

To: SSSP Board of Directors and the Budget, Finance, and Audit Committee

From: Pattie Thomas, PhD, Chair of the Ad hoc Transnational Virtual Initiatives Committee and Interim Chair of the Transnational Initiatives Committee

Date: September 22, 2022

Re: Joint Report from the Transnational Initiatives Committee(TIC) and the Ad-hoc Transnational Virtual Initiatives Committee (TVIC)

Executive Summary

The usual purpose for a committee report is to document the work of a committee for a given year. This, however, has been an exceptional year, and really, an exceptional two years. So this report seeks to convey much more than the usual. The following is a thorough report of the activities, lessons learned and recommendations of the **Transnational Initiatives Committee(TIC) and the Ad-hoc Transnational Virtual Initiatives Committee (TVIC)**. The most important activity of this year's committees, building upon work done in the 2020-21 cycle, is the conducting of the first Free Virtual Global Outreach conference conducted by the TIC/TVIC entitled: [*Reimagining our Worlds from Below: Transnational Conversations on Resistance, Movements, and Transformations*](#). Based on our experience planning, organizing and holding this event, we have outlined three scenarios for the Executive Board and made recommendations for moving forward, utilizing our knowledge and observations.

Scenario 1: The TIC continues to hold virtual outreach conferences, annually or biannually, as a separate event from the annual meeting

These recommendations are based on moving forward with the current understanding of the purpose of the TIC.

To implement this scenario, we recommend the following to the board:

1. Provide a **larger budget** to hire tech and administrative support, including a **webmaster** for the conference website, a **promotional assistant** to help with social media, graphic design, newsletters, etc. and an **administrative assistant** to help with emailing and setting up meetings, calendars and overseeing the planning schedule, helping the committee and planners to stay on task.
2. Allow the committee to recruit and recognize interested scholars who will be involved in the planning. In other words, **allow the TIC to form one or more ad hoc committees to help in planning the virtual event and/or suggest the Board of Directors the adding of additional TIC members for the period of time of the conference organizing, complementing those who are nominated for fixed terms according to the SSSP by-laws (section 29)..**
3. For the sake of continuity and building on the experience of the past as lessons will continue to be learned, **we recommend that the past chair also remain as a member of the committee**, in addition to the current chair and the chair-elect.

Scenario 2: SSSP moves to a hybrid model and TIC expands opportunities

We outline several reasons why a separate conference from the main meeting will not fulfill the goal of expanding SSSP's global, transnational outreach and we recommend exploring a hybrid format for the annual meeting.

To implement this scenario, we recommend the following to the board:

1. It is our understanding that an **Ad Hoc Meeting Location and Format Committee** is being formed by the SSSP Board of Directors. We suggest **including members of the 2021-22 TIC/TVIC**, who had experience with the NCN model, as part of this ad-hoc committee in order to take advantage of their experience and expertise.
2. Change the **language for the TIC's mission** to include holding small events at least twice a year.

Scenario 3: Transition the SSSP Annual Meeting into a more accessible and inclusive format, possibly a NCN model, within the next 5 to 10 years

Finally, we felt that the possibility of working towards a virtual annual meeting as the norm rather than the exception needs to be raised even if this is not the most likely outcome of the efforts of the new Ad Hoc Meeting Location and Format Committee.

To implement this scenario, we recommend the following to the board:

1. It is our understanding that an **Ad Hoc Meeting Location and Format Committee** is being formed by the SSSP Board of Directors and, as in scenario 2, we suggest **including members of the 2021-22 TIC/TVIC** as part of this ad-hoc committee.
2. We further recommend that our concerns be shared with this ad-hoc committee so they can **explore transitioning towards a more inclusive interaction and strong relationships, building with other sectors and attendees from around the globe in the course of main meetings**, possibly by considering a move from classical live annual meetings to virtual conferences.

We note that these scenarios are not mutually exclusive and may even be seen as building upon each other. We also note that these recommendations go beyond our remit, but we felt it important to point out implications from the lessons we've learned in this remarkable experience of conducting a virtual conference.

This executive summary is outlining the most pertinent part of the recommendations for the Executive Board. There is a lot more information in this report, including specific recommendations for future TIC members. We encourage a full reading of the report.

Full Report

To: SSSP Board of Directors and the Budget, Finance, and Audit Committee

From: Pattie Thomas, PhD, Chair of the Ad hoc Transnational Virtual Initiatives Committee and Interim Chair of the Transnational Initiatives Committee, and Josephine T. V. Greenbrook, Chair of the Transnational Initiatives Committee

Cc: Héctor L. Delgado and Michele Koontz

Date: September 22, 2022

Re: Joint Report from the Transnational Initiatives Committee(TIC) and the Ad-hoc Transnational Virtual Initiatives Committee (TVIC)

TIC Members:

The following members comprised this year's Transnational Initiatives Committee (TIC):

- *Josephine T. V. Greenbrook, University of Edinburgh, UK, and University of Gothenburg, Sweden, Chair (2021-2022)
- *Diana Therese Montejo Veloso, De La Salle University, Philippines, Chair-Elect (2020-2023)
- Nathalie P. Rita, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (2020-2023)
- *Lena Gross, UiT The Arctic University of Norway (2021-2022)
- *Henry Parada, Ryerson University, Canada (2021-2024)
- *Morena Tartari, University of Southampton, UK (2021-2024)
- Héctor L. Delgado, Voting, Ex-Officio, Executive Officer, Professor Emeritus, University of La Verne and SSSP Executive Officer (2021-2022)

TVIC Members:

The following members comprised this year's (2021-22) Ad-hoc Transnational Virtual Initiatives Committee (TVIC):

- Pattie Thomas, College of Southern Nevada, Chair and Interim Chair, TIC
- John Foran, University of California, Santa Barbara
- *Fatime Güneş, Anadolu University, Turkey
- Ligaya L. McGovern, Indiana University
- *Eberhard Raithelhuber, Bertha von Suttner Private University, Austria
- Alan J. Spector, Purdue University Northwest

* Denotes Non-U.S.-based members

Annual Meeting of the United Committees

The TIC/Ad-hoc TVIC had its joint official Annual Meeting on **Friday, July 8th**, before the SSSP Annual Virtual Meeting, as requested by the Board of Directors.

Throughout the year, we met 9 times online, while our members live in distant time zones with a maximum of 17h difference.

About the TIC

According to the TIC's by-laws, the TIC will need a new Chair-Elect for 2023-2024, and replacements for members who will step down. These new TIC members shall be nominated by the President-Elect in consultation with the Committee on Committees and appointed by the Board of Directors.

