EDITOR’S MESSAGE

Since editing my first issue of this newsletter in the spring of 2012, a lot has changed. I've had the joy of working with the last ESA presidents – Pekka Sulkunen and Carmen Leccardi – and Executive Committees. During this time, we have continuously sought to develop European Sociologist from a humble newsletter into a publication focusing upon issues of interest and concern to our members. Indeed, with this issue, you may notice that “Newsletter of the European Sociological Association” has been replaced in European Sociologist’s masthead by “A Publication of the European Sociological Association”.

While this may appear to be a small revision, it reflects the current and upcoming changes that Frank Welz (ESA’s President), the members of the new Executive Committee and I have been working towards. Most significantly, as the first edition of the new European Sociologist, this issue has a new structure with three distinct sections: (1) For Sociology, (2) From ESA and (3) For Sociologists. Each of these sections focuses upon a different aspect of ESAs activities. The 1st, For Sociology, highlights the identity and key debates within European Sociology. The 2nd, From ESA, presents strategies and activities relating to ESA’s activities and those of its Member Associations and Research Networks. The final section, For Sociologists, provides information on funding, teaching, upcoming conferences and other content of use to our sociological community.

Future issues of this publication will introduce new content and a renewed design and layout (see Frank Welz’s President’s Message on page 2 for further details). For now, however, we have begun by structuring the current issue according to this new three-part formula. Following the President’s Message in part one, Risto Heiskala’s Viewpoint discusses a key concept for our discipline – modernity – and he asks the rather provocative question “Have we ever been modern?” Alongside this, Dale Southerton interviews Alan Warde on practice theory in a new section titled A Spotlight on... which will become a regular feature with a different sociological theory presented in each issue.

The 2nd part of this issue begins with a report by the Local Organising Committee of the 12th ESA Conference held last August in Prague, Czech Republic. Following this, you will find news from our ESA journals; a series of short interviews introducing each member of the new Executive Committee; Kristoffer Kropp’s Perspective on the history of and challenges faced by Danish sociology; an interview with Anand Kumar, President of the Indian Sociological Society, celebrating the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between our associations; an interview with Milica Antic Gaber, President of the Slovene Sociological Association marking fifty years of Slovene sociology; and a report on the joint conference between the ESA and the Italian Sociological Association, which took place in Naples, Italy from June 4th to 5th last year.

In the final part of this issue you will find information on Discover Society – an online publication promoting social research, commentary and policy analysis, which is edited by John Holmwood, Sue Scott, Gurinder K. Bhambra and Alison Shaw. In addition to this, you will also find a short report from RN-02 on its PhD Student Award for the Best Research Paper in the Sociology of the Arts, which was conferred upon Eileen Hogan at the ESA conference last August; 4 tricks to improve your teaching by John Machinnes; information on research funding possibilities from the European Research Council (ERC); and Other Information detailing, amongst other things, the European Sociologist email discussion list to which you may wish to subscribe and an opportunity for European National Sociological Associations to host a joint conference with ESA. Finally, this issue concludes with a new piece presenting Conference News from ESA's Member Associations and Research Networks. (If you wish to feature your conference in the next issue of European Sociologist, please contact the editor.)

As this is a publication for and by European Sociologists, we encourage all members to contribute. If you have an article you wish to submit or an idea for a future issue, please click here.

Peter Holley, May 2016

Have We Ever Been Modern?

In this issue’s Viewpoint, Professor Risto Heiskala asks:

Are there any legitimate uses for the term ‘modernization’ in the academic discourse?

Read more on page 4.
FOR SOCIOLOGY AS A PUBLIC GOOD

Dear ESA member!

From conference to conference: 3,459 sociologists - most likely including you - very much enjoyed the 12th ESA conference in August 2015. Our cordial thanks goes out to all those who contributed many months of volunteer work to making our meeting possible: the Prague Local Organizing Committee led by Tomáš Kostelecký, the ESA conference committee led by Tiziana Nazio and not least ESA’s President, Carmen Leccardi (and the Executive Committee 2013-2015), who took the responsibility for this event on her shoulders.

Besides everlasting complaints (by all participants) about paper quality (of other participants), the meeting received excellent feedback in almost all regards. (Concerning the paper presentations we will try to initiate a discussion in another issue of this journal on how to improve their quality without excluding half of us. We all know that for good and bad this is a bottom-up conference; it is a one-person-one-paper meeting that hosts nearly 3,000 presentations.) Let me already invite you to put in your calendar in preparation for our next ESA conference, which will be offered to you in Athens, Greece.

From ‘Sociology for society’ to ‘Sociology for measure systems’? Our ever growing meetings, our journals, the business of sociology all seem to work well, but how about the blood pressure of the discipline? In my view the cognitive core of sociology that ensures its autonomy and boosts all applications is in bad shape. Since 2008 there has been a strong and wide public debate on the so-called financial crisis, particularly in the Eurozone, and since late 2015 on migration and refugees too. Did you ever hear a sociological argument in all of this? Are economic flows and people’s anxieties translated into reflections on social lives? On the one hand, in quantitative terms, yes, it is true that in the 2nd half of the 20th century sociology became well established at European universities and the discipline now includes just under 300,000 educated sociologists (European Societies 17/3: 294).

On the other hand, however, sociology doesn’t only face the unavoidable challenges of fragmentation and a language divide, but new counter-forces such as paywalls, austerity in research funding and most particularly a new disease called Evaluitis that fabricates a science ruled and steered by numeric assessment systems. It seems that slowly but steadily the latter is gaining influence over and even determining the orientation and content of our research.

Will the ideal of an enlightened, Luhmannian self-referential autonomous system, self-governed by scholars, be replaced by a new form of Foucauldian academic governmentality already virulent in the discipline? Will content-driven reflections of broadly educated scholars on Sociology for society be replaced by an externally stipulated funding-oriented Globalized writing competition for scarce resources, executed by one-sidedly specialized sociological self-entrepreneurs who unconsciously work for a stratified education system?

1. FOR SOCIOLOGY – THE COGNITIVE CORE

What can we do? What can you do? I will restrict my reflection on the tasks of the new ESA Executive Committee 2015-2017 and limit my focus on what, in my view, ESA should do.

