



Important but Lesser-Known Contemporary Sociologists (Post-2000s)

Below is a curated list of 35 sociologists who have been influential in the 21st century within specific subfields, yet are not widely known outside those domains. The list is grouped by thematic areas, highlighting global diversity across the Global North and South. Each entry includes the sociologist's affiliation, region, primary research foci, notable work(s), and a brief summary of their contributions.

Race, Ethnicity, and Intersectionality

Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (Puerto Rico/USA)

- **Affiliation:** Professor of Sociology at Duke University (James B. Duke Distinguished Professor) [1](#).
- **Research Areas:** Race and racism, color-blind racism, stratification [2](#).
- **Notable Work:** *Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in America* (2003) [1](#).
- **Contribution:** Bonilla-Silva introduced the concept of “color-blind racism,” explaining how modern racial inequality is perpetuated through ostensibly nonracial structures and practices [3](#). He argues that racism is systemic (embedded in social institutions rather than just individual prejudice), reshaping scholarship on white supremacy and racial stratification in the post-civil rights era [4](#) [5](#). As a Black Puerto Rican sociologist, he has also been an outspoken mentor and advocate for scholars of color in the discipline [6](#).

Patricia Hill Collins (USA)

- **Affiliation:** Distinguished University Professor Emerita of Sociology, University of Maryland, College Park [7](#).
- **Research Areas:** Race, gender, and class intersections; Black feminist thought; sociology of knowledge [8](#).
- **Notable Works:** *Black Feminist Thought* (1990); *Intersectionality* (2016, with S. Bilge) [9](#) [8](#).
- **Contribution:** Collins pioneered Black feminist sociology, articulating the “matrix of domination” – how axes of race, gender, and class oppression intersect [10](#). Her work gave voice to Black women’s intellectual traditions and introduced intersectionality into sociology as a critical framework for understanding inequality [8](#). Collins’s scholarship (e.g., *Black Feminist Thought*) gained wide recognition for analyzing how knowledge and power shape the experiences of African American women [8](#). In 2009, she became the first Black woman President of the American Sociological Association, underlining her influence within the field [11](#).

Gloria Wekker (Suriname/Netherlands)

- **Affiliation:** Emeritus Professor of Gender and Ethnicity, Utrecht University [12](#).
- **Research Areas:** Race and ethnic relations, postcolonial studies, gender and sexuality, Afro-European diaspora [13](#).

- **Notable Work:** *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race* (2016) ¹².
- **Contribution:** Wekker's work uncovers the enduring legacies of colonialism in Dutch society. In *White Innocence*, she exposes the "passionate denial" of racism in the Netherlands alongside persistent racial inequalities ¹² ¹⁴. Her analysis shows how Dutch self-image as a tolerant, ethical nation is underpinned by an unacknowledged colonial archive that shapes attitudes toward Black people and immigrants ¹⁵ ¹⁶. A Surinamese-born scholar, Wekker brings a Black feminist perspective to European discussions of race, challenging the Dutch tendency to regard racism as "not here" and illuminating how "innocence" about colonial history safeguards white privilege ¹⁴.

Evelyn Nakano Glenn (USA)

- **Affiliation:** Professor Emerita of Gender & Women's Studies and Ethnic Studies, University of California, Berkeley ¹⁷ ¹⁸.
- **Research Areas:** Race, gender, and class inequality; labor markets; citizenship; women of color feminism ¹⁸.
- **Notable Work:** *Unequal Freedom: How Race and Gender Shaped American Citizenship and Labor* (2002) ¹⁹.
- **Contribution:** Glenn is a pioneer of intersectional analysis in historical sociology ²⁰. Her research demonstrated how race and gender together structured labor markets and citizenship in U.S. history, showing (for example) how women of color's work was devalued and how laws enforced racial/gender hierarchies ²¹ ¹⁹. She developed the concept of the **racial-gender "structure of labor"**, illustrating how women of color labored under double subordination in domestic service and clerical work ¹⁸. A former President of the ASA (2010), Glenn has been influential in institutionalizing race-gender scholarship; her concept of the "interlocking dynamics" of race, gender, and class provided foundational insight for contemporary inequality studies ¹⁷ ¹⁸.

Bandana Purkayastha (India/USA)

- **Affiliation:** Board of Trustees Distinguished Professor of Sociology and Asian American Studies, University of Connecticut ²² ²³.
- **Research Areas:** Intersectionality (gender, race, migration), transnational feminism, human rights, diaspora communities ²⁴ ²⁵.
- **Notable Work:** Co-editor of *Human Rights in Our Own Backyard* (2011) – award-winning book on U.S. human rights issues ²⁶.
- **Contribution:** Purkayastha's scholarship bridges global human rights and intersectional sociology. An Indian-born sociologist in the U.S., she examines how gender, race, and immigrant status intersect to shape experiences of inequality both in the U.S. and transnationally ²⁴ ²⁵. Her work emphasizes "connected sociologies," advocating that sociology incorporate perspectives from the Global South and diaspora communities rather than relying only on Euro-American theory ²⁵. As a past president of Sociologists for Women in Society and Vice-President of the ISA, Purkayastha has also championed mentoring and inclusion of minority scholars, enlarging the horizon of intersectionality research to a global scale.

Gender and Sexuality

Oyèrónké Oyéwùmí (Nigeria/USA)

- **Affiliation:** Professor Emerita of Sociology, Stony Brook University (SUNY) ²⁷ ²⁸.

