

Хроника Currents Actualité

The 19th IUAES-WAU World Anthropology Congress 2023 „Marginalities, Uncertainties, and World Anthropologies: Enlivening Past and Envisioning Future”, New Delhi, India, October 14-20, 2023.

The IUAES-WAU World Anthropology Congress 2023, themed „**Marginalities, Uncertainties, and World Anthropologies: Enlivening Past and Envisioning Future,**” unfolded at the University of Delhi, India, spanning October 14 to 20, 2023.

The primary objective of the Congress was to critically examine longstanding hierarchies and marginalities, particularly how they persist amid contemporary crises. Additionally, the event aimed to catalyze new discussions, seeking innovative ideas to dismantle entrenched disparities and inequalities, with the overarching goal of constructing a new world from the remnants of the old.

The Congress was meticulously organized through collaborative efforts involving the University of Delhi, the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES), the World Anthropological Union (WAU), the World Council of Anthropological Associations (WCAA), the Ethnographic and Folk Culture Society in Lucknow, and the Indian Anthropological Association (IAA). Strategic partnerships were forged with institutions including the Indira Gandhi National Open University, the Uni-

versity of Hyderabad, the Asiatic Society in Kolkata, and Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University.

At the helm of the organizational leadership was Soumendra Mohan Patnaik, an Indian anthropologist, professor, and Head of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Delhi, serving as the Chair of the Organizing Committee. The international organizational committee was under the leadership of Junji Koizumi, IUAES President, and Noel Salazar, IUAES Secretary-General. Numerous other committees played important roles in the event’s execution, including the scientific committee, national steering committee, national organizing committee, host institution committee, and implementation team, which comprised professors from the University of Delhi Department of Anthropology, faculty from other Indian universities, laboratory and technical staff, and office staff.

The Congress website, accessible at <https://iuaes2023delhi.org/index.html>, provided a comprehensive and informative resource, presenting a detailed overview of the program and accompanying activities.

The conference transpired from October 14 to 20 at the North Campus of the University of Delhi, located on the historic grounds of the former residence of the British Governor of India. Attendees included anthropologists hailing from various countries across all inhabited continents. The conference was conducted

in a hybrid format, encompassing on-site and virtual participation. On-site activities comprised 159 thematic panels, 17 roundtables, 8 workshops, and 15 film screenings. Additionally, the virtual component encompassed 37 thematic panels, 5 roundtables, and 5 film screenings. (The link to the program and the accepted panels can be found at: <https://iaaes2023delhi.org/panelabstract.aspx>).

Following the first day, which centered on IUAES and WCAA business meetings as well as the welcome reception, the Congress Inauguration unfolded in the early afternoon of October 15 at the Vice Regal Convention Hall. This ceremonial event featured welcoming addresses from the principal Congress organizers, succeeded by keynote lectures delivered by Marilyn Strathern and Ravindra Jain.

The Congress spanned six days, encompassing a diverse array of plenary and parallel sessions. The first plenary session engaged with: „How Can the World Anthropological Union Contribute to the UNESCO-BRIDGES Coalition in Developing Humanities-led Sustainability Science?”. The second plenary session delved into „Covering the Pandemic: History, Politics and Culture”. The final plenary session focused on „Caste, Tribe and Gender: Perspective from World Anthropologies”.

The parallel panels, where the majority of papers were presented, covered a wide range of themes. While many were organized by the IUAES commissions, others were curated by two or three individual co-organizers hailing from different countries. English served as the official language of communication throughout the Congress.

The World Council of Anthropological Associations (WCAA) sponsored

four roundtables during the Congress. Gordon Mathews and Shannon Morreira organized a roundtable titled „Making Anthropology Global: Findings from the WCAA Taskforce.” This session delved into the working conditions, research dynamics, and publication challenges faced by anthropologists worldwide. The taskforce members scrutinized issues such as publication evaluation, tenure, academic hierarchy, political pressures, influences from the Global North, anthropological public impact, and generational shifts among anthropologists in diverse societies. The discussion featured insights from Gang Chen, Yasmeen Arif, Gonzalo Diaz Crovetto, Takami Kuwayama, and Thomas Hylland Eriksen.

Emily Metzner and Fernando Salmerón Castro organized another engaging roundtable titled „Anthropological Journals in the World Today. Hegemony (and counter-hegemony) of the Global North.” Chief editors from anthropological journals worldwide shared their experiences, addressing challenges related to ensuring global diversity on editorial boards and in publications. The roundtable included perspectives from Jinsook Choi, Isabelle Rivoal, Virginia Dominguez, and Alexandrine Boudreaault Fournier.

The WCAA Taskforce on Precarity, led by Ana Ivasiuc and Georgeta Stoica, hosted a roundtable titled „Academic Precarity and the Anthropological Profession.” This session explored the impact of academic precarity on the field of anthropology, considering implications for student training, fieldwork practices, and broader societal engagement. The speakers featured Rituparna Patgiri, Marta Gentilucci, and Leonardo Francisco de Azevedo.

The WCAA Global Cultural Policies Task Force played a pivotal role in co-organizing one of the major Congress events, specifically a plenary roundtable designated as R13. Titled „**How Can the World Anthropological Union Contribute to the UNESCO-BRIDGES Coalition in Developing Humanities-led Sustainability Science?**” this gathering was co-organized by Vesna Vučinić Nešković and Luci Attala. The roundtable was sponsored by the WCAA Global Cultural Policies Task Force, the IUAES Commission on Anthropology, Public Policy and Development Practice, the World Anthropological Union, and the UNESCO-BRIDGES Coalition. Scheduled for October 16, from 10:30 to 12:00 am, the plenary session featured seven speakers. The discussants included **Steven Hartman** from Arizona State University (UNESCO-BRIDGES Coalition Founding Executive Director), **Luci Attala** from the University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UNESCO-BRIDGES UK Hub Director), **Vesna Vučinić** from the University of Belgrade (WCAA Global Cultural Policies Task Force Chair), **Fadwa El Guindi** from the University of California, Los Angeles (El Nil Research founder), **Thomas Reuter** from the University of Melbourne (Anthropology, Public Policy and Development Practice Commission Deputy Chair), **Soumendra M. Patnaik** (Anthropology, Public Policy and Development Practice Commission Chair), and **Noel Salazar** (IUAES Secretary-General).