ESA is a bottom-up organization of more than 2,100 members. It is neither a gate-keeper nor a distributor of jobs and other resources. Fortunately, it is still a flat organization. Let us consider it together with sociology as a public good, available to and useful for all; a good that offers meaning to action and is worth working for. Of course, this good has to serve its individual members too. This will be my 3rd point (3). In addition, ESA has certainly learnt its Foucauldian lesson. The public communication sphere of sociology must be materially organized. This will be my 2nd point (2).

But my main point is that amid all our time-consuming volunteer work on keeping the business running, our first concern should neither be the institutional nor social but the cognitive dimension of our discipline. If there has been some influence of sociology in society, if (a few decades ago) there was a strong attraction of high numbers of and the best students to our discipline, this did not happen because of the impressive amount of journals at that time or because of the mass of our instrumental findings. Rather it was because of a very specific new mode of relational thought. But what is that? An art of thought that was not offered before by other disciplines such as history or philosophy, far from politics and media constructions. Do we have time to think about it? What was intellectual stuff that once attracted us to this discipline? Why does sociology matter? It is obvious that in supporting the autonomy of the discipline, sociology’s identity and arguments, its key debates, should come first.

In this regard, firstly, ESA and its 37 Research Networks (RNs) must carefully think about its orientation lines: for example, how we are guiding young scholars and the scope of our conference themes that offer frames, spaces and legitimation for some thousands of thinkers (and paper submitters). Secondly, as a very small sign, we will devote the first section of European Sociologist to the identity and key debates of sociology. We will continue to invite contributions that discuss these questions.

2. ESA, ITS RNs & NAs – THE INSTITUTIONAL DIMENSION

In addition to the cognitive core of the discipline that guarantees its autonomy, it is important to put all our efforts into struggling for a democratic and stable institutional order for the production of sociology. Compared to universities, publishing companies and the job markets (in national sociologies) ESA is small, but at least it is a bottom-up player in this field.

What can we do? First, advocating for the social sciences in the European research area will only be effective in collaboration with National Associations (NAs) of sociology and, particularly, hand in hand with other disciplines. We therefore participate in the small but strong Initiative for
A statement of solidarity with our colleagues from Turkey

You will have read about the ‘Academics for Peace’ initiative in Turkey. Because of signing a public statement for renewing dialogue efforts in Turkey’s southeastern area nearly 30 academics from Turkish Universities have been dismissed from their positions. ESA and its RNs particularly RN18 and RN34 whose (board) members are concerned as victims of this development, have sent protest letters to the Turkish Prime minister and further authorities. We also successfully asked National Associations to widen the protest in other directions. In the meanwhile, we condemn the recent steps taken against a group of colleagues in Turkey who have been calling for peace in the country.

More than 1100 Turkish academics from 89 universities and over 400 international scholars initially signed a petition for peace in the South East region of Turkey. Thereupon Turkish authorities initiated measures against signatories that included removing them from their university positions (see nature).

We call the authorities to stop the measures.

The measures violate the human right to freedom of expression and they violate academic freedom.

Current developments in Turkey in our view violate the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights’ article 19 that guarantees the freedom to hold opinions without state and other interference.

Freedom of thought and opinion is guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey (art. 25-27) and academic freedom is a necessary requirement for the functioning of science, an area of work that has the task of improving human life by exploring and articulating knowledge about complex situations.

Executive Committee of the European Sociological Association
February 2016
Have We Ever Been Modern?

It so happened that, to our mutual astonishment, my good friend and colleague Pertti Alasuutari turned sixty, and I was asked to give a talk in a festive seminar held in his honour. For the talk I read his new book *The Synchronization of National Policies. Ethnography of the Global Tribe of Moderns* (Alasuutari 2016). I found the book an excellent piece of academic work, which focuses on the analysis of the use to which political entrepreneurs and administrators put the idea of ‘modernization’ when they try to legitimize their choices of path for the social whole and conceal the political nature of such choices.

While I agree with all that is said in the book, my reading experience evoked another question not addressed in it: are there any legitimate uses for the term ‘modernization’ in the academic discourse? In what follows, I am going to briefly address that question. I will start the discussion by first sorting out three different and broad currents in the modernization debate.

Three approaches to modernization

The first and seminal current from which it all begun is the *holistic modernization approach*. It says that modernization is a holistic evolutionary process in which societies gradually evolve toward a more complete actualization of the potentialities of the human race. This is progress in the sense of societal differentiation, in the course of which

- science develops ever more accurate descriptions of the laws of nature,
- forms of production and circulation of goods improve and create affluence,
- administration becomes more efficient and predictable in the process of bureaucratization,
- polity becomes more rational in the development of the rule of law and democracy, and finally
- the whole culture becomes secularized and disenchanted in the sense that old superstitious belief systems are replaced by valid modern ones.

This theory was introduced in the 1950s and 1960s in the US from where it spread elsewhere. Talcott Parsons (1966 and 1971), of course, is the most famous proponent of this approach but there are many more versions with relatively similar basic characteristics (especially so if we include theories of industrial society such as Dahrendorf 1959; Lipset 1959; Kerr et al. 1960; Aron 1967 and 1968; Rostow 1971; and Bell 1973). One important variant exists in so-called development studies in which attempts are made to enhance poor and badly governed areas of the globe to the level of the more developed modern societies.

In putting almost all of its effort into promoting ‘good governance’ in the developing countries today, the World Bank takes critical distance to its past in which it tried to ‘modernize’ the developing countries according to this holistic modernization theory and used the US as a standard of development. However, the difficulties of giving up the holistic modernization approach are still present in many of its documents in which the task of promoting a narrowly defined ‘good governance’ in the sense of more efficient and more transparent administration often expands to recommendations dealing with the whole polity and proper ways to organize the circulation of goods, and even further.

The two other approaches to modernization are criticisms of the holistic approach. The first of them can be called the *modernization as an ideological scam approach*. Drawing much of its inspiration from Marxism, it says that the developing countries do not have any reason to believe the persuasion of the World Bank, according to which ‘modernization’ and increased ‘good governance’ in their societies will bring them closer to the living standards of the US. What happens instead is that a restricted *niche* is developed in each of them so that they specialize in what, according to the Ricardo maxim, is called their competitive edge.