- **Research Areas:** Gender and knowledge, sociology of culture, African studies, postcolonial theory [29](#) [30](#).
- **Notable Work:** *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses* (1997) [31](#).
- **Contribution:** Oyéwùmí offers a radical critique of Western gender assumptions through an African lens. In *The Invention of Women*, she argues that “gender” as understood in the West did not exist in the same way in Yorùbá society prior to colonization [32](#). She shows that Western colonial powers imposed a binary, gendered order (“the narrative of gendered corporeality”) onto societies where social categories were structured more by age or seniority than by sex [33](#). This insight – that gender is a culturally specific, historically constructed category – has been hugely influential in decolonizing gender studies. Oyéwùmí’s work, which won the ASA’s Distinguished Book Award in 1998 [28](#), challenges universalist feminist theories by centering non-Western epistemologies and demonstrating that gender itself can be “invented” through colonial discourse [30](#).

Sylvia Tamale (Uganda)

- **Affiliation:** Professor (former Dean of Law) at Makerere University, Uganda [34](#) [35](#).
- **Research Areas:** Gender and sexuality, feminist legal studies, human rights in Africa, queer studies.
- **Notable Works:** *African Sexualities: A Reader* (2011, editor); *Decolonization and Afro-Feminism* (2020) [36](#).
- **Contribution:** Tamale is a leading African feminist sociologist and legal scholar who has boldly pushed the boundaries on taboo issues of sexuality and women’s rights in Africa. She has written extensively on women’s political participation and on LGBTQ rights, famously arguing in 2003 for Uganda’s definition of “minority” to include lesbian and gay people [37](#) – a stance that drew intense backlash from conservatives (“Worst Woman of the Year”) [38](#) [37](#). Her edited volume *African Sexualities* assembles diverse voices challenging the idea that sexuality is a “Western” issue, instead highlighting indigenous African perspectives on sexual rights [39](#). Tamale’s work decolonizes sexuality studies by centering African experiences and critiquing the imported Victorian-era morals that inform many African laws [39](#) [40](#). Through scholarship and public engagement, she has advanced conversations on sexual freedom, gender justice, and the need to “Africanize” feminism and human rights discourse.

Naila Kabeer (Bangladesh/UK)

- **Affiliation:** Professor of Gender and Development, London School of Economics (Emeritus Professor; also affiliated with LSE International Development) [41](#) [42](#).
- **Country/Region:** Indian-born British-Bangladeshi.
- **Research Areas:** Gender, development, and poverty; women’s livelihoods; empowerment; social protection in South Asia [43](#) [44](#).
- **Notable Works:** *Reversed Realities: Gender Hierarchies in Development Thought* (1994); *The Power to Choose: Bangladeshi Women and Labour Market Decisions* (2000) [45](#).
- **Contribution:** Kabeer is a feminist economist/sociologist whose work on women’s empowerment in development has been highly influential. She illuminated how development programs often overlook gender power relations, famously critiquing “instrumental” approaches that treat women merely as tools for economic growth [46](#) [47](#). Instead, Kabeer’s research – based on extensive fieldwork in South Asia – foregrounds women’s agency and the structural barriers they face in labor markets and society [43](#) [48](#). She introduced concepts like women’s “power to choose” in her analysis of garment workers in Bangladesh, highlighting how cultural norms and limited options constrain poor women’s

choices ⁴⁹. Her emphasis on **socially just development** (e.g., gender-aware planning ⁴⁶ and “empowerment as process”) has shaped global policy debates on poverty and led to more nuanced measures of development success that include gender equality ⁴³ ⁵⁰.

Nira Yuval-Davis (UK/Israel)

- **Affiliation:** Professor Emeritus of Sociology and Honorary Director of the Research Centre on Migration, Refugees and Belonging, University of East London ⁵¹.
- **Research Areas:** Gender and nation; nationalism and racism; citizenship; intersectionality; feminist politics ⁵² ⁵³.
- **Notable Works:** *Gender and Nation* (1997); *The Politics of Belonging: Intersectional Contests* (2011) ⁵⁴.
- **Contribution:** Yuval-Davis is known internationally for her analysis of how gender shapes national projects and for her theory of “transversal politics.” In *Gender and Nation*, she showed that nation-building always involves specific notions of manhood and womanhood – for example, women often serve symbolically as biological and cultural reproducers of the nation ⁵⁵. She has detailed how nationalist movements and state policies regulate women’s bodies (through reproductive laws, etc.) in service of ethnic or national “purity.” Additionally, Yuval-Davis has been a key figure in intersectional theory, arguing for an inclusive feminism attentive to racism and religious fundamentalism ⁵³. As a veteran activist (co-founder of Women Against Fundamentalism) and scholar, she advocates a dialogical, cross-community approach to women’s rights. In recognition of her scholarship bridging academia and advocacy, she received the ISA Distinguished Practice Award in 2018 ⁵⁶ ⁵⁷, exemplifying how her work ties analyses of **gender, nationalism, and racism** to real-world struggles for social justice.