We have provided the relevant language from the by-laws below:

The Transnational Initiatives Committee shall consist of a Chairperson, a Chairperson-elect, and four members, of whom at least two must be international members, each serving three-year staggered terms and a graduate student member. In addition to the appointed members, the Executive Officer shall serve as an ex officio member.

Following criteria stipulated in the by-laws governing standing committees, the Transnational Initiatives Committee shall be reconstituted each year with a turnover membership of at least one-third, and no member may serve on the same committee of the Society, whether by election or appointment, for more than three consecutive years.

The 2022-23 Transnational Initiatives Committee shall consist of the following members:

- *Diana Therese Montejo Veloso, Chair (2020-2023), De La Salle University
 - *Morena Tartari, Chair-Elect (2021-2024), University of Southampton
 - Brian Gran (2022-2023), Case Western Reserve University
 - *Tani Nguyen (2022-2025), Hoa Sen University
 - *Henry Parada (2021-2024), Ryerson University
 - Oyindamola Okuwa (2022-23), University of Oklahoma
 - Susan M. Carlson, Interim Executive Officer, Voting, Ex-Officio Member (2022-2023), Western Michigan University
- * Denotes Non-U.S.-based members

About the Ad-Hoc TVIC

The TVIC is an ad-hoc appointed committee for the years 2020-22. It was inaugurated in 2020 in order to develop virtual forms of reaching out globally. The recommendation of last year's report was to extend the ad-hoc committee into the 2021-22 year. Following this recommendation, the ad-hoc committee continued meeting with the main committee, and the two committees worked together to achieve a Free Virtual SSSP Global Outreach conference, as envisioned by last year's committee. The achievements of this year's committee absolutely built upon the foundations laid by the 2020-21 committee. While the ad-hoc committee will not continue beyond this year, it is our understanding, and hope, that the TIC will form subcommittees and encourage volunteers to help plan virtual events and build upon the foundations and lessons learned from the virtual conference.

Goals achieved by TIC and TVIC in 2021-22

Most of the efforts of the committees during this year concentrated on building on the work done by the 2020-21 TIC/TVIC committee efforts to host a Free Virtual SSSP Global Outreach conference. The committee did achieve three goals this year:

Goal 1). Extended financial support for participants of the 2022 Annual Meeting

TIC funding for travel expenses for scholars from the Global South, as well as economically disadvantaged countries and nation-states, and politically, economically, and culturally subjugated regions of all countries is available.

The committee received six requests, two of which were disqualified. One of the requests for support was from the chair-elect, which raised some concerns and discussion among committee members. The chair-elect recused herself from the meeting discussion and vote. The committee requested funding separate for the chair-elect. However, the board decided to simply extend funding to \$6,000 from the original \$4,000, which allowed the committee to fund all four requests in amounts that made it possible for the chair-elect to attend the annual meeting. One of the recipients was unable to attend at the last minute and the funds were returned to the SSSP general fund.

The expansion of the fund to \$6,000 by the board will remain intact for future funding under this program. The committee feels it is important for SSSP to provide funding to committee chairs, as SSSP seeks to include scholars from the Global South in the work of the TIC. If SSSP wants to expand its reach to said scholars, we need to even the playing field, as more barriers exist for scholars in the Global South and other regions outside the US and Canada. What might be perceived as a conflict of interest on an even playing-field, makes sense in light of these barriers. We hope our actions this year set a precedent for such considerations of future TIC members. More information at https://www.sssp1.org/index.cfm/m/853/Virtual_Annual_Meeting_Funds_Available/

Goal 2). Co-sponsorship of 4 sessions proposed for the 2022 Annual Meeting

This year, the TIC/Ad-hoc TVIC organized four sessions for the 2022 Annual Meeting, however, none of those sessions received enough submissions to avoid cancellation (for details see below):

- **Session #084:** CRITICAL DIALOGUE: Transnational and Comparative Institutional Ethnographic Research, co-sponsored with Institutional Ethnography and Transnational Initiatives Committee - Cancelled 2/17
- **Session #129:** CRITICAL DIALOGUE: Fostering Moments of Belonging in the Context of Undocumented Migration: Transnational Perspectives, co-sponsored with Program Committee and Transnational Initiatives Committee - Cancelled 2/21
- **Session #130:** Reimagining Transnational Families: The Social Systems, Social Solidarity, and Social Actions of Unaccompanied Minors in Cross-Border Migration, co-sponsored with Program Committee, Transnational Initiatives Committee, and Transnational Virtual Initiatives Committee (Ad Hoc) - Cancelled 2/17

- **Session #131:** Transnational Momentum in the Struggle for Indigenous Rights, co-sponsored with Program Committee and Transnational Initiatives Committee - Cancelled 2/9

Goal 3).Hosting the first Free Virtual SSSP Global Outreach conference in May 2022.

Introduction

The 2021-22 TIC/TVIC inherited substantial work on this project from the 2020-21 TIC/TVIC, and the success of this event needs to be seen as a two-year effort.

This event was organized by 2020-21 TIC/TVIC, with the theme **Reimagining Our Worlds from Below: Transnational Conversations on Resistance, Movements and Transformations**. It was originally scheduled for February 22 to 24, 2022. Due to its development of a new format to reach out globally, the TIC/TVIC was able to attract the climate justice/environmental justice hub at the Orfalea Center for Global and International Studies of the University of California Santa Barbara (UCSB) as a co-host for this event. The Board dedicated US\$2,000 to this conference for technical support. This budget was carried over to 2021-22.

Several issues slowed the new committees work during the Fall of 2021. With the appointment of TVIC Chair Pattie Thomas as the Interim Chair of the TIC, the committees began meeting regularly again in December 2021. The date for the live virtual sessions portion of the conference was changed to May 18-21, 2022. A Call for Submissions for eleven sessions was organized with a due date of March 20, 2022.



Enough submissions were received to form nine sessions. One of the nine sessions was divided into two sessions because of the number of submissions that were received. One of the sessions became a special session, which included recorded interviews with three scholars. Only one session was cancelled completely and the two papers that were submitted found a place in other sessions. Of the ten sessions organized, one did not conduct a live virtual discussion because it had only two submissions. That session did have a webpage with both submission presentations recorded and uploaded. In addition to the core 10 panel sessions, 4 special sessions, one film and 2 keynote sessions were

organized. It should be noted that one of the special sessions did not have attendance. All other sessions were attended.