This is how their societies and productive structures are made so one-sided in the global division of labour that they become dependent on the rest of the world in regard to all other products than those forming their ‘competitive edge’, be they peanuts, bananas or soy beans. This again is how these countries are tied to an international system of dependencies or the world system as satellites and peripheries, whose role is to be exploited by the US, which is at the centre of the system, or semi peripheral countries such as Finland. The initiator of this approach was Andre Gunder Frank with his dependency theory, and a full-blown version is presented by Immanuel Wallerstein in his world-systems theory (Frank 1967; Wallerstein 2004).

Finally, the third approach can be called the *modernization as an ideological misrecognition approach*. One of the two best-known versions of this approach is presented by Bruno Latour in the book entitled *We Have Never Been Modern*, to which I am alluding in the title of this text by asking ‘Have we ever been modern?’ According to Latour we have not. This is because for him the project of modernity is to draw a clear boundary between nature and culture and then present true statements about the laws of nature, and Latour does not believe that such a boundary can be established and maintained. He refers to phenomena such as the ‘ozone-layer’ or ‘climate change’ and points out that it is impossible to say whether they are nature or culture because they are both at the same time. Here
he actually builds on another French theorist who presented a more extensive version of this approach back in late 1970s, namely Jean-Francoise Lyotard and his pamphlet *Knowledge in the Postmodern Society*.

As is well known, in his pamphlet, Lyotard defined modernity as an attempt to replace the abundance of local cultural narrations creating local identities with the meta-narratives of science and progress. He called these ‘meta-narratives’ because modernity for him consisted of an attempt to conceal the narrative nature of science and progress from sight and present it as universal truth characterizing the process of Enlightenment, which was understood as an evolutionary step forward and beneficial to everybody. The emergence of postmodernism was, according to Lyotard, a sign of erosion of the terroristic cultural closure of Enlightenment and the beginning of a long process of recovery, in the course of which the cultural nature of our identities and conceptions about reality would be rediscovered. (Lytard 1984; Latour 1993; Heiskala 2011.)

**What can be said about validity?**

After dealing with the genesis and basic claims of the three approaches, let us now move to their validity, or *geltung*, as our German colleagues would say.

Let us start with the ideological misrecognition approach. It is correct in its claims that all our interpretations of nature, whether everyday conceptions or scientific theories, are cultural constructions. Latour is therefore right in saying that the laws of nature are not discovered but rather enacted in a thoroughly cultural process of science, which has been elegantly described by him and other actor network theorists. That is something we can give to Latour because it rightfully belongs to him and his colleagues. However, it is also important to take care that we do not throw out the baby with the bathwater.

Max Weber seldom, if ever, used the word ‘modernization’ even though he, after his death, was interpreted as a modernization theorist based on his ideas about the differentiation of value spheres or forms of reason. In a broad sense the interpretation of Weber as a modernization theorist is also a correct one because he spoke about the process of rationalization that characterized the West and only the West. In speaking about the rise of Western capitalism and other forms of rationalization, Weber often made ethnocentric claims, which are vulnerable to criticism. One of his several rationalization processes, however, seems to be an accurate description of how things are. I am referring to ‘ disenchantment’ in the sense of the replacement of magic with science. For Weber, magic and technologies based on science are similar activities and belief systems in the sense that both aim to control natural forces for the benefit of human beings. The only difference is that the magical persuasion of spirits does not work, whereas the technologies characterizing the scientific-technological revolution do work.

The proof of this claim is the astonishing explosion of affluence based on modern scientific technologies of production. It has been described by Michael Mann as follows: ‘The increasing productivity of agriculture and industry enabled a fourfold world population growth, from 1.6 billion in 1900 to almost 7 billion in 2010, with the average person being taller, heavier, living twice as long, and becoming twice as likely to be literate’ (Mann 2012:6), and this description refers only to the last 110 years. If we want to have a longer perspective, we can point to the fact that in the year 1400 there were only 340 million people on the surface of the globe whereas in the year 2050 there will be some 11 billion of us (Marks 2015; see also Crone 2003). This should be enough proof of the claim that even if the propositions of modern natural science are not found but enacted in a thoroughly cultural process they are good enough to sustain better and more efficient productive technologies than any other known belief system (Schroeder 2007).

This suggests that even if realism pure and simple is too naïve a description of the natural sciences, the same is true about constructionism pure and simple. Instead, we should orientate ourselves toward a realist form of constructionism allowing the fact that some descriptions of natural processes are more accurate and some are less so. I believe that a fruitful variant of such realist constructionism can be found in Charles Peirce’s pragmatism (cf. Short 2007). Be that as it may, the fact remains that it is not completely out of the question to speak about the development of science as modernization of our conceptions of the ways of nature and consider this as an irreversible process, even if we admit that such conceptions cannot be formulated outside language and culture.

If we then move to the modernization as an ideological scam approach we soon come to a somewhat similar conclusion in the sense that it both is and is not accurate. Talk about modernization is indeed an ideological scam, at least in two senses. First, it presents social change toward the patterns characteristic of the US as an abstract disembodied process toward a better society without alternatives. To maintain this scam, the term ‘Americanization’ was, according to Jeffrey C. Alexander (1994), soon replaced by that of ‘modernization’ in the sociological community after World War II. Second, the approach gives a promise of affluence, which it does not in many cases hold because many countries that are ‘modernized’ end up in such a subordinate position in the global division of labour that they are actually worse off than previously. There is plenty of experience of this in Latin America and Africa, where many countries were indeed swindled with the help of modernization talk.

However, there are also other kinds of examples. The list starts with the loser states of World War II, Germany and Japan, and continues with the Asian Tiger states, Mainland China, and probably quite soon with India. In their case, the competitive edge has actually materialized. In addition to the foundation provided to these countries by their histories, it has required modernization of the productive machinery and development of efficient administrative patterns. In that sense, the modernization story has not been completely without justification even if it has also worked as an ideological smokescreen and concealed from sight the political nature of choices between alternative paths of development.
Finally, it is time to turn to the original modernization story, the holistic modernization approach, and ask whether there is any validity in it. As I have already said above, I find some forms of modernization talk appropriate in regard to two sectors of life, i.e., science and productive technologies and bureaucratization of administration.

Now I would like to add a third sector, which is

- the development of science and
- the development of productive technologies.