Sylvia Walby (UK)

- **Affiliation:** Professor of Sociology, City, University of London (formerly holder of UNESCO Chair in Gender Research; currently Director of Violence & Society Centre) ⁵⁸.
- **Research Areas:** Gender inequality and patriarchy theory; gender-based violence; work and globalization; social theory and complexity ⁵⁹ ⁶⁰.
- **Notable Works:** *Theorizing Patriarchy* (1990); *Globalization and Inequalities* (2009); *Gendered Violence* (2017).
- **Contribution:** Walby is a leading theorist of gender relations, known for her structural account of patriarchy. She famously identified **six interlocking “structures” of patriarchy** – paid work, household production, culture, sexuality, violence, and the state – which systematically restrict women and uphold male domination in society ⁶¹ ⁶². This framework, developed in her early work, helped move feminist theory beyond single-factor explanations to a more holistic view of how gender oppression is organized across different institutions. Over time Walby has updated her approach, incorporating intersectionality and global perspectives, but her focus remains on how transformations (e.g. globalization, neoliberal policies) impact gender regimes ⁶⁰. She has also researched the rise of gender-based violence and how it is intertwined with societal changes. A former President of the European Sociological Association and Officer of the Order of the British Empire (for services to diversity) ⁶³ ⁶⁴, Walby’s career testifies to the importance of combining rigorous theory with public engagement to advance gender equality.

Class, Inequality, and Labor

Loïc Wacquant (France/USA)

- **Affiliation:** Professor of Sociology, University of California, Berkeley; Research Associate, Centre de sociologie européenne, Paris [65](#) [66](#).
- **Research Areas:** Urban inequality, poverty and ghettos, incarceration and the “penal state,” social theory (Bourdieu), ethnography [67](#).
- **Notable Works:** *Urban Outcasts: A Comparative Sociology of Advanced Marginality* (2008); *Punishing the Poor: The Neoliberal Government of Social Insecurity* (2009).
- **Contribution:** Wacquant is a prominent urban sociologist who melds Pierre Bourdieu’s theory with gritty field research to analyze marginalization. He has compared Black urban ghettos in the US with immigrant districts in France, coining the term “advanced marginality” to describe the new spatial concentration of poverty under neoliberalism [68](#) [69](#). He famously linked the breakdown of the ghetto to the rise of mass incarceration, arguing that U.S. prisons and inner cities function as a single “carceral continuum” for managing dispossessed Black populations [70](#) [65](#). Through works like *Urban Outcasts*, Wacquant showed that punitive turn in policy (the “**penal state**”) is deeply connected to economic deregulation and welfare retrenchment [69](#). His mix of sociological theory, comparative analysis, and personal training as a boxer in a Chicago ghetto (documented in *Body and Soul*, 2004) has given a visceral understanding of how class and race inequalities are lived and enforced at the margins of society.

Mike Savage (UK)

- **Affiliation:** Martin White Professor of Sociology, London School of Economics; former Head of LSE Sociology [71](#) [72](#).
- **Research Areas:** Social stratification and class formation; elites and wealth inequality; cultural capital; historical sociology of class in the UK [72](#).
- **Notable Works:** *Social Class in the 21st Century* (2015); Lead researcher on the BBC Great British Class Survey (2013) [72](#).
- **Contribution:** Savage has reshaped contemporary class analysis by integrating big data and cultural dimensions. He was lead architect of the Great British Class Survey, a massive project that went beyond the old three-class model to identify seven new class groupings in the UK, including a distinctive wealthy elite and a precarious “precariat” [72](#) [73](#). This research, popularized in *Social Class in the 21st Century*, revealed new insights – for example, showing how elite advantage today is secured not just by income but by social networks (education, club memberships) and cultural tastes [73](#). Savage introduced the idea of a “class ceiling,” wherein even those from modest backgrounds who attain high-level jobs often face hidden barriers in elite environments [73](#). His work on wealth accumulation and inheritance in Britain has likewise highlighted intensifying inequalities [72](#). Overall, by combining survey data with Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital, Savage has advanced a more nuanced understanding of class stratification in the era of extreme wealth gaps [72](#).

Beverly J. Silver (USA)

- **Affiliation:** Professor of Sociology and Director, Arrighi Center for Global Studies, Johns Hopkins University [74](#) [75](#).
- **Research Areas:** Labor and labor movements in historical perspective; world-systems analysis; global capitalism and crises; development and “hegemonic” cycles [76](#) [77](#).

- **Notable Work:** *Forces of Labor: Workers' Movements and Globalization since 1870* (2003) ⁷⁸.
- **Contribution:** Silver is a world-systems sociologist who maps the ebbs and flows of labor unrest on a global scale. In *Forces of Labor* ⁷⁸, she analyzed waves of worker activism over 130+ years and showed how labor movements repeatedly arise in new industrial centers as capital shifts geographically. A key finding was that each time corporations relocate for cheaper labor or fewer regulations (for instance, 19th-century Britain to 20th-century USA to late-20th-century East Asia), they eventually encounter **resurgent labor militancy** in the new locale ⁷⁸. Silver conceptualizes this as capitalism's "moving target" – capital's search for stability is constantly upset by workers' resistance in ever-new sites ⁷⁸. Her work, informed by the late Giovanni Arrighi, also links these labor cycles to broader hegemonic transitions (e.g., British to U.S. global economic dominance) ⁷⁶ ⁷⁷. By combining Marxist analysis with rich empirical data across nations and eras, Silver provides a dynamic picture of labor as an agent of global change, even as new forms of worker organization emerge in today's era of transnational production.