In the interest of time and the hope to encourage more participation, as well as the limitation of resources, we were unable to collect data on who attended. Organizers of these sessions were somewhat independent and decentralized. With more lead time and a larger budget, we would have been able to set up ways to track and streamline the process.

The final conference **included 16 sessions presented by 15 organizers, with 49 presentations involving 65 discussants/presenters.** We did not require registration, so we do not have a count of attendees. However, we do have a count of “views” for the videos online of roughly **1100 views for 40 of the presentations** (not all were set up to be counted), making it an average of **27 to 28 views per presentation.**

The vast majority of presenters were affiliated with academic institutions; however, several had **community (4) and activist (3) affiliations.** We did not have the capacity to collect information on these affiliations, but it would be possible for future committees and/or SSSP to take what information we did collect and reach out to these presenters and their organizations for future connections and collaborative work.

While we did not ask presenters what their nationality or ethnic backgrounds were, we do know that **20 countries were represented** in their affiliations. However, many of the US, Canadian and European based scholars were from other countries. **All populated continents** were represented both in terms of background and affiliation, though no African scholars who presented their work were based at a university in Africa. Nonetheless, especially for a first effort with a small budget and limited institutional support, this conference was **global in perspective and participation.**

Background of the Free Virtual SSSP Global Outreach Conference

It is important to understand this conference in its historical context, as well as to understand the legacy this conference offers SSSP and the TIC. The remainder of this report will seek to document this effort in light of the aims of the formation of the Transnational Initiatives Committee for SSSP, the current global circumstances we find ourselves in what has been a historic couple of years, provide a basic understanding of the innovations of this conference model, document the successes of the conference and outline the lessons learned for future outreach efforts by the TIC and SSSP. We will also provide recommendations for both future TIC members and the SSSP Board based on the conference experience.

History

The Transnational Initiatives Committee started as an ad-hoc committee in 2011 to explore the global outreach of SSSP and to explore how to expand both SSSP membership and organizational collaborations across borders. The TIC was then escalated to a permanent committee in 2016. As early as 2016-17, *videoconferencing* had been discussed as a method of overcoming these barriers, along with providing funding for scholars to attend live meetings.

Of course, the pandemic also escalated this. The cancellation of the 2020 live meeting and the conducting of a virtual meeting in 2021, helped SSSP expand its virtual meeting capabilities, highlighting both challenges and advantages of this type of conferencing. Before the pandemic, the TVIC was organized to expand the number of people involved in holding a Global Outreach virtual conference aimed at building connections with and providing opportunities for scholars from economically disadvantaged countries and nation-states, as well as politically, economically, and culturally subjugated regions of all countries, with a special emphasis on the Global South, as well as making connections with activist and community organizations throughout the world.

It is also important to locate the work of this committee within a specific understanding of transnational sociology, as opposed to traditional thinking about global social problems. In their article, "Invitation to Transnational Sociology," in the recently published SSSP publication, *Global Agenda for Social Justice 2*, John G. Dale and Ivan Kislenko call for a *democratic production of sociological knowledge*. Most of the members of these committees, both past and present, sought to do more tasks other than recruiting international members to SSSP or expanding the reach of SSSP across borders. Our hopes lie in a particular historical moment in reflecting upon the place of academic scholarship in our understanding of injustices, the rise of indigenous and oppressed persons who offer critiques of the continued legacy of colonialism, and the rising realization that many of our social problems have never been contained within national perspectives. In other words, if we as the Society for the Study of Social Problems want to not only study social problems, but want to find effective and important solutions to those problems, we need to seek a bottom-up, intersectoral and transnational approach to our research and activism. We need to start listening instead of exclusively directing.

Virtual conferencing, while not being the one and only way to move into this direction, is an important technological development that will allow organizations like SSSP to hear from and listen to scholars with important perspectives beyond the traditional, colonial, western paradigms. One might argue that virtual conferencing is a matter of digital privilege in a digitally divided world. This argument has some merit. Fully one-third of the world's population remains offline and, according to the [UN's 2022 Global Connectivity Report](#), the covid pandemic actually slowed down some of the recent gains in addressing this inequality. That same report, however, asserts:

Connectivity has a profound and far-ranging impact. The catalytic and enabling role of connectivity for sustainable development is recognized in the Sustainable Development Goals. The Internet offers significant economic benefits and the potential to enhance welfare for individuals throughout their lives. It enables new forms of communication, entertainment, expression, and collaboration. It enables access to services where traditional services are lacking, access to an enormous amount of knowledge, learning resources, and job opportunities. ***The benefits of connectivity are considerable for everyone, including marginalized and vulnerable groups, who are often the least connected.*** (emphasis added, Executive Summary p. xv)

Thus, the first Free Virtual Global Outreach conference conducted by the TIC/TVIC to include scholars across national and cultural boundaries can be seen within the context not only of the history of this committee and SSSP, but also within the context of a historic moment that suggests a future where this form of knowledge sharing and production will become increasingly important.

The Nearly Carbon Neutral Conference Model

Through working with the Environmental and Climate Justice Studies Hub of the University of California at Santa Barbara, which co-hosted our event, we adopted the [Nearly Carbon Neutral \(NCN\)](#) model of conferencing, with an addition of live virtual discussions that took place May 18-22, 2022.

The NCN conference model was created to help reduce the carbon footprint of academic conferencing, which requires large groups of people to utilize carbon-based transportation and other resources to provide short-term presentations of academic research and discussion that are usually not recorded or preserved beyond a conference program guide. Conferencing is important as a way for scholars within particular fields to meet, discuss and report, but their impact may not be worth the carbon costs. UCSB's EJ/CJ efforts are seeking to find ways to receive the benefits from conferencing without paying the high environmental costs, while equally allowing participants from the Global South and other economically disadvantaged regions to enhance their participation in academic activities for free or at a considerably low cost.

This model uses web-based presentations and discussion boards to allow presenters to present their submissions on videos that are then embedded in the webpages for each session. Conference attendees can then watch the presentations and comment. The live virtual sessions were then devoted to a discussion among the panel of presenters, encouraging a freer format than the typical presentation of a panel. The NCN model creates a permanent web presence for the presenters and stands as an example of scholar's work, allowing, especially young scholars, to be able to point to their presentation and their participation in the event beyond what a conference program provides. It makes their work more accessible throughout the world.