This too, in my opinion and that of Max Weber, leads to an increase of efficiency, which is, at least in principle, beneficial for all parties and, because of that, difficult to contest rationally. In all these senses, I think that we can speak of modernization, and in all the three cases, modernization means more affluence, better predictability of the future and an increase of collective resources. Therefore, I do think that the holistic modernization approach had and still has a point.

However, this was not all the holistic modernization approach claimed. It also said that three other phenomena take place in the process of modernization. First, organization of the distribution of goods takes a more rational form. Some forms of the holistic modernization narration were reluctant, after Word War II and in the conditions of the Cold War, to say anything more about this factor, but it is clear that Weber, for example, thought that this rational form is capitalism. And, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the rise of neoliberalism as a virtually uncontested global ideology, we have once again heard this Gospel being repeated more and more often. Yet I think that even if there are, as both Marx and Weber noted, some aspects of capitalism that tend to enhance efficiency in economic life, there are also others, which, as Marx also showed, work in the opposite direction (Heiskala 1986). Second, the holistic narration claims that in the process of modernization, polity becomes more rational due to development of the rule of law and democracy. This is something I see as a value statement pure and simple. I happen personally to support it, but I also understand that it is perfectly possible to defend other stands concerning polity, and the choice between these stands cannot be based on any kind of expertise but is a matter of opinion or voluntary choice. Third, the holistic modernization narrative also included the extensive disenchanted claim, according to which the whole culture becomes secularized and disenchanted in the sense that old superstitious beliefs are replaced by valid modern ones. As I said before, there is quite a lot of validity in this thesis as long as it is restricted to the sphere of natural science. However, outside the sphere of science, I agree with Latour and Lyotard in their criticism of the modern meta-narratives. In this sense, we really should never again be modern!

It is true then that there are significant limitations to the holistic modernization approach. The restrictions detected, however, still leave us with the significant improvements of science and productive technologies and bureaucratization of administration as a meaningful referent for ‘modernization’. That is why I think it is possible to speak about the emergence of modernity as an irreversible break in the course of history and, in that sense, it is possible to answer the question in my title by saying ‘Yes, we have been modern, and we still are’.

For a further qualification, however, I would like to set two further conditions for the responsible academic use of the term ‘modernization’. First, one should always try to avoid using the term in an intransitive form and always try to use it transitively. In other words, when using the term, we should always speak about modernization of something and not just about modernization in general. Second, we should always understand that ‘modernization’ as an expression is a form of shorthand, which is used to refer economically to vast societal processes. Therefore, it should never appear as the first term of a causal chain. ‘Modernization’ does not cause anything or require anything. In an academic description, it is just an economical way to refer to contingent societal processes, which could, but need not, be described in their full complexity in the context in question.

With these two caveats in mind, I think that it is indeed possible to use the notion of modernization in the academic descriptive discourse without making a fool of oneself.

**Why should anybody care?**

But why is any of this important? The notion of modernization is out of fashion in the sociological community and the legitimate uses for it that I have been able to come up with are rather narrow. Why not let it fall completely into oblivion?

There are two reasons for not allowing this to happen. The first reason has to do with the history of the sociological community. The modernization narrative in its holistic form used to define the identity of our discipline. It would be wrong to let this figure go unreflectively. Otherwise we will not know who we are and why we think that we belong to the same discipline. Today, when I go to sociological conferences, I get the impression that this is exactly where we are now. To get away from this place of amnesia, we would need some anamnesis and some critical reflection. I have tried to make part of my contribution here.

The second reason has to do with society at large. The idea of ‘modernization’ still plays a significant role in the civic debate and administrative discourse, as Pertti Alasuutari shows in many illuminating ways in his book referred to at the beginning of this text. Therefore, there is a need for some sociological ideology criticism. Alasuutari contributes to such criticism very forcefully in analysing the ways in which what he calls epistemic governance works with concepts such as ‘modernization’. What could be added to that kind of criticism would be a careful analysis of why ‘modernization’ is such a powerful rhetorical figure. My version of such an analysis would start by admitting that it is true that our scientific conceptions and productive technologies do indeed improve as time goes by. Therefore, there is a rational core to the historically unique cult of newness present in the celebration of modernity in our time. Yet this celebration should not be extended to those values present in the economic system and polity of the US and other OECD countries. They too can be supported, not as the highest points of evolution but as normative choices made by some and rejected by some others. It was the mistake of the holistic modernization approach and a proof of its ideological nature that it did not make this distinction.
Literature


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**Risto Heiskala**

Risto Heiskala is Professor and Director at the Institute for Advanced Social Research (IASR), University of Tampere, Finland. He is currently working on a monograph entitled *Semiotic Sociology* and an edited volume entitled *Is the EU an Emerging Empire?* In addition to several journal articles his past publications include books such as *Social Innovations, Institutional Change and Economic Performance* (2007) and *Society as Semiosis* (2003).
Omar Lizardo suggests that there has been a ‘practice turn’ in social theory and cites your work as a critical contribution. Do you think this is an accurate characterisation?

The metaphor of ‘the turn’ in the social sciences and humanities always causes me a degree of dizziness. Sadly, I don’t have a better immediate alternative to capture restless theoretical movement. Omar is undoubtedly right to bring attention to developments in this area, although he may have overstated the general significance for sociology at large. For a start, some of the variants of practice theory, as Davide Nicolini depicts them in his excellent resume in *Practice Theory, Work and Organization* (2012, Oxford University Press), have been employed continuously for decades. That is not to deny that theories of practice have enjoyed new favour, especially in areas like cultural sociology, the sociology of everyday life, of households, of consumption, and of environmental sustainability. It is promising to see that theories of practice are being employed to account for social organisation in empirical studies in these and many other different domains. It is also interesting that these theories find favour across many disciplines; practices have invaded anthropology, geography, management sciences, media studies, linguistics among others.

What do you think is the appeal?

What I find most exciting about theories of practice is that they open up to explain consumption in terms other than individual choice. In my recent book, *The Practice of Eating* (2016, Polity Press), I tried to make the strongest case possible for understanding eating as a corollary of social organization rather than a matter of food choice. For a sociologist of consumption the term ‘choice’ is much too heavily embedded in the ideologies of market economies and neo-liberal governments, and their links to everyday psychologies of self-identity through elected lifestyle, to be helpful when seeking fresh insights into some of the most important features of political economy in the 21st century. So I tried to minimise the use of concepts which present human action as deliberative, calculating, autonomous and self-directed decision-making. Theories of practice permit radical conjecture regarding socially coordinated, routine, habituated, embodied, materially embedded, practical and purposive conduct.