Annette Lareau (USA)

- **Affiliation:** Emerita Professor of Sociology, University of Pennsylvania ⁷⁹.
- **Research Areas:** Sociology of family and education; social class and childrearing; qualitative methods.
- **Notable Work:** *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life* (2003; updated 2011) ⁸⁰ ⁸¹.
- **Contribution:** Lareau's landmark study *Unequal Childhoods* revolutionized our understanding of how social class shapes parenting and life chances. Through in-depth observation of families, she identified two contrasting child-rearing logics: "**concerted cultivation**" practiced by middle-class parents (who enroll kids in many activities, encourage questioning and self-advocacy) versus "**accomplishment of natural growth**" in working-class families (where children have more unstructured time and are taught deference to authority) ⁸² ⁸³. Lareau found that while neither style is born of more loving parenting, concerted cultivation tends to equip children with skills and a sense of entitlement that yield advantages in school and beyond ⁸². This work powerfully demonstrated how everyday family interactions reproduce class inequalities across generations. Moreover, Lareau's research highlighted that class often matters even more than race in certain outcomes, as she saw similar parenting patterns in white and African American middle-class homes ⁸¹ ⁸⁴. Her qualitative approach set a standard for ethnographic rigor in sociology, and terms like "*concerted cultivation*" have entered the lexicon of education and policy discussions on opportunity gaps ⁸².

Ruy Braga (Brazil)

- **Affiliation:** Professor of Sociology, University of São Paulo (Brazil) ⁸⁵.
- **Research Areas:** Sociology of work and labor movements; precarious employment (the "precariat"); political sociology of populism and hegemony in Latin America ⁸⁶ ⁸⁷.
- **Notable Work:** *A Política do Precariado: do populismo à hegemonia lulista* (2012, in Portuguese; published in English as *The Politics of the Precariat: From Populism to Lulista Hegemony*, 2018) ⁸⁸.
- **Contribution:** Braga is a Marxist-critical sociologist examining how neoliberal globalization has transformed labor and politics in Brazil. He introduced the lens of "**the precariat**" to the Brazilian context – analyzing the growing class of workers in unstable, precarious jobs – and how this group's discontent played into the rise and later crisis of Lula's era (the "Lulista hegemony") ⁸⁶ ⁸⁸. Using a dialectical historical approach, Braga links macro-economic shifts (from Fordist industry to financialized post-Fordism) with the subjective experiences of precarious workers (feelings of

anxiety, discontent, rebellion) ⁸⁹ ⁸⁸. He argues that while Lula's left-populist government initially incorporated the working class, the persistence of precarity and new "peripheral Fordism" eventually fueled social protests and ruptures in Brazil's development model ⁸⁹ ⁸⁸. Braga's work is significant for highlighting the "*pernicious continuity of exploitation*" even under progressive regimes and for conceptualizing the political agency of precarious workers. As an activist-intellectual, he has contributed to contemporary debates on how to organize labor in the gig economy and how Latin American states might escape the cycle of inequality tied to resource-extractive, precarious economies.

Technology, Media, and Communication

Zeynep Tufekci (Turkey/USA)

- **Affiliation:** Professor and 2019–2020 Henry G. Bryant Chair of Sociology and Public Affairs, Princeton University (previously Associate Professor at UNC and faculty associate at Harvard Berkman Center) ⁹⁰ ⁹¹.
- **Research Areas:** Sociology of technology and social media; digital activism and protest movements; algorithms and society; online privacy.
- **Notable Work:** *Twitter and Tear Gas: The Power and Fragility of Networked Protest* (2017) ⁹².
- **Contribution:** Tufekci, often described as a "techno-sociologist," has illuminated how social media both empowers and undermines social movements. Drawing on firsthand observations from events like the Arab Spring and Gezi Park protests, she showed that digital platforms can rapidly mobilize mass protests but also leave movements **fragile** – lacking the organizational depth to achieve lasting change ⁹². In *Twitter and Tear Gas*, she examines the "strengths and weaknesses of networked activism," arguing that while the internet lowers barriers to entry for dissent, it can create an *illusion of momentum* without the strategy or leadership needed to negotiate with power ⁹². Tufekci has also been a leading public intellectual on the societal impact of Big Tech: she's warned about algorithmic biases, misinformation, and surveillance capitalism in op-eds and talks long before these became mainstream concerns. Through her academic work and as a prolific writer, she urges that we treat search engines, social media feeds, and AI not as neutral platforms but as systems imbued with power and values – and thus subject to democratic scrutiny ⁹³ ⁹⁴. Her insights have influenced both policymakers and activists in grappling with the double-edged sword of digital connectivity.

Judy Wajcman (Australia/UK)

- **Affiliation:** Emeritus Professor of Sociology, London School of Economics (held the Anthony Giddens Chair in Sociology) ⁹⁵ ⁹⁶.
- **Research Areas:** Sociology of work and technology; science and technology studies (STS); gender and technology; time use and digital speed.
- **Notable Works:** *Technofeminism* (2004); *Pressed for Time: The Acceleration of Life in Digital Capitalism* (2015) ⁹⁷.
- **Contribution:** Wajcman is a founding figure in technofeminism – examining how technology and gender relations co-shape each other. She has challenged the male-centric narratives of technology by showing how gender biases are built into the design and use of machines (from household appliances to AI) and by advocating for women's greater participation in tech development ⁹⁶. Her book *Pressed for Time* tackles the paradox of why, despite labor-saving devices and efficiency apps, people (especially working women) feel more time-poor than ever. She argues that digital technologies have intensified work rhythms and blurred work-life boundaries, rather than

universally liberating time ⁹⁷ ⁹⁶. Wajcman's concept of "**time poverty amid digital abundance**" suggests that technology's impact on society must be understood through a social lens: for instance, who controls clock time at work or whose schedules are privileged by scheduling software ⁹⁸ ⁹⁹. She has also written on the future of work with AI and maintains that without conscious intervention, new technologies often reproduce existing gender and power inequalities. Her lifetime achievements have been recognized by multiple academic honors, underscoring her influence on how sociologists and policymakers think about technology in society ¹⁰⁰ ¹⁰¹.

