

SUNDAY AGENDA

The Guardian on Sunday
August 10 - 16, 2014

Addressing problems of inequality in society

By Bituro Kazeri

July 13, 2014 the world witnessed the end of a month long FIFA world cup in Brazil. Interested and disinterested alike could not miss the event that was rigorously marketed by all known means via all available venues.

Vigorous marketing stands to be the leading feature of the neo liberalism. Under neo liberalism leisure and entertainment is increasingly becoming important.

At around that time In Yokohama Japan leading global sociologists were convening to attend their congress which like the FIFA world cup comes after every four years.

The congress presents a global forum on which sociologists present their findings and experiences on their effort of trying to understand

majority black rule could bring about egalitarian society in South Africa.

She has noted that almost two decades since South Africa celebrated its political freedom; unemployment, poverty and inequality remain undeniably high. The dominant narrative by most South Africans is "awukho umsebenzi" and "asinamali" standing for there is no

**XVIII ISA
WORLD CONGRESS OF
SOCIOLOGY** 13-19 July 2014



practice by politician and elites in high position.

They demand the leadership accountability. And for broken policies the only place they can have undelivering and corrupt leaders and elites punished is through the ballot box.

Voting present the opportunity were western society and African society slightly differ and the

is filled by race and minority-based classes where migrant labour is heavily exploited.

Another presentation was from France experience recorded by Sociologists Luc Boltanski. Sociologists Boltanski focused on the impact of neo-liberal policies in the field of politics and intellectuals. It is observed that over the past ten years the intellectual and political fields have turned conservative and nobody is strong enough to critique the ruling elites effectively.

The ineffective social critique is caused by lack of support from natural supporters such as labour unions and social movement. The labour unions and social movement support is compromised by their own fight for survival. As a result there is no one out there to find and defend against inequality, unemployment

global society.

Sociologists have noted that the global society characterized by inequality. They have served with concern that socio-economic formations have made inequality highly visible and its impact not only imminent but also disastrous.

With that in mind the 2014 International Sociological Association (ISA) congress picked inequality as its theme. Presenters attempted to explain the origin of inequality, its impact, how to deal with it, and viable alternative.

Sociologist Guy Standing from the University of London in the United Kingdom traces the origin of inequality to the global market system. The global market system rose from the ashes of the Second World War.

It appreciated and encouraged liberalization, commoditization, individualism through privatization, privatization of social policy and action. The transformation dismantled the existing social institutions and social solidarity.

Ultimately the global society increasingly became dominated by capital, insecurity, and social inequality.

Sociologist Guy Standing argues that as the result of the global market system, the world has created a class of Precariat made of individuals with unpredictable future and high degree of insecurity. The class of individual highly educated but the best they can get is seasonal, temporary and insecure employment that makes them move in and out of the social system.

The Precariat class has no faith and do not subscribe to the left, right or center ideologies as it poses a headache to politics. However, because of its nature and immaturity it is an easy target for populous politicians, who use its fear and desire for transformation. Sociologist Standing has suggested that provision of social income to Precariat could be a viable solution. The question becomes, can we do that?

On the other hand, Sociologists Sarah Bratsa, a lecturer at the University of Johannesburg in South Africa described the experience of South Africa. She revealed that there was high hope that the end of apartheid and the placement of minority white rule by

work and we do not have money.

This statement evokes exactly the solution suggested by Sociologists Standing entailing that unemployed should be given money.

These who join the growing army of unemployment lose their dignity and they have nowhere to turn to but their respective households. Her findings highlight the importance of the household in African societies.

She feels that households are not just places of consumption and leisure but significant places of production and the provision of services, especially in the context of unemployment and poverty.