And what about the limitations, does it have any?

I used to believe that sociology should seek an overarching, unifying, general theory of social organization. I’ve gradually changed my mind, thinking now that we are best to employ different theories depending upon what it is we want to explain. One obligation which arises for social theorists is to define the limits or the boundaries of the competence of the theory that they espouse and expound. That is one issue I find problematic with practice theory.

Among the most challenging and interesting at present is the question of how to deal with matters of macro-sociological significance. Practice theory has proved very effective (that is to say it has produced many new illuminating and convincing explanations) when analysing the minutiae of everyday life – both its humdrum routines and the improvised local resistance that often prefigures institutional change. Also, it can be employed to analyse large scale phenomena like politics or economics as practices. But there remains an outstanding question of how to understand systematically the inter-relationship between practices of different kinds and at different scales.

What other theoretical lenses might you imagine drawing upon as complements to theories of practice?

Macro-sociological analysis used to be good at accounting for the interconnections between institutionalised processes. It explained the interdependence of economic organisation, welfare provision and household arrangements, or demonstrated the links between...
between sociology and political practice. It is not yet clear whether practice theories can supply sufficiently lucid and illuminating accounts of such interdependencies. Of course, practices intersect and overlap; they co-evolve; they inform and constrain each other; they borrow understandings and procedures. But we have no theoretically generated rules for determining what makes some practices more important than others, nor how members of social groups or collectivities come to stand in similar relationships to a range of practices. In their absence it is hard to explain broad patterns of social inequality and distribution of power. Some version of quasi-structural analysis – perhaps field theory, or political economy, or neo-institutional or social network analysis – seems to be a necessary supplement or complement to the analyses of practices.

(DS) And how about connecting approaches beyond the social sciences?

One point of strength of practice theory is its potential for both multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary cooperation. Sociology needs to think of itself as part of an alliance of social sciences, as well as a distinctive, autonomous discipline with its specialised knowledge and capacity. Pragmatic reasons alone would suggest that. Finding the funds to do field research in the current European political context where authorities believe that interdisciplinary cooperation is the best way to respond to almost all social and political challenges means that sociology must position itself to collaborate not only with other social sciences but also with natural sciences. This is nowhere more pressing than in dealing with issues of sustainable production and consumption. That said, the assumption that interdisciplinary research can provide the answers to the major socio-political challenges of our time is dangerous: it can produce a tendency within funding agendas for a focus on technical or applied research in which the social sciences are cast merely as the provider of tools for assessing the public acceptability of technological or policy initiatives. An attraction of practice theory is its potential to offer a framework for understanding societal change in which social scientific propositions are core rather than peripheral to inter-disciplinary analysis.

(DS) This suggests that you view theories of practices as offering progressive insights into ‘grand societal challenges’?

In the area that you work in – sustainable consumption – the practice-theoretical orientation is having a significant, if still insufficient, impact. Understanding the flow of resources involved in established patterns of consumption cannot be dissociated from reflection on how institutions might be better organised to prevent or mitigate the natural and social consequences of climate change and ecological depletion. Practice theory explains that strategies for intervention which rely on dissemination of information, or on trying to make individuals morally responsible for their environmental footprints, typically fail because they make implausible assumptions about the bases of collective action. This observation has both sociological and political purpose, a virtuous meeting point between sociology and political practice.

It may still need to identify more effective levers for promoting the public good because the scale of the task is vast, both intellectually and politically. The apparent widespread acceptability of the pronouncements of both Presidents Bush that the American way of life is not-negotiable fills me with dread. The idea that the rich parts of the world, and the richest people among them, shall not modify their consumption habits – what they eat, how they travel, how they use energy – in the context of a population of 9 billion on the one and only planet currently available for human habitation, presents sociology with one of its most challenging and intellectually interesting agendas. Understanding the mechanics of social change takes on a new importance when the dreams and realities of a conventionally acceptable and comfortable material life bang up against the prospect of severe and rapidly accelerating climate change. All extant political, economic and social arrangements come into question, and a narrow focus on how to influence individual choice in the marketplace looks like a woefully weak basis for intervention.

### Alan Warde

Alan Warde is Professor of Sociology at the University of Manchester’s School of Social Sciences and a Professorial Fellow at its Sustainable Consumption Institute. Professor Warde has conducted research on politics, social movements, cities, domestic divisions of labour, economic restructuring and the social structure of Britain. His current work focuses on the sociology of consumption, the sociology of culture, the sociology of food and eating, and social stratification. His recent publications include *The Practice of Eating* (Polity Press, 2016) and “The Sociology of Consumption: its recent development” (Annual Review of Sociology 41. 2015). Professor Warde is a founder member of ESA Research Network 5 - Sociology of Consumption.

### Dale Southerton

Dale Southerton is Professor of Sociology at the University of Manchester’s School of Social Sciences and the Director of its Sustainable Consumption Institute, which is principally funded by Tesco plc. Professor Southerton leads the Sustainable Practices Research Group that is funded by the ESRC, DEFRA & The Scottish Government. His research focuses on the study of consumption and its significance in processes of societal change. His publications include the *Encyclopedia of Consumer Culture* (Sage, 2011), *The Habits of Consumption* (Helsinki Collegium of Advanced Studies, 2012) edited with Alan Warde and *Communities of Consumption* (VDM Verlag, 2009).
independent thinking from polity

The Metamorphosis of the World
Ulrich Beck

“This book, which its author, one of the most original and perceptive thinkers of our time, was prevented from completing by a sudden catastrophe, reads as a most thorough and exhaustive – indeed complete – description of our world: a world defined by its endemic incompleteness and dedicated to resisting completion. A kind of world envisaged two millennia ago, at the time of another seminal metamorphosis, as a temple “made with hands” – while about to be destroyed and replaced “within three days” by another, made this time “without hands” (Mark 14:58).”