Safiya Umoja Noble (USA)

- **Affiliation:** Professor of Gender Studies and African American Studies, University of California, Los Angeles; Co-Founder, UCLA Center for Critical Internet Inquiry ¹⁰² ¹⁰³.
- **Research Areas:** Race, gender and digital media; algorithmic bias; information technology ethics; internet policy.
- **Notable Work:** *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism* (2018) ¹⁰⁴.
- **Contribution:** Noble's groundbreaking book *Algorithms of Oppression* revealed how search engines like Google can perpetuate racist and sexist biases in their results ¹⁰⁴. For example, she documented that searches for "Black girls" once returned hypersexualized or derogatory content, making visible the "**hidden discrimination in algorithmic sorting**" ¹⁰⁴. Noble argues that these biases are not glitches but reflections of the values (and commercial agendas) encoded in tech platforms ⁹³ ¹⁰⁵. Her concept of "technological redlining" shows how women and people of color are systematically misrepresented or excluded by supposedly neutral algorithms ¹⁰⁴. Beyond diagnosing the problem, Noble is an advocate for algorithmic accountability: she has served on government and NGO committees to demand fairness and transparency in AI systems ¹⁰⁶ ¹⁰⁷. In 2021, her contributions were recognized with a MacArthur "Genius" Fellowship ¹⁰⁸. Noble's work has galvanized both academic fields (like critical algorithm studies) and public discourse, insisting that **digital technologies must be assessed in terms of social justice and civil rights**, not just innovation or convenience ¹⁰³ ¹⁰⁶.

danah boyd (USA)

- **Affiliation:** Founder and President of Data & Society Research Institute; Partner Researcher at Microsoft Research; Visiting Professor at New York University ¹⁰⁹.
- **Research Areas:** Youth and social media; online privacy; digital culture; data and society.
- **Notable Work:** *It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens* (2014) ¹¹⁰ ¹⁰⁹.
- **Contribution:** Stylized in lowercase, **danah boyd** has been a pathbreaking researcher on how young people use social media. Through extensive interviews across American teens, *It's Complicated* countered alarmist myths and showed that teenagers are generally adapting social media to their age-old developmental needs – for friendship, identity exploration, autonomy ¹¹⁰. Boyd introduced nuanced perspectives: for instance, teens appear "addicted" to phones often because it's their main avenue for socializing in a world where physical freedom is curtailed ¹¹⁰ ¹¹¹. She also highlighted phenomena like "context collapse" and the ways teens manage privacy through shifting language or accounts, thereby complicating the idea that youth don't care about privacy. Beyond youth studies, boyd's influence extends to critical data studies; she has raised early warnings about "big data" and AI systems lacking context or exacerbating bias. As founder of Data & Society, she convenes interdisciplinary work on the social implications of data-centric technologies. Overall, boyd's work is characterized by **empirical groundedness and a balanced view**: she often reassures that "*the kids*

are all right, but society isn't", meaning societal structures (inequality, surveillance, limited public spaces) are the real issues that need addressing in discussions of kids and technology ¹¹² ¹¹³.

Nick Couldry (UK)

- **Affiliation:** Emeritus Professor of Media, Communications and Social Theory, London School of Economics; Faculty Associate, Harvard Berkman Klein Center ¹¹⁴.
- **Research Areas:** Media and culture; digital media and democracy; data and society; social theory (esp. concept of voice).
- **Notable Works:** *Why Voice Matters: Culture and Politics After Neoliberalism* (2010); *The Costs of Connection: How Data Is Colonizing Human Life and Appropriating It for Capitalism* (2019, with U. Mejías ¹¹⁵).
- **Contribution:** Couldry's scholarship centers on the value of human voice and agency in an age of concentrated media power. He has critiqued the neoliberal media environment, arguing that it treats people more as consumers than as citizens with a voice. In *Why Voice Matters*, he posits that voice (people's ability to narrate their lives and be heard) has been undermined by institutions that instead impose top-down narratives ¹¹⁶. This has implications for democracy and social belonging. More recently, Couldry (with Mejías) introduced the idea of "**data colonialism**" ¹¹⁴. They draw an analogy between historic colonialism (expropriating land/labor) and today's Big Tech regime that appropriates personal data on a massive scale as a raw resource ¹¹⁷ ¹¹⁴. This theoretical framework urges us to see continuous surveillance and data extraction not as normal or inevitable, but as a new form of **colonial appropriation** that demands resistance ¹¹⁷ ¹¹⁵. By linking media studies with social theory, Couldry has been influential in highlighting power asymmetries in communication systems and advocating for reinvigorating the public sphere where all voices can genuinely matter.