As evaluations have demonstrated, this model of conferencing is more inclusive than live meetings, not only because people can participate from anywhere in the world with electricity and internet connectivity, but also it includes persons with other issues that make live meetings hard to attend, including limited resources, disabilities, language differences, obligations to parenting and caregiving among others. We live in a time that technological development has made this inclusion possible. While we recognize the advantages to live meetings, we feel that this model of conferencing has its place in expanding the outreach and inclusion of SSSP. The continued advances in technology (for example, translation services, universal web practices, etc.) as well as the escalating environmental and resource issues that travel presents, mean that the future of SSSP must include this kind of conferencing to remain true to principles of inclusion and climate responsibility.

Successes and Legacies

Our conference, *Reimagining our Worlds from Below*, succeeded in four major ways:

1. Virtual Conferencing and Global Outreach

Scholars, organizers and activists from every continent were able to share their work. This opportunity to see what other people are doing in other countries and cultures is rare. It serves as an example of what can be done if we reach out to each other beyond

borders. It allows younger scholars to be recognized and promoted. Most importantly, it allows anyone who is interested to listen, long after the conference date. This first effort only involved a small number of people, but it demonstrated that given resources and expanded efforts, more scholars could be promoted connected, and heard.

The bottom line is that this conference can be viewed as a *proof-of-concept* effort. The TIC/TVIC were tasked with finding ways to use virtual technologies (video conferencing) to improve the global outreach of SSSP and to connect with scholars outside of the US and Canada. This conference demonstrated that is possible to organize, attract and promote scholarship using virtual technology, and to do so in a cost effective, decommodified, environmentally just and meaningful way.

2. New Approach to Conferencing: Website Legacy

By adopting the Nearly Carbon Neutral approach for this virtual conference, we leave behind a solid body of work that provides video presentations that can be accessed for as long as the website exists. Much more accessible than a program from a conference with oral presentations and a traditional “one-shot” model for dissemination, presenters will be able to link to their presentations and panels on their CVs, within their classrooms and when sharing with colleagues and the public. This is legacy that will far outlive the conference event itself and can innovate the organizational practices of SSSP in general.

3. Transnational perspective

Efforts like this can be done in a number of ways and, historically, have often followed a top-down approach, giving primacy to western values, issues and goals. This conference made a good beginning at utilizing a bottom-up orientation. We were decentralized in our approach and sought out as many voices as we could, given our limited resources. We encourage future organizers to keep this in mind. There was, of course, much more that could be done. Nonetheless, we feel that for a first-time effort, we made a strong beginning for this kind of conferencing across SSSP as a whole.

4. Open Science and Decommodified Exchange

By answering the call for contributions, presenters and discussants agreed that all material be published under a Creative Commons license, thus giving general permission to share and use it under the conditions of [CC BY-NC-ND](#). The abolition of traditional conference fees removed further barriers to access for both presenters and attendees. Hence, this decommodified approach made the dissemination, discussion of material (Q&As) and its subsequent use accessible to all levels of global society, thus connecting SSSP’s academic activities, “In Pursuit of Social Justice,” to the values and approaches of the Open Science movement. The experience made here in the context of the activities of one committee should be considered for a future innovation of SSSP practices across divisions and other subunits.

Lessons Learned

This section is devoted to some of the lessons we learned from conducting the conference. We feel that these should be documented for future efforts by TIC or other parties who want to conduct virtual events of this nature.

1. Lessons specific to conducting a NCN model

The NCN model used for this conference is new. Most of the people involved in this project (committee members, session organizers, presenters) have a particular paradigm of how conferences work. This paradigm shift was harder than we expected and provided important lessons to learn.

Understanding the model

Probably the biggest lesson was how the model is designed. We concentrated too much on the live virtual discussions and not as much on the process of setting up the panels, getting the presentation videos uploaded, and inviting people to watch the videos and discuss them. We encouraged this interaction at a relatively late stage in the process. This might have been one reason why participation was relatively low, measured against our own expectations.

We advise educating and promoting the process as much as the call for submissions and making sure session organizers and presenters understand and help promote the webpages for each panel.

Difficulties of live virtual meetings

The NCN model as proposed by EJ/CJ Hub is designed to conduct the conference online only, utilizing website discussions. TIC/TVIC added to this model live virtual discussions on Zoom, which were recorded and subsequently to be added to the session websites. These live discussions that took place approximately three weeks after the launch of the conference website were supposed to be in addition to the webpage presentations and not simply another way to make the presentations. The hope was that participants (both presenters and attendees) would have familiarized themselves with the presentations and then would have time to discuss and exchange ideas about the presentations. This was not as successful as hoped.

We will outline some of the difficulties of having virtual zoom discussions below, but the two major issues were as follows: (1) Many of the presentations were late in being uploaded and therefore not really giving participants enough time to see the presentations and formulate topics and questions; and (2) Session discussants/organizers were unsure how to generate the discussion without first making the presentations, probably due, in part, to the paradigm shift mentioned above. However, based upon the sessions in which we were more successful, we believe this is a good way for participants to dive more deeply into the session topics. We hope that this will remain a component of any future conferences as it affords the opportunity for exchanges of ideas and collegiality beyond a typical conference experience.

We advise a longer period of time between the time when videos are posted online and the time of any live virtual discussions, spending time after the presentations are posted encouraging participants to visit, watch and leave comments on the webpages.

We also advise providing session organizers with suggestions on how to lead discussions.

We also advise that session presenters are told upfront that they are committing to more than a presentation on a given date, but rather are committing to participating in online discussions before the live virtual session date.

Technological competencies

The NCN model relies upon embedded videos to give presentations. This means that presenters need to record their presentations, upload these to YouTube or Vimeo, and then provide a link to the tech support person. In addition, if people upload the recordings to their own channels, it is helpful to provide an abstract of the presentation that also mentions the contextual details (session name and chairs, conference name, organizer and dates, creative commons license, link to the main conference page etc.), and to indicate the conditions for the use of the material. This did not go as smoothly as hoped. Essentially, we were able to support the technical process because the committee chair was able to take presentations recorded in PowerPoint and convert them to an .mp4 file and then upload to her own YouTube and/or Vimeo channel. Because this was a last minute, improvised solution, it required a lot of time and email exchanges, including getting permissions from multiple presenters. This process needs to be standardized, including the video descriptions (abstract, licensed use etc.), and needs to involve more tech support than the budget would allow. While decentralized organizing is beneficial to allow for creative ideas and bottom-up approaches, we believe it will be better to centralize this part of the process.