Zygmunt Bauman

HB 9780745690216  £14.99
March 2016

Crisis
Sylvia Walby

“Sylvia Walby’s new complexity theory analysis of the current crises adds an essential dimension, addressing the financial, economic, welfare state and political ramifications of the crisis as strongly connected dynamics. She convincingly argues why the conflict between democracy and capitalism can only be resolved through a deepening of democracy. As such, her book is an indispensable academic intervention in the politics of knowledge and empowers academics, politicians and citizens alike to address crisis.”

Mieke Verloo, Radboud University

PB 9780745647616  £15.99
September 2015

The Practice of Eating
Alan Warde

“Rejecting conventional accounts of consumer choice, Alan Warde examines the routinized and habitual character of eating as a social practice. In a field that is prone to political rhetoric and media speculation, The Practice of Eating offers conceptual clarity and empirical rigour – a compelling synthesis of more than a decade’s research on the sociology of consumption.”

Peter Jackson, University of Sheffield

PB 9780745691718  £15.99
December 2015

Who is Charlie?
Xenophobia and the New Middle Class
Emmanuel Todd

“Todd’s highly contrarian analysis of the Charlie movement and his strident tone have drawn widespread criticism. But the very boldness of his claims, backed up by hard data, commands attention. No student of the marches can ignore this deeply unconventional book.”

Times Literary Supplement

HB 9781509505777  £16.99
September 2015
POST CONFERENCE REPORT

The ESA 12th Conference: Differences, Inequalities and the Sociological Imagination

Our greatest thanks belongs to Tiziana Nazio for her outstanding and continuous help with organization and support throughout the whole preconference process. We are also very grateful to all Research Network (RN) and Research Stream (RS) coordinators, to Harald “the ConfTool Master”, to Iveta Košt’álová and her PCO team (especially Anička and Jasna), to all co-workers and volunteers. We wish you a similar dream team for Athens 2017. Good luck!

CONFERENCE MANAGEMENT

The ESA 2015 Prague conference was organised by the Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences (IS CAS). The Local Organising Committee (LOC) comprised of Tomáš Kostelecký (Chair of the LOC and director of IS CAS), Kateřina Bernardyová, Petra Broskevičová, Marie Čermáková, Filip Lachmann and Michaela Trtíková Vojtková.

Tomáš was in charge of building the scientific programme and the rooming, Filip was in charge of ConfTool management and together with Kateřina managed the conference email, web and social media. Petra was charge of financial management of the conference, Marie was responsible for relations with the Technical University (the main conference venue) and Michaela and Kateřina were responsible of coordinating, supervising, analysing and pulling all the strings together.

Social Programme

The social part of the conference began with an Opening Ceremony and Welcome Cocktail held at the Prague Congress Centre. The evening was started by a Prague Youth Chamber Orchestra performance, followed by welcome addresses by Pavel Bělobrádek (Deputy Prime Minister for Science, Research and Innovation), Jiří Drahoš (President of the Czech Academy of Sciences) and Tomáš Kostelecký (Chair of the Local Organising Committee), as well as introductions to the conference by Carmen Leccardi (President of the European Sociological Association) and Tiziana Nazio (Chair of the Conference Programme Committee).

Participants were honoured to listen to Professor Arlie Hochschild’s (University of California, Berkeley) plenary lecture “Deep Stories, Emotional Agendas and Politics” and Professor Zygmunt Bauman’s (University of Leeds): plenary lecture “Out of Control and Running Wild: Or A (Recent) History of Modern Inequality.” Following the opening plenaries, a welcome drink was served at the Prague Congress Centre. This was attended by 2,500 participants and 100 accompanying persons. The Social Dinner and Party was held at Občanská Plovárna and attended by 1,200 guests. The cost of 40 EUR remained the same as in Lisbon, Geneva and Torino.

During the Closing Ceremony the new ESA President, Frank Welz, was introduced, and plenary lectures were delivered by Christopher T. Whelan (University College Dublin) who spoke on “The ‘Squeezed Middle’ in the Great Recession: A Comparative European Analysis of the Distribution of Economic Stress” and Gurminder K. Bhambra (University of Warwick) who spoke on the “Postcolonial Reconstructions of Europe”. No other events were organized due to the poor attendance to the sociological walks in Turin.

Professional Conference Organiser (PCO)

Guarant International provided professional solutions for the preparation and organisation of this conference and social events and other meetings. The scientific part of conference (abstract submission) was managed by the LOC using the ConfTool system which was chosen by ESA. Registrations were made by PCO through a different IT platform, as was the case in Turin in 2013. The synchronisation of information between the two platforms was done “manually”, but this was not a problem.
CONFERENCE DEADLINES & REGISTRATIONS

In Prague the ESA conference deadlines were strictly followed according the plan prescribed by the ESA Conference Manual.

The Coordinators were twice asked to create the RN/RS sessions. First they did preliminary composition after the peer review process. Then in June they restructured the sessions after the registration deadline for paper givers with all valid participants instead of accepted contributions. Only few Coordinators complained with “time consuming and senseless work” arguments, but the preliminary session building was very useful and helpful for the LOC to prepare ConfTool and to make the RN/RS coordinators familiar with its tools and functions, which was crucial when the final allocation had to be done quickly. Also the organisation of room allocation depends on the number of sessions eventually organised, so it is good to be ready for the ultimate numbers.

THE HUMAN TOUCH: DELAYS AND EXCEPTIONS

We tried to set a time schedule that would give us reasonable amount of time between particular deadlines, however things were not always as easy as they looked on the paper. One needs to account for the fact that delays will always occur – emailing with coordinators takes time, participant payments may be lost for some time and late requests inevitably arise. Therefore, we experienced a series of delays in the planned schedule, yet the main factor responsible for delays was the record number of abstracts we received and sheer people engaged in the whole process. Deadlines were mostly respected by participants, but for the next ESA Conference it should be made clearer from the conference website what each registration deadline means in terms all participants understand (“early bird registration deadline”, “registration deadline for paper presenters/paper givers”, “late registration deadline”, etc.). We noticed that some people did not realize that it was not possible to register for active participation at the conference after the deadline for paper presenters. The biggest delay in our plans occurred after this date (June 1st) as the session building depended on the RN/RS coordinators and the final number of sessions. As a result, the planning the sessions took more time than expected.