Environmental Sociology and Sustainability

John Bellamy Foster (USA)

- **Affiliation:** Professor of Sociology, University of Oregon; Editor of *Monthly Review* (Marxist journal) ¹¹⁸.
- **Research Areas:** Environmental sociology; Marxist ecology; political economy of climate change; eco-socialism.
- **Notable Works:** *Marx's Ecology* (2000); *The Ecological Rift: Capitalism's War on the Earth* (2010, co-authored).
- **Contribution:** Foster is a leading theorist of **ecological Marxism**, reviving Karl Marx's insights on capitalism's destructive metabolism with nature. He articulated the concept of the "**metabolic rift**," describing how capitalism ruptures the natural nutrient cycle (e.g. by urbanization and industrial agriculture separating humans from the land), leading to soil depletion and wider ecological crises ¹¹⁹ ¹²⁰. This idea, rooted in Marx's notes, provides a classical foundation for environmental sociology, framing the modern sustainability crisis as a result of capitalist production's alienation of humans from natural processes ¹¹⁹. Foster's work in *The Ecological Rift* and numerous articles argues that addressing climate change and biodiversity loss requires confronting the capitalist growth imperative itself. He has also analyzed contemporary issues like climate denial and the politics of environmental reform from a Marxian perspective. By blending scholarly analysis with an editor's platform in *Monthly Review*, Foster has influenced a generation of red-green scholarship and activism, insisting that environmental sustainability and social justice are inextricably linked in the struggle against the "war on the earth" waged by profit-driven systems ¹²¹.

Kari Marie Norgaard (USA)

- **Affiliation:** Professor of Sociology and Environmental Studies, University of Oregon.
- **Research Areas:** Climate change sociology; environmental justice (especially Indigenous environmental issues); social psychology of denial; environmental movements.
- **Notable Work:** *Living in Denial: Climate Change, Emotions, and Everyday Life* (2011) ¹²².
- **Contribution:** Norgaard's research tackles the puzzle of why societies fail to act on climate change even when awareness is high. In *Living in Denial*, an ethnographic study of a town in Norway, she documented "**socially organized denial**" – a collective process where educated, well-informed people still manage to ignore or normalize the warming they witness (like oddly warm winters) by treating it as sensitive taboo or distant threat ¹²³. She found that emotions (like fear or guilt) and cultural norms lead people to suppress discussion of climate, allowing them to continue carbon-intensive lifestyles without feeling hypocritical ¹²³. Norgaard's concept of "*collective climate denial*" has been influential in environmental sociology and psychology, shifting attention from outright climate skepticism to this more subtle, pervasive form of inaction ¹²³. Beyond climate, she has worked with Native American communities (e.g., the Karuk Tribe) on environmental justice, highlighting how climate and environmental degradation disproportionately impact Indigenous peoples and how Indigenous knowledge can guide responses. Norgaard's interdisciplinary and community-engaged approach exemplifies how sociologists contribute to understanding environmental crises *not just as scientific issues, but as social and cultural issues of justice and behavior change*.

Juliet Schor (USA)

- **Affiliation:** Professor of Sociology, Boston College (previously at Harvard University).
- **Research Areas:** Consumer culture and overconsumption; work-time balance; sustainable consumption and economy; sharing economy.
- **Notable Works:** *The Overworked American* (1992); *The Overspent American* (1998); *Plenitude: The New Economics of True Wealth* (2010).
- **Contribution:** Schor is a prominent analyst of the intersection of economy, culture, and environmental sustainability. In the early 1990s, she drew attention to rising work hours in the U.S., coining the term "**time squeeze**" in *The Overworked American*, which showed that despite technological gains, Americans were working longer and experiencing stress and time poverty. She then examined consumerism in *The Overspent American*, explaining how middle-class families fall into "upscale" aspirations that drive debt and overconsumption. This critique of the work-and-spend cycle laid groundwork for later sustainability discussions. Schor's recent work advocates for **alternative models of prosperity ("plenitude")** that emphasize more leisure, ecological resilience, community, and a move away from fossil-fuel-driven growth ¹²⁴ ¹²⁵. She explores practical trends like downshifting (choosing less income for more free time), the sharing economy, and local food movements as pathways to a greener and more equitable economy. By integrating sociological insight with economics, Schor has been influential in the degrowth and new economy movements, arguing that improving well-being and saving the planet go hand in hand when we redefine prosperity beyond GDP growth to include time, health, and social connection.

Maristella Svampa (Argentina)

- **Affiliation:** Researcher at CONICET (Argentina's National Scientific and Technical Research Council); Professor at the National University of La Plata (Argentina).