We advise that future NCN conferences utilize the SSSP YouTube Channel, by asking presenters to submit either a PowerPoint, narrated presentation or an .mp4 to organizers who, with help of SSSP tech staff, will upload the videos to the SSSP channel.

We also suggest a practical guideline for users and a process description (including a chart) be developed, as part of SSSP's quality assurance.

2. Lessons regarding the general use of virtual conferencing

There were some lessons learned that would apply for any virtual conferencing and are not specific to the NCN model.

Time zone barriers

Scheduling across 17 time zones is probably the most obvious and most difficult challenge with transnational meetings, both for the committee and for the conference. Unfortunately, in light of the goal of moving away from a western-centric emphasis, we found that working around the Universal Time Coordinated (UTC) zone was the best way to avoid dead zones where no one would want to participate. This meant that the Americas had an early morning conference and Asia, for the most part, had a late-night conference. Our virtual meetings ended up with a window of just 6 to 7 hours (noon to 7pm UTC) schedule discussions. Even limiting the timing this much did not avoid some weird times for persons on the extreme ends of the range. To be honest, we are not sure we have figured out a good solution to this issue.

We advise sensitivity to this reality of wide range of time zones and ensure people understand when a meeting is in their local zone.

We also advise that some consideration to expanding the number of days that virtual live meetings are scheduled, perhaps over 5 to 7 days, than 4 days.

Language and translation barriers

The other obvious barrier is language. While many scholars around the world speak English as a second language, the fact that we had to require English as the language of the conference has implications for the desire to move away from a western and American-centric model. The decentralized approach we took helped with this. Only one presenter did not speak English well enough to present, but one of the organizers was able to translate and did a voice-over on the video, as well as interpreted during the discussion. This is admittedly insufficient in an effort to be inclusive. As SSSP and TIC seeks to create more outreach, we believe finding ways to interpret and translate must be part of virtual activities. The good news is that technological advances may make this much easier in the future. However, we would be remiss to not recognize this is and will continue to be an issue in virtual outreach efforts.

We advise TIC to remain sensitive to language barriers and work with SSSP tech support and non-English speaking scholars and organizers to find ways to translate and interpret all outreach work. Potentially, the linguistic resources within our overall association could be tapped into for this task, including from members who might be willing to support this transnational outreach effort on a pro-bono basis.

We also recommend staying abreast of technological advancements that would provide high quality translation services.

Promotional Strategies

Conferences planned by organizations such as SSSP have built-in promotional strategies. People become members or know members of the organization. The conferences are held the same month every year and have been established as a long-term tradition. Basically, the situation is “if we build it, they will come” when planning the conference each year. When the core group of planners is between 13 and 25 persons, more is needed to attract submissions and attendees. We did not really find the magic formula this time around. We relied on some social media platforms and emailing to contacts provided by SSSP, but realized that in order to do either of these things, some upfront work needs to be done. In many ways, it can become a chicken and egg situation, where you need contacts to reach out and you need to reach out to find contacts. The good news is that now that we have the website to point to in the future, it may be easier to build up contact lists and social media followers to help with promotion the next time around.

We advise the TIC to make a significant commitment of time and effort to build up a social media presence and a mailing list as the first step towards the next virtual outreach event. We leave three options initiated during the past year:

- **Facebook Page:** <https://www.facebook.com/TransnationalConvos>
- **Gmail address:** transnationalconversations@gmail.com
- **Substack mailing list:**
<https://transnationalconversations.substack.com/>

All three of these resources are underdeveloped. We will be happy to pass along all the log-in information and set up admin privileges for the next committee. Of course, other social media opportunities exist, as well as the SSSP YouTube Channel. These resources are free but do require dedicated attention to develop.

3. Lessons regarding global connections, from contacts to relationships

Finally, there are some more theoretical lessons to be learned from this work. Most of the conference participants, including committee members and organizers, live within the context of western-centric institutions. This can lead to unintended consequences and put up barriers to the goal of transnational work and inclusion.

Balancing new capabilities and institutional needs

On the one hand, the decentralized nature of the world wide web and virtual conferencing allows for a creative, bottom-up focus. It is easier to think outside the academic and western-centric box. This should be encouraged. For example, one of our keynote sessions was not a speech, but rather a panel and live discussion among young scholars of color. On the other hand, many young scholars are struggling to be accepted and advance within the halls of academia and to expect them to break from tradition can have the unintended, but, perhaps, anticipated,

consequence of sabotaging their careers. A balance needs to be maintained between finding ways to be supportive of scholars while maintaining a critical eye on the institutional needs of up-and-coming scholars. To achieve this requires empathy and openness, as well as a vigilant eye for unintended consequences.

We advise that planners of outreach events consider using as much bottom-up and decentralized processes as they can so that scholars, organizers and activists on the ground can make their needs known and guide sessions and presentations in directions that make sense to them.

The Digital Divide and Digital Threats

Technology is not evenly or equitably distributed on the global map. A virtual conference assumes access to tools that are not available to many. While the expansion of global internet and cellular phone coverage has been amazing over the past decade and many scholars in the Global South and in disadvantaged countries and communities are often more privileged than others in their vicinities, this inequality and colonial leftovers will affect any effort at transnational outreach. We would not make good Social Problems scholars if we did not recognize the intersection of the digital divide and the post-colonial world.

Probably the most obvious impact on our conference is that while we had scholars who were born in Africa, all the African scholars who participated in our conference did so from the US, Asia and Europe. No African institution was directly represented. Evening the digital playing field might be beyond the scope of SSSP, much less the TIC, but that does not mean it should not be considered and some effort should not be made to address this gap. We did not find a solution this time around, but we do recognize some lessons need to be learned. Of course, the digital divide is not the exclusive source of this gap in participation. The participants in the conference were found mostly through the connections that committee members and organizers had already made before planning the conference.

An important note needs to be acknowledged at this point. While it is true that the digital gap is closing, it is also true that surveillance advances can make a digital presence more dangerous, especially for scholars and local actors who are oppressed by their respective governments. This **digital threat** is inherently unequal, with many more Global South and disadvantaged persons facing this kind of barrier. In some ways, in-person meetings can be more secure for such persons. On the other hand, many of the same persons face travel restrictions and difficulties crossing borders. We do not have a solution to this reality, but feel that moving forward, we must not forget this reality and must work on solutions.

We advise that special effort be made in future outreach events to find and include scholars from the African continent. We suggest that breaching that barrier may provide exponential growth in the number of African scholars who participate.