The greatest amount of our time was consumed in dealing with exceptions and late requests which arose daily. These included: late registrations, late payments, incomplete payments, problems with funding and even late abstract submission requests (sometimes months after the call for papers!). Some of these issues needed to be solved immediately with RN/RS coordinators. We also noticed a number of cancellations which sometimes caused minor issues in the session building (i.e. one of three contributors in a session cancelled so the session had to be rebuilt in cooperation with RN/RS coordinator).

IT is not easy to count all the messages (we were also sending bulk emails) we had to deal with, but we received more than 6,000 unique emails from participants, coordinators, suppliers, etc. on our official ESA email address alone (plus hundreds of emails in our personal inboxes). We sent more than 20,000 emails from our email client (including bulk emails) and nearly 40,000 emails through the IT platform (ConfTool).
It was crucial to have several people to read each bulk email before it was sent. This saved hours of work! It was always important to give participants/submitters/coordinators complete information and clear instructions in bulk emails, otherwise you would find yourself having to answer the same questions forever, again and again. It was also important to have the right information on the webpage, but correct and simple information in emails was crucial. This was especially important with regard to deadlines and their descriptions (i.e. in each email participants needed to be informed that the registration deadline for paper presenters was June 1st and that this meant that no later registrations could be accepted – even if it was not true (we accepted late registrations provided that RN/RS coordinators were able to squeeze these contributions into their programmes).

We found that it is good to try to minimize bulk emailing because one bulk to 4,000 participants meant that one or two people spent at least one full day replying to both relevant and irrelevant questions. We received frequent requests for: a change of abstract title or content (this needed to be discussed with the RN/RS coordinator), changes to the order of authors, funding, planning, paper allocations and cancellations (e.g. a participant bought return his/her flight for the Thursday afternoon so could not attend his/her session on the Friday).

The only criticism that arose related the late Wednesday Business Meetings. However, after a long discussion no better solution could be found. It maybe a good opportunity for the next Conference Organising Committee/LOC to rethink the schedule for these Business Meetings.

The Conference Venue
The conference took place at two faculties of the Czech Technical University in Prague: the Faculty of Civil Engineering (Thákurova 7, 166 29 Praha 6 – Dejvice) and the Faculty of Architecture (Thákurova 9, 166 34 Praha 6 – Dejvice). These two faculties were chosen because of their proximity to the airport, city centre, main train station and for capacity to host large number of participants for such a big event as the ESA 2015 Prague Conference.

Creativity and Artful Graphic Design
The colour orange was picked according to Goethe’s Theory of Colours and a unique and complex graphic design was created to cultivate the visual part of conference. This move was very much appreciated by participants and applauded in the post conference survey. We hope that the next conference will also give thought to this concern....

Social Media
A Facebook event-page and a twitter hashtag (#ESA2015Prague) were created and administered by Katerina and Filip. These added to the overall experience of the 2015 confernce with some users actively engaging with these social media platforms.

The Conference
Sessions
Next to the RN/RS sessions being held, a series of general sessions took place. These included:

• 9 Semi-Plenary Sessions (18 papers)
• 23 Midday Specials (3 ESA Lectures, 14 Specials and Workshops, 3 Author Meets Critiques, 3 Contributions from National Associations)
• PhD Workshop (21 participants)
• Opening and Closing Plenary (2 papers each).

With respect to previous ESA conferences, the number of RNs increased to 37 at the Prague conference and a large number of Joint Sessions (26) with 2 or 3 RNs were organised. Most RNs showed signs of growth, while the total number of sessions organised was, to date, the largest number registered for any of ESA’s conferences. See Figure 1 (below) for an overview of the number of sessions organised by research network at each ESA conference since 2009.

Due to the high acceptance rate and the room availability provided by the LOC and conference venue, the number of presented papers was enormous. 70 rooms were fully booked from the morning until the evening throughout most of the conference time.

Independence and Control: The IT Platform
For the Prague conference we used a new IT platform selected by ESA. As noted earlier, the chosen software was ConfTool: a professional conference organising platform developed in Germany. For a new user...
due to this, participants could only fill a remark box to indicate which session they wished to join. As a result, the only solution was to create sessions after the notice of acceptance/rejection (April 1st in our case) and use these for the preliminary sorting of contributions. A disadvantage of this solution was that final sessions needed to be completely rebuilt, renamed and they also contained contributions of non-payers. This task may not seem demanding, but it was – after all, we are talking about thousands of contributions!

The ESA 2015 Conference was indisputably socially responsible. All lunches distributed during the conference were prepared by Ethnocatering – a social enterprise, which presents an opportunity for supporting corporate social responsibility (CSR) policy. Women migrants, who are disadvantaged in the local labour market, obtained a respectable job whilst using their traditional skills in a way that helps them to integrate into Czech society. All profits derived from Ethnocatering projects are further invested into integration programmes of the Civic Association, InBaze Berkat.

ConfTool can be difficult to take in. It is not tailor-made solution (i.e. software specifically designed for ESA’s conference), but it did offer a lot of choices on how to adapt the program for our needs. Most categories and terminology used throughout the online app were able to be renamed (e.g. we renamed “Tracks” to “Research Networks/Research Streams”) so administrator could adjust wording of user interface for other uses, as well as wording in automatic e-mails, etcetera. When using the software, the service support operated mainly by Harald Weinreich was of key importance to its success. Harald was (1) always responsive, helpful and fast in his replies, (2) able to make both small and bigger changes in the app (update options, filters etc.), and (3) happy to help and he understood any troubles we encountered. It was also possible to use a manual for particular phases and we found the ConfTool user forum, which provided advice and solutions invented by other ConfTool users, useful also.

We found ConfTool to be the most powerful in the following tasks:

- it handled a huge amount of data without major delays or lags;
- it offered the possibility to set phases and deadlines for different users;
- it recognised the different users entered into the system;
- it was capable of sending bulk emails efficiently;
- it provided a wide choice of data for export;
- it covered all major phases involved in the organising of the conference (i.e. abstract handling, reviewing, acceptance/rejection, session setup).