This roundtable sought to explore innovative ways through which anthropologists can actively contribute to the UNESCO-BRIDGES Coalition in the development and application of approaches to sustainability grounded in human sciences. The first part was dedicated to

outlining the BRIDGES' objectives and ongoing activities. The Founding Executive Director of the BRIDGES Coalition discussed the challenges and opportunities of integrating humanities, social sciences, and local/traditional knowledge perspectives into global sustainability research, education, and action. Subsequently, the Director of UNESCO-BRIDGES UK Hub explored the distinctive anthropological method, highlighting its potential for fostering successful collaboration between anthropology and other human and social sciences in sustainability research. In the second part, the WAU anthropologists engaged with BRIDGES representatives by responding to the following questions: (1) How have creative pedagogies that integrate fieldwork research and learning helped students to engage with complex social and environmental challenges which put human security at risk?, (2) How have anthropologists performed research valuable for policy making? and (3) What are their experiences with reaching out to policymakers and promoting the use of anthropological research in policy crafting? The discussion was grounded in the belief that world anthropologies can contribute to global sustainability through context-specific on-the-ground research and by promoting traditional sustainable practices while incorporating new ones without disrupting the socio-cultural continuity of local communities. In the final part, the panel explored possibilities for collaboration between IUAES and WCAA, leveraging their distinct structural and membership frameworks, and the UNESCO-BRIDGES Coalition in addressing global socio-economic, cultural, and environmental challenges.

Numerous business meetings were a significant part of the Congress agenda.

The **IUAES General Assembly** provided a comprehensive overview of major activities since the previous IUAES Congress in Mexico (2022). Following a similar agenda, the **WAU Constituency meeting** detailed parallel developments. Both assemblies announced the forthcoming congress scheduled for **November 11-15, 2024, in Johannesburg, South Africa** (<https://waucongress.org/>). Titled **„Reimagining Anthropological Knowledge: Perspectives, Practices, and Power,”** **this event marks the inaugural „WAU Congress,”** signifying the ultimate integration of the IUAES and WCAA chambers into this unified organization.

In the morning of October 20, the **WCAA Delegates Meeting** unfolded in a hybrid mode. It was presided by Gordon Mathews, the Chair of WCAA. The first part comprised reports from the chair, secretary, treasurer, and the task force coordinator, followed by the announcement of the 2024 Congress in South Africa. The ensuing discussion probed the implications of switching most of WCAA activities to online platforms. This particularly pertained to the delegates' meetings, traditionally held physically at major conferences at least once and often multiple times a year during the entire pre-pandemic period. The same applied to the WCAA Biennial Meetings, regarded as pivotal occasions for strategic planning and decision-making.

The delegates affirmed the paramount importance of physical meetings and underscored the need to devise a collaborative project to secure funding for a special workshop/symposium to be incorporated into the WAU Congress in Johannesburg. It was agreed that concerted efforts should be made to conceptualize such an initiative. Furthermore, a decision was reached

to submit a project proposal related to anthropological perspectives on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to the Wenner-Gren Foundation by the December application deadline.

The Delegates' Meeting in Delhi summarized and continued the discussion initiated during the September Zoom Delegates' Meeting. The discussion focused on the challenges faced by member associations over the past five years and their efforts to surmount them. Its aim was to explore how WCAA could better serve as a forum and platform to assist member associations in overcoming these problems.

It was also reported that some WCAA task forces had concluded their activities, while others remained vibrant. Continuing their engagements, the active task forces were identified as the „Global Cultural Policies Task Force,” „Academic Precarity Task Force,” „WCAA Publishing Council,” and „Anthropological Values Task Force” (Replacing the „Making Anthropology Global” Task Force). The conversation also delved into the question of identifying new task forces that may be needed in the future. Additionally, the meeting spotlighted the ongoing vitality of WAU Webinars as a dynamic platform for discussing intellectually and politically engaging anthropological issues. Delegates were encouraged to propose new Webinar topics for upcoming months, fostering a collaborative and forward-looking approach to addressing emerging concerns.

In addition to the academic sessions and business meetings, the 19th IUAES-WAU Congress in Delhi culminated in the vibrant „Kala Utsava” – a colorful four-day Cultural Festival. From October 15 to 19, the adjacent Ramjas College theatre became a stage for various musical and

dance forms that epitomized the essence of Indian culture. Collaboratively, undergraduate, postgraduate, and research scholars from the Department of Anthropology at the University of Delhi, along with students from various other institutions, came together to showcase the rich colors and cultural ensemble of India. The program further enriched the cultural experience by featuring traditional dances from Japan and Brazil.

The 19th IUAES-WAU World Anthropology Congress 2023 can be unequivocally deemed a resounding success. This was the first IUAES world congress conducted in a hybrid mode, introducing novel challenges for organizers and

technical staff who had to coordinate physical and online events. Despite the complexities, participants who attended the congress in person were afforded the chance to immerse themselves fully in its intellectual, cultural, and social richness. This undoubtedly underscores the distinct advantages and benefits derived from the live conduct of such congresses.

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