- **Research Areas:** Environmental sociology in Latin America; neo-extractivism and socio-environmental conflicts; Latin American social movements; post-development alternatives.
- **Notable Works:** *Neo-extractivism in Latin America: Socio-environmental Conflicts, the Territorial Turn, and New Political Narratives* (2019, in Spanish); *The “Commodities Consensus” and Latin America* (2013).
- **Contribution:** Svampa is a leading intellectual examining Latin America's reliance on natural resource extraction (minerals, oil, agribusiness) and the grassroots resistance it sparks. She coined the term "**Commodities Consensus**" to describe how left and right governments alike embraced high commodity export models in the 2000s, claiming it as development, while downplaying the resulting environmental devastation and displacement of indigenous and peasant communities ¹²⁶ ¹²⁷. Svampa documents an "**eco-territorial turn**" in Latin America: a wave of socio-environmental movements (often led by indigenous groups, rural women, and youths) defending land, water, and local autonomy against mining, fracking, and deforestation ¹²⁸ ¹²⁹. She argues these movements are forging new political narratives—such as *buen vivir* (living well in harmony with nature) and calls for post-extractivist development—that challenge both neoliberal and traditional left development paradigms. In her analyses, Svampa emphasizes concepts of environmental justice and decoloniality, insisting that Latin America's future lies in breaking from the colonial pattern of resource export and instead pursuing sustainable, inclusive paths. Her work connects Latin American critical theory with on-the-ground activism, providing one of the strongest region-specific contributions to global environmental sociology and the degrowth dialogue.

Julian Agyeman (UK/Ghana/USA)

- **Affiliation:** Professor of Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning, Tufts University (USA) ¹³⁰.
- **Research Areas:** Environmental justice and equity; sustainable urban planning; food justice; "just sustainabilities."
- **Notable Concept: Just Sustainabilities** – integrating social justice into sustainability efforts ¹²⁴ ¹²⁵. (Notable book: *Just Sustainabilities: Development in an Unequal World*, 2003, co-edited).
- **Contribution:** Agyeman is known for expanding the sustainability discourse to explicitly include social justice, coining the term "just sustainabilities" ¹²⁴. He argues that a truly sustainable society can only be achieved by simultaneously pursuing environmental quality *and* human equality – for example, ensuring that low-income and minority communities are not disproportionately burdened by pollution and have equal access to parks, clean energy, and healthy food ¹²⁴ ¹²⁵. His work has highlighted urban issues like transit equity and green space distribution, and he's examined innovative ideas such as sharing cities and interculturalism as ways to build more inclusive urban environments ¹³¹ ¹³². Agyeman's policy-oriented scholarship (and consulting with city planners) demonstrates practical pathways for moving from **environmental racism to environmental justice** – for instance, he's documented community-led efforts in urban agriculture that both improve environmental outcomes and empower marginalized groups. By centering equity, diversity, and inclusion in sustainability, Agyeman's "just sustainabilities" framework has influenced planners and activists globally, reminding us that sustainability is as much about fairness and human rights as it is about technology or conservation ¹²⁴.

Urban and Regional Sociology

AbdouMaliq Simone (Sierra Leone/UK)

- **Affiliation:** Senior Professorial Fellow, Urban Institute, University of Sheffield (UK) ¹³³; formerly Professor at Goldsmiths, University of London and urban consultant in Africa/Asia.

- **Research Areas:** Urban life in the Global South; African and Southeast Asian cities; informal economies; “people as infrastructure.”
- **Notable Works:** *For the City Yet to Come: Changing African Life in Four Cities* (2004); “*People as Infrastructure*” (article, 2004) ¹³⁴.
- **Contribution:** Simone’s rich ethnographic studies of cities like Johannesburg, Dakar, Jakarta, and Cairo offer new ways to understand urban vitality beyond formal structures. He introduced the evocative concept of “**people as infrastructure**,” highlighting how ordinary urban residents in poor neighborhoods perform the functions that formal infrastructure fails to provide ¹³⁴ ¹³⁵. For example, in the absence of reliable public transport or banking, it is social networks, street-level trading, and reciprocal collaborations among the urban poor that keep the city running. This perspective shifts focus from viewing slum dwellers as victims to seeing them as creative agents continually shaping urban life. Simone also examines “**rogue urbanism**” and the invisible politics of African cities, arguing that standard urban theory (based on Western cities) misses the improvisational and provisional logics at work in Southern cities ¹³⁶. His work has been influential in urban studies, inspiring a wave of scholarship on “*the Black Urbanism*” and “*Southern urban theory*” that values the lessons from Lagos to Jakarta. In practical terms, Simone’s insights guide more responsive urban policies that recognize and support – rather than suppress – the informal, lived infrastructure produced by city dwellers themselves.

Teresa P. R. Caldeira (Brazil)

- **Affiliation:** Professor of City & Regional Planning, University of California, Berkeley.
- **Research Areas:** Urban anthropology; crime, security, and segregation; public space and graffiti; cities in Brazil (São Paulo) and the Global South.
- **Notable Work:** *City of Walls: Crime, Segregation, and Citizenship in São Paulo* (2000).
- **Contribution:** Caldeira’s *City of Walls* is a seminal study of how fear of crime reshapes urban form and civic life in one of Latin America’s largest cities. She documented the proliferation of **fortified enclaves** – gated communities, high-walled compounds, private security regimes – that wealthier Paulistanos created in response to crime and instability ¹³⁷ ¹³⁸. This physical and social segregation, Caldeira argues, erodes public life and deepens class/race inequalities: it undermines the very idea of the city as an open space of encounter and citizenship. She noted that as elites retreat behind walls, poorer residents are criminalized and excluded, leading to a fragmented urban citizenship (a “city of walls” replacing a city of publics). Caldeira also highlighted how urban peripheries in São Paulo produce their own cultural expressions – for example, she later studied street graffiti/tagging (pixação) as a form of insurgent art and claim to the city by marginalized youth. By linking urban design, policing, and discourse (e.g., how talk of crime justifies exclusion), Caldeira’s work has illuminated the “**geography of fear**” in contemporary cities and influenced urban policy debates on security and inclusion in Brazil and beyond. Her approach underscores that how a city is built (and for whom) is fundamentally a political question of whose rights are recognized in urban space.