We also suggest networking with local or regional associations to improve outreach and increase participation from scholars from Asian, Latin American, and African countries.

We advise that exploration of security technologies and allow for anonymized methods of participation, especially for persons facing persecution and digital surveillance.

Recommendations – Action Items for the SSSP Board:

This conference presents a crossroad for SSSP and, as such, our recommendations to the board are contingent upon what general direction SSSP wants to go. The 2011 decision to form the TIC ad hoc committee and the 2016 decision to form the TIC permanent committee were born out of concerns about the state of the world and the need for a wider focus to address social problems and sociological scholarship on social problems. Many of these concerns remain or have grown and multiplied since these issues were raised.

With this in mind, we offer three scenarios for the SSSP Board to consider and, with each scenario, recommendations. Please keep in mind that there is nothing exclusionary about these scenarios. All three of them could be pursued by the board simultaneously, or in phases.

Scenario 1: The TIC continues to hold virtual outreach conferences, annually or biannually, as a separate event from the annual meeting

This is basically a status quo scenario. The TIC continues to work towards outreach across national boundaries and in underserved areas of the globe and it does so with activities that are tangential to the main annual meeting. The main attraction of this scenario is that it allows the scholarship of the Global South and disadvantaged countries and communities to be highlighted and celebrated, building connections that have potential not only to support SSSP members and membership, but also to forge alliances with other organizations, institutions and efforts beyond the US and North America.

While this conference served as a proof of concept showing that dedicated people could pull off an event with minimal resources, it was costly in time and energy for the people involved. As such, this scenario needs some tweaking if it is to be sustainable. It is telling that this report is late, in part, due to the illnesses of several members of the committee. We worked hard this year and neglected other things in our lives to make this happen. We severely overworked our tech support, Baron Haber, from UCSB, paying poorly for the long hours he dedicated to the website development. This no doubt was a labor of love for the people involved, but events such as this should not burn out the people involved. If we want to create a second virtual global outreach conference, which should remain free and accessible, without charging fees for presenters and/or attenders, more resources need to be available. Additionally, note that this does not mean burdening the hardworking administrative staff. This needs a bigger budget with more hands-on deck.

To implement this scenario, we recommend the following to the board:

1. Provide a **larger budget** to hire tech and administrative support, including a **webmaster** for the conference website, a **promotional assistant** to help with social media, graphic design, newsletters, etc. and an **administrative assistant** to help with emailing and setting up meetings, calendars and overseeing the planning schedule, helping the committee and planners to stay on task.

2. Allow the committee to recruit and recognize interested scholars who will be involved in the planning. In other words, **allow the TIC to form one or more ad hoc committees to help in planning the virtual event and/or suggest the Board of Directors the adding of additional TIC members for the period of time of the conference organizing, complementing those who are nominated for fixed terms according to the SSSP by-laws (section 29)**. The two committees numbered 13, with a core group of about 7 to 8 who did the bulk of the work. Next year, the regular Transnational Initiatives Committee will only have 7 members. If the TIC is going to be expected to conduct a second conference, they need to have close to three times the number of people committed to the tasks at hand.
3. For the sake of continuity and building on the experience of the past as lessons will continue to be learned, **we recommend that the past chair also remain as a member of the committee**, in addition to the current chair and the chair-elect. This will help improve the continuity provided by staggering the terms of office of members. We benefited greatly from the presence of the past chairs of 2020-21 being a part of the ad-hoc committee in 2021-22. The learning curve for this work is great and it is a great advantaged to have experienced members and leaders.

Scenario 2: SSSP moves to a hybrid model and TIC expands opportunities

The second scenario would be to take away the responsibility of providing a separate, global focused conference from the TIC and incorporate more virtual sessions, including web-based only sessions, as in the NCN conference model, into the annual meeting. The 2021 SSSP Annual meeting was an attempt at virtual conferencing that relied upon the same paradigm of conferencing as traditional, live meetings. Presentations were made on Zoom in the same way they would have been made at the live meeting, with specific times and with simultaneous sessions. Attendees logged in at the same time. While these panels were recorded, no effort was made to provide these recordings for others to view. No effort was made to hold meetings at times that were more convenient to Africa or Asia.

In this scenario, we are suggesting that in addition to a live meeting, the annual conference include opportunities for scholars to submit videos of presentations for panels that would be available for SSSP members online to view, allowing a broader group of scholars to present work. These would not be zoom meetings, but would be web-based only, following the NCN model. It might also be good to have a couple of live Zoom gatherings during the annual meeting to allow scholars who cannot attend in person to get to know each other, thus innovating the NCN conference model similar to the way we did it in the Free Virtual SSSP Global Outreach conference. The details on how to make this work, of course, would need to be fleshed out, but the scenario is that an effort to create a hybrid model, allowing fuller participation of not only foreign scholars and activists, but also persons with disabilities, persons with limited means and no institutional support and persons who otherwise cannot attend a live conference to be able to share their work and be a part of SSSP.

One obvious disadvantage of this approach, of course, is that it would not automatically promote or emphasize the Global South and disadvantaged countries and communities. However, in addition to making the annual meeting hybrid, the TIC's efforts could include outreach throughout the year by creating small events on the SSSP YouTube Channel, and in social media spaces, which would highlight work in those parts of the world. This

could be in the form of one-on-one Zoom interviews, Zoom panels, podcasts, and written newsletters that would be available for free online. Some effort could be made to reach out to other organizations around the world and even co-sponsor such events with those organizations. In addition to providing these opportunities for Global South and disadvantaged scholars, organizers and activists, TIC would promote the hybrid annual conference to these scholars.

To implement this scenario, we recommend the following to the board:

1. It is our understanding that an **Ad Hoc Meeting Location and Format Committee** is being formed by the SSSP Board of Directors. We suggest **including members of the 2021-22 TIC/TVIC**, who had experience with the NCN model, as part of this ad-hoc committee in order to take advantage of their experience and expertise.
2. Change the **language for the TIC's mission** to include holding small events at least twice a year.

Scenario 3: Transition the SSSP Annual Meeting into a more accessible and inclusive format, possibly a NCN model, within the next 5 to 10 years

This final scenario is the most radical and, admittedly, beyond the remit of the TIC/TVIC. However, we would not be the first in SSSP to question the sustainability of having annual live-only meetings in the current financial, habitual and geographical frameworks. Voices have been raised, and efforts have been made, calling for greater interaction with local communities and actors "from below," pointing out that our main point of face-to-face interaction happens in luxury conference hotels with considerable economic, social and mobility thresholds. Now that two virtual conferences have been successfully conducted, the 2021 SSSP Annual Meeting and the 2022 Global Outreach meeting, we have some experience and lessons learned upon which to build a transition into making virtual meetings the common way to meet, moving away from the costly, live *annual* meetings.