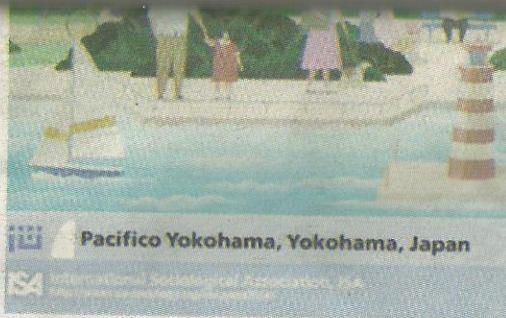
The household has become the only site of stability for most people as well as their only means of survival – the real “hidden abode of production.” Most households, however, are fragile; they lack resources and are unable, therefore, to effectively alleviate and cushion the effects of unemployment, poverty and inequality.

She further advances that new patterns of male domination and female subordination have emerged and intensified, often riddled with conflict. Intergenerational conflict also intensifies in a context where access to income and time use becomes a source of conflict rather than cooperation.

Conventional theories of gender relations and households are challenged in this new social and economic context.

The result of all these is the increase of domestic violence where women are at the receiving end. However, men could be absorbing high degree of psychological torture if a phrase “I have lost job I have lost my manhood” make any sense. For sure in African context it not only makes sense, but it is the fact.

The political field is not also spared as the electorate mainly of youth and unemployed feels let down by politician who cannot deliver and fulfill their election process. The youth and unemployed blame the situation on corruption



outcome also identical. The Precariat in the west may opt not to turn out and vote because they know changing leadership means very little.

In Africa as South Africa presents; turning out to vote is a means towards

punishing these in power. The change of leadership in Africa, like in the west, also brings no impact on the forces of the global market system.

The congress then had a treat from Sociologist Chizuko Ueno from the University of Tokyo in Japan. Sociologists Ueno evoked Daniel Bell's 1960s prediction that new class society will be based on knowledge and information capitalism where gender will mean nothing.

The prediction turned out to be not true. Sociologists revealed that through the observation in Japan, the reality is that social change has promoted neo-liberal reforms that have resulted in a widening class gap and decreased social mobility, wherein gender matters a great deal.

Women are cast into the labour market in the name of the “equal opportunity,” which handicaps by virtue of their care-burden. In addition, the rapidly ageing society added further burdens to the care-takers, mainly women.

That observation is true even in Africa where women, indeed older women, carry the burden of supporting the household in the time of need due to unemployment; are care givers to the household members hit by health and medical problem especially these related to HIV/Aids.

They are care givers to children of their offspring single parents who send them for custodian to let them free to brace the struggle in the new labour seeking and employment which gives no time for single parents to look after and care for their own children.

Is it the same every where? According to Sociologist Ueno the answer is no! Where it is true that the social economic transformation has created a class of care givers, in the West that role

precariousness.

Sociologists Boltanski advances that neo-conservatism has taken France back to the situation like the one that lead to the Second World War Neo-conservatism - responsible to notable socio-economic changes whose precise analysis seems particularly urgent.

The first and most visible change is the decline of industry, which dismantles an “old” proletariat given over to unemployment and precariousness. The second change is the development of new economic forms which create wealth by exploiting the patrimonialization of sites or “terroirs” whose “authentic” character is distorted by forms of commodification and/or through the extension of cultural industries of luxury brands.

These two economic processes have political effects that promote reactionary and xenophobic positions. Groups and social classes whose interests are linked with industry accuse “foreigners” of “robbing” the work of the “real” French people. Groups and social classes involved in the process of patrimonialization accuse “foreigners” of polluting “authentic”, “ancestral” and national places and values.

Patrimonialization, commodification, promotion of cultural and luxury brand such as the FIFA World Cup, and xenophobic are not restricted to France and for that matter the Western world, but they are now global phenomena.

Sociologist Raquel Sosa Elizaga the outgoing ISA Vice-President, Congress Programme in the opening paper showed that the role of sociology is to alert the world of the problem and encourage a healthy debate about it.

The 18th International ISA Congress has managed to describe inequality; its dimension and dynamism that are leaving no one safe. Inequality is a known problem know.

Wisdom advances that a known problem is half solved but is the half solution to such a serious problem good enough?

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