Ananya Roy (India/USA)

- **Affiliation:** Professor of Urban Planning, Social Welfare, and Geography, University of California, Los Angeles; Inaugural Director of the UCLA Luskin Institute on Inequality and Democracy.
- **Research Areas:** Urban poverty and informality; housing and slums; global urbanism (especially in India and the Global South); development and microfinance; postcolonial urban theory.

- **Notable Works:** *Poverty Capital: Microfinance and the Making of Development* (2010); *Urban Informality* (2004, co-edited).
- **Contribution:** Roy's scholarship brings a critical, global South perspective to urban studies and international development. She has been a vocal critic of mainstream development narratives – for instance, in *Poverty Capital* she examined the rise of the microfinance industry and showed how even anti-poverty programs can become entangled in neoliberal finance, benefiting Wall Street-like investors under the banner of helping the poor. In urban studies, Roy has challenged the dominance of Western city models by advocating “*worlding*” urban theory – theorizing from the megacities of the Global South (like Mumbai, Dhaka, Lagos) rather than treating them as deviations ¹³⁹. She analyzed how slum dwellers innovate housing solutions and how informality is “**the urban condition**” produced by state practices as much as by the poor. Roy also introduced ideas like “**urban land grabs**” and examined how regimes of urban redevelopment often displace the very poor they claim to uplift. As an activist-scholar, currently in Los Angeles she researches housing justice and racial banishment, drawing parallels between informal settlements in South Asia and homelessness/ evictions in U.S. cities. Roy's work exemplifies engaged scholarship – using postcolonial critique to reveal power inequities in how we frame poverty and then working collaboratively to imagine more just futures for cities globally.

Sujata Patel (India)

- **Affiliation:** Indian Institute of Advanced Study (Honorary Professor); former Professor of Sociology at University of Hyderabad and University of Mumbai.
- **Research Areas:** Urban sociology and history (particularly Mumbai/Bombay); modernity and colonialism; sociology of India and postcolonial theory; indigenization of social science.
- **Notable Works:** *Bombay and Mumbai: The City in Transition* (2003, co-edited); Writings on the history of Indian sociology and on *Durban's Theory for India*.
- **Contribution:** Patel is known for combining urban studies with a sharp reflexive analysis of sociology's colonial legacies. In her urban research, she chronicled Mumbai's transformation from colonial Bombay to a postcolonial metropolis, examining issues like housing, caste segregation, and the city's changing political economy. She co-edited a volume on *Bombay/Mumbai* that became a reference on how globalization and liberalization impacted Indian cities at the turn of the 21st century. Patel is also a leader in “*decolonizing sociology*” in the Indian context ¹⁴⁰. She has critically assessed how Indian social science remained Eurocentric or derivative of Western paradigms, advocating for recognition of indigenous intellectual traditions and more globally inclusive canons ¹⁴⁰ ¹⁴¹. During her tenure as President of the Indian Sociological Society, she pushed for teaching the lineage of Indian sociology (including thinkers like Dr. B.R. Ambedkar) alongside classical Western theory. Through her scholarship and professional service, Patel has urged that concepts like modernity, class, or even urbanism, when applied in former colonies, must be re-theorized to account for colonial histories and local specificities. In essence, she calls for an “**embedded sociology**” that is rooted in its geo-cultural context, which has inspired younger Asian and African scholars to reclaim their sociological imaginations from intellectual dependency.

Xiangming Chen (China/USA)

- **Affiliation:** Paul E. Raether Distinguished Professor of Global Urban Studies and Sociology, Trinity College (USA); Research Fellow, Center for Urban and Regional Development, Shanghai ¹⁴² ¹⁴³.
- **Research Areas:** Globalization and urban change; city networks and global cities (especially in Asia); urbanization in China; regional development (e.g. the Greater Pearl River Delta).

- **Notable Works:** *The World of Cities: Places in Comparative and Historical Perspective* (2003, co-authored); *Shanghai Rising: State Power and Local Transformations* (2009, edited).
 - **Contribution:** Chen's work bridges Chinese and Western urban sociology, providing deep insights into how global forces intersect with local dynamics in rapidly transforming cities. He has been at the forefront of studying **China's urbanization** – for instance, examining how Shanghai re-emerged as a global city by harnessing state power for local economic liberalization ¹⁴². Chen's comparative approach, looking at city-regions like the Pearl River Delta or transborder zones like the Singapore-Johor-Riau growth triangle, illuminates new forms of regional urban integration under globalization. He also co-developed perspectives on "global city networks" beyond the usual New York/London/Tokyo trio, incorporating secondary cities in developing countries into analyses of world urban hierarchy. By combining on-the-ground data from Asian cities with global urban theory, Chen challenges western-centric models of urban development. Notably, he has highlighted the role of the state in China's urban expansion (nuancing the idea that globalization uniformly weakens state influence). His scholarship underscores that understanding 21st-century urban futures requires a genuinely global viewpoint – one attentive to socialist market conditions, migration, and regional inter-city competition as seen in China and other emerging economies ¹⁴² ¹⁴⁴. Chen's contributions have thus expanded the comparative scope of urban sociology and provided valuable knowledge to planners dealing with unprecedented urban growth.
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