Our committees, of course, do not have a complete answer to this question. There is much to be considered before making such a move. And, of course, except in the middle of a global pandemic, such a move could not be made overnight. But the success of our conference is an opportunity to explore more far-reaching concerns.

Social issues are becoming increasingly global in nature. Strong evidence demonstrates that a transnational component exists in most social problems. SSSP would benefit from becoming a stronger international organization. This was the original thinking for creating the TIC ad hoc committee in 2011, and making the TIC permanent. Moving to virtual formats for SSSP, possibly including its annual meeting, is a logical and important next step to making SSSP a responsible transnational organization, which really is the direction that we may have to go "In Pursuit for Social Justice."

We wish to make clear that we appreciate the efforts made to increase international participation over the past ten plus years, and recognize that there are many factors, including, and perhaps especially, financial ones, that go into deciding when, where, and how to hold our annual meetings. But the truth is that we do not see how SSSP can achieve a goal of becoming more international, especially when it comes to greater participation by scholars with limited financial means from the Global South, without having

annual virtual meetings in some form, incorporated in the main, annual coming together of our members.

We also recognized that, perhaps, Scenario 2 above is enough to accomplish this goal. A hybrid conference would open up opportunities to participate that many would not otherwise have. However, there are other considerations that suggest virtual meetings as the dominant form of meeting would be more sustainable for SSSP. At the very least, we feel that this option needs to be explored seriously and thoroughly. There are several considerations beyond encouraging transnational participation that make this a moment to make such an exploration.

First, a virtual annual meeting would be a more responsible carbon footprint. Global warming/climate change represent one of the most daunting and encompassing social problems of our times. It also is increasingly the source of many other social issues, such as migration, war, famine, poverty and expanding inequality. SSSP's core mission of not only studying but actively addressing social problems is undermined by sticking to a traditional approach that represents an inefficient use of natural resources and contributes to the production of greenhouse gasses. This is especially true in light of emerging technologies that offer alternatives.

Second, with the digital divide closing the gap more and more each year, this form of conferencing is fast becoming more inclusive than a live meeting. Scholars of color, disabled scholars, independent scholars, students, activists, community organizers and interested parties that do not have institutional support to travel have long since criticized the expense of annual meetings. There are significant barriers to participation in the annual meeting. We now have a model that offers the potential to be more inclusive and the inexpensive technology to make it happen. Six billion people on the planet have at least minimal access to these technologies and that number is growing rapidly as poorer countries are building digital infrastructures. The excuses to not be more virtual in our annual meetings are slowly disappearing. Though again, we advise that part of the exploration of virtual options must consider the surveillance and persecution of some scholars around the world by their governments (or governments that are left behind). Sensitivity to this can include questions of ensuring security and anonymization in virtual meetings.

Finally, the high costs of energy and the vulnerability of live meetings to those costs, including travel costs and health costs, are going to make participation in live annual meetings more and more difficult even for our wealthier members. The pandemic has demonstrated how vulnerable we are. If SSSP wants to remain a viable, sustainable organization, it may have no choice but to make this transition. Making the meeting virtual may expand the membership of SSSP as an organization as well as expanding its influence. If it is foreseeable that virtual meetings may be forced upon SSSP more often, such as it was in 2020 and 2021, it would behoove us to start planning for that now rather than waiting for the next big public health, economic or political crisis to force this. ,

Inclusion efforts of organizations often take the form of "add-ons," that is, the organization doesn't make any fundamental, infrastructure changes, but just creates a token opportunity for those on the outside. This approach, of course, is doomed to failure. As sociologists, we know that such an approach, a way of thinking, just furthers the othering of the group that we are supposedly including. The activities of TIC have that inherent danger.

The 2021-22 TIC/TVIC members tried to be vigilant about this tendency in outreach efforts. But we also recognize that if scenario 1 is as far as SSSP is willing to go, then the virtual conference is in danger of remaining a stepchild of the organization, and not lead to fundamental changes in the relationships between more privileged scholarship and under-represented scholarship. We also see that scenario 2 may also lead to a two-tiered view of members, making in-person attendees privileged over virtual attendees. This will undermine any effort to study, address and change transnational and global social problems. Thus, we felt that scenario 3 must also be proposed and explored.

To implement this scenario, we recommend the following to the board:

1. It is our understanding that an **Ad Hoc Meeting Location and Format Committee** is being formed by the SSSP Board of Directors and, as in scenario 2, we suggest **including members of the 2021-22 TIC/TVIC** as part of this ad-hoc committee.
2. We further recommend that our concerns be shared with this ad-hoc committee so they can **explore transitioning towards a more inclusive interaction and strong relationships, building with other sectors and attendees from around the globe in the course of main meetings**, possibly by considering a move from classical live annual meetings to virtual conferences.

As stated in the introduction paragraph of this section, **these scenarios are not necessarily mutually exclusive**. In fact, they could be seen as phases for the future work of both TIC and SSSP. We hope that they will be seriously considered and discussed by the Board of Directors, as we believe they offer insights into the future of SSSP and its important work and survival.

Conclusion and Report Summary

The usual purpose for a committee report is to document the work of a committee for a given year. This, however, has been an exceptional year, and really, an exceptional two years. So this report seeks to convey much more than the usual.

We want to convey the amazing experience this committee had in organizing and conducting the conference, ***Reimagining our Worlds from Below: Transnational Conversations on Resistance, Movements, and Transformations***. We have met some incredible people, discussed important work and expanded our intellectual horizons and our social consciousness. We felt it was important not only to record this experience for history, but to point out the potential of what we have learned and to help shape the direction where this is going. We know others will pick up the baton and move forward. We wanted to make sure they have available to them the best information to help them do so.

