængig-Vesteuropa-er-af-slaver-fra-Østeuropa.

15. As scholars such as Richard Saull have argued, it might prove fundamental for an "alternative theoretical framework" of the postwar period "to place the South at the center of the Cold War in its evolution and end." See Richard Saull, "Locating the Global South in the Theorisation of the Cold War: Capitalist Development, Social Revolution and Geopolitical Conflict," *Third World Quarterly* 26, no. 2 (2005): 253-280.
16. Kenneth Mostern, "Postcolonialism after W.E.B. Du Bois," *Rethinking Marxism: A Journal of Econnomics, Culture & Society* 12, no.2 (2000): 61-80.
17. See Joseph Jakubek and Spencer D. Wood, "Emancipatory Empiricism: The Rural Sociology of W.E.B. Du Bois," *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* 4, no. 1 (2018): 14–34.
18. See Du Bois, W. E. B. "The Negro Question in the United States," pp. 285-338 in Nahum Chandler, (ed.). *The Problem of the Color Line at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015).

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