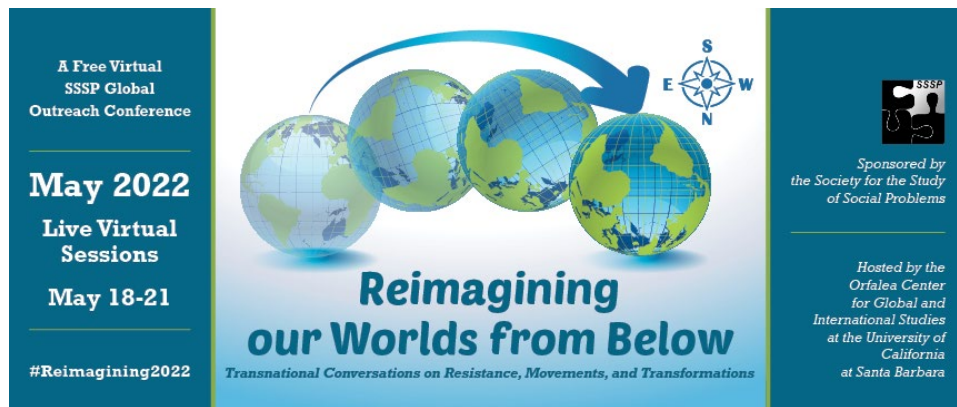
We want to recognize people who helped us along the way. We have had superb support from the SSSP administrative office, most especially **Michele Smith Koontz**. She was always willing to guide us and keep us on track, helping us to solve many problems along the way.

We are also grateful to **Hector Delgado**, who went beyond merely sitting on our committee by offering support and guidance, as well as historic and organizational context

to the work we were doing. His humility and generosity that has made him a remarkable leader for SSSP, as well as a remarkable mentor in our efforts.

We are grateful to the support we received from UCSB's Environmental Justice/Climate Justice Hub and, most notably, **Baron Haber**, who helped with the technical aspects of setting up the website and planning the work. He was not compensated for anything near the value he added to the conference. We simply would not have succeeded without him.

We are also grateful to **Kelsey Whitaker**, SSSP Assistant Administrator, **Rachel Cogburn**, IT Specialist, and **Laura Barroso**, Barroso Design. They offered needed assistance, often at the last minute.



Appendix: Summary of Program

Reimagining our Worlds from Below: Transnational Conversations on Resistance, Movements, and Transformations

May 2022

Full program and presentations can be seen on the [conference website](#).

Keynote Talk: *The Violence of Certitudes and Re-think-ing Solidarities Across Differences*, Swati Parashar, Professor in Peace and Development Research at the School of Global Studies of the University of Gothenburg, Sweden

Keynote Roundtable: *Constructing Common Ground and Transformative Pathways Through Decolonial Methodologies and Pedagogies*, Panelists: Rachel Issa Djesa, Eva Maria Fjellheim, Mayssa Rekhis, and Lena Gross

Advanced Screening: *The Edmund Pettus Bridge to Climate Justice*, a film by Dr. Richard Widick

Panel 1: *Global Political Economy of Covid 19 Pandemic: The Impact On and Responses From Civil Society and International Community*, Presenters: Osaki Bilaye-Benibo, Suresh N. Neupane, Jane Da Costa, and Sanjay Tewari, Organizer: Ligaya Lindio McGovern and Alan Spector

Panel 2: *Engaging Global South Knowledge Creation and Practices as a Forms of Resistance*, Presenters: Jennifer Friedman, Laurel Graham, Wendy Marilú Sánchez Casanova, and Joel Federman, Organizers: Henry Parada and Kevin Cruz

Panel 3: *Developing Feminist Leadership and Research on Movements and Indigenous Communities in the Global South*, Presenters: Heeya Datta, Vijaya Tamla Rai, and Ligaya Lindio McGovern, Organizers: Ligaya Lindio McGovern and Morena Tartari

Panel 4: *The Rise of Race-Religion-Ethnic Discrimination in the Current Development of Capitalism*, Presenters: Gay Young, Doran Eldar, Aize Akhabau, and Fernando Augustin Renteria, Organizer: Alan Spector

Summary of Program (continued)

Panel 5: *From the Global to the Grassroots: Fostering Transnational and Intersectoral Exchange in Participatory Practices and Methodologies*, Presenters: Corey Dolgon, Antonio Alejo, Camila Macedo Ponte, Patrícia Ferreira de Souza Lima, Elisa Privitera, Noa Cykman, and Tony Barbero, Organizer: Corey Dolgon and Eberhard Raithelhuber

Panel 6: *Single Parents in the Global North and South*, Presenters: Farzaneh Ejazi, Shuvasree Bhaduri, Jagriti Gangopadhyay, Simone Casey, Dries Van Gasse, Nina Van Eekert, and Erin Gaede, Organizer: Morena Tartari

Panel 7: *From Everyday Struggles to Global Change: Possibilities and Hurdles for Transnational Social Movement Unionism*, Presenters: Hendrick Simon, Cyntia Machado, Mara Lira, and Dithhi Bhattacharya, Organizers: Tatiana López Ayala, Janina Hirth, and Michael Fütterer

Panel 8: *Mentoring for Social Inclusion in Turbulent Times. Political Entanglements, Critical Consciousness and Dynamics of Inequality in Programs*, Presenters: Eberhard Raithelhuber, Óscar Prieto Flores, Danielle Lavin-Loucks, Yu-Te Huang, Leo Zephyrus Chow, Chi-Chung Lau, Jacob Avery, Fiona Soler, and Anuradha Kumar, Organizers: Óscar Prieto Flores and Eberhard Raithelhuber

Panel 9: *Single Parents: Challenges and Resistance*, Presenters: Eliane Egger, Rashmee Karnad-Jani, and Mengxing Ma, Organizer: Morena Tartari

Panel 10: *The Decade of Decision: Confronting the Global Climate and Corona Crises with Systemic Alternatives*, Presenters: Guy McPherson, Shrishtee Bajpai, Organizers: John Foran and Morena Tartari

Invited Conversation 1: *Deconstructing and Reconstructing Belonging in the Context of Migration: Critiquing Nordic Exceptionalism and Its Narratives of Deservingness*, Interviewees: Alexandra Bousiou, Mayssa Rekhis, and Niina Vuolajärvi, Organizer and Discussant: Josephine T. V. Greenbrook

Invited Conversation 2: *Advancing Minorities in Academia: Countering Exclusion, Finding Solidarity, and Confronting Internalized Capitalism Through Community*, Organizer and Discussant: Josephine T. V. Greenbrook

Invited Conversation 3: *Imperialisms, Capitalism, and War*, Organizers and Discussants: Ligaya Lindio McGovern and Alan Spector

Invited Conversation 4: *Crafting Global Feminist Autoethnographies: Reflection on Decolonizing Pathways*, Discussants: Josephine Beoku Betts, Melanie Heath, Deepali Aparajita Dungdung, Rituparna Patgiri and Bandana Purkayastha