ConfTool uses a system of “bidding” when assigning contributions to reviewers and it uses “topics” for this matter. It seems that topics could be used to divide “tracks” (RN/RS) into smaller thematic units. This would be useful for the preliminary planning as most of RNs/RSs have their preliminary sub-sessions given in advance to show what is their networks and streams about. However, “topics” cannot be used because from the structural view they are above the tracks (RNs/RSs). Participants can use this function as well, but it does not make sense to use it as an indicator for sub-topic inside the tracks (RN/RSs) because it is not designed for this purpose (so we switched them off). Due to this, participants could only fill a remark box to indicate which session they wished to join. As a result, the only solution was to create sessions after the notice of acceptance/rejection (April 1st in our case) and use these for the preliminary sorting of contributions. A disadvantage of this solution was that final sessions needed to be completely rebuilt, renamed and they also contained contributions of non-payers. This task may not seem demanding, but it was – after all, we are talking about thousands of contributions!
CONFERENCE STATISTICS

The table opposite shows some key information relating to ESA’s last four conferences in Lisbon (2009), Geneva (2011) Turin (2013) and, of course, Prague (2015). Amongst these key figures one can see that the Prague conference experienced the greatest number of participants ESA has witnessed to date with some 3459 persons attending. As Figure 2 (below) indicates, the vast majority of participants (90.3%) attending the conference came from Europe. Of those attending from outside ESA’s traditional catchment area, 4.4% of all conference participants came from Asia and 3.7% came from America.

In addition to an overall increase in the number of conference participants, the Prague conference showed an increase in the number of presentations with a new record of some 2884 papers and posters presented in some 678 sessions. Indeed, this growth was also reflected in the number of abstracts submitted (some 5260) by 3990 unique users. While the number of students has increased, the number attending from band 2 countries dropped by some 10% in comparison to the 2013 conference in Turin.

Of the total number of participants, some 31% were students and some 11% of participants came from band 2 countries. While the number of students has increased, the number attending from band 2 countries dropped by some 10% in comparison to the 2013 conference in Turin.

JUNIOR SCHOLAR GRANT

The Junior Scholar Grant was a new award announced by ESA and coordinated by LOC. It was a great idea appreciated by many applicants, but a very time demanding issue that needed to be communicated with 37 coordinators, at least 74 grantees separately and the PCO (because of registration and accommodation). There was not a single case where the applicant was fully eligible (for the requirements see http://esa12thconference.eu/junior-scholar-grants) from the beginning. We had to ask each grantee many times to send an extended abstract, we had to ask coordinators to pick an alternate and sometimes an alternate for the alternate, because some applicants did not answer our emails, dropped out or did not prove to be “juniors”. There was also trouble with the grant amount of 150 EUR since the fee structure differed depending upon the grantee’s country of origin. For example, a fee of non-student from Band 1 country (190 EUR) could not be simple waived and the grantee had to pay the 40 EUR extra. On the other hand student from Band 2 country (whose conference fee was 80 EUR) had and extra 70 EUR for his accommodation. The award itself and the use of it should therefore be made simpler. (Kateřina Bernardyová)

Table 1: Key Figures from ESA Conferences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Lisbon</th>
<th>Geneva</th>
<th>Turin</th>
<th>Prague</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>2560</td>
<td>2631</td>
<td>2681</td>
<td>3459</td>
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<td>Delegates</td>
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<td>ESA members</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>53%</td>
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<td>48%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students</td>
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<td>28%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>31%</td>
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<td>Band 2 countries</td>
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<td>21%</td>
<td>11%</td>
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<td>Sessions</td>
<td>563+23</td>
<td>588+39</td>
<td>640+32</td>
<td>676+119</td>
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<td>Invited speakers</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>54 (tbc)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>35</td>
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<tr>
<td>Invited speakers (covered only)</td>
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<td>37 (tbc)</td>
<td>33 (tbc) +2</td>
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<td>77 PM (52 AM)</td>
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<td>3990</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drop out rate</td>
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<td>N/A</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Proportion of Conference Participants by Region

4.4% Asia
3.7% America
0.3% Africa
1.2% Australia & New Zealand
90.3% Europe

InBaze Berkat provided the conference lunch boxes.

One of the many sessions taking place during the conference.
THE 1st EURO-ARAB MEETING FOR YOUNG RESEARCHERS IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES: SEARCHING FOR A COMMON GOOD

“Fascinating scientific adventure” that gave us an incredible opportunity to explore our worlds, our points of view, and our opinions on the sociological and scientific world that lies beyond our cultural and theoretical structures. We had the chance to gather together and experience one of the most important acts of respect which is in need in a polarized society like ours: a confrontation, a debate and a productive discussion. The core of this debate was to examine every side of important and often controversial issues in an atmosphere of reasoned argument and respectful discourse, and in Manama we debated deeply on several issues.

The meeting can be definitely considered a pioneering initiative to exchange knowledge between the two shores of the Mediterranean, from where people with different and various backgrounds arrived for this gathering. The director of the Knowledge Transfer Project, Tahar Labib, is a Tunisian Sociologist and the Honorary President of the Arab Association of Sociology. The meeting was attended by Roberto Cipriani, the Chair of ESA’s Council of National Associations.

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The First Euro-Arab Meeting for Young Researchers in Social Sciences – although young in spirit, it was deep and sustainable in its vocation – was an opportunity to find ambitious and enthusiastic colleagues from different countries and cultures. It was fitting that the meeting took place in Bahrain, which, as a cultural mediator, is a real actor for development in its region and a transnational and multicultural cultural floret with a strong identity.

The presentations and the following debates enabled us to make an overview not of topical subjects, giving rise to many discussions and controversies, but to distinguish the present and future issues faced by our contemporary societies with a view to sustainability, tolerance and cultural rapprochement.

We young social scientists were all researching for the common good: the sublimated knowledge which comes from the collective discussion, mutual understanding and coexistence.

During the meeting, we discussed and debated on several issues, receiving illuminating feedback from the professors, eminent personalities and the intelligentsia from Arab and European countries. We learned from each other during both the plenary session and our free-time, and the huge spectrum of the topics covered by our research-papers allowed us to “sociologize” on many issues.

We had the chance to confront our (pre) constituted knowledge on certain aspects of the world: willing or not, our personal cultural backgrounds work like a guideline in the mapping of the society; we are always a little bit Western-centric in interpreting most of social issues. The meeting allowed us to breathe new air, to have a different viewpoint, an alternative perspective, and this is fundamental for all young researchers from both shores of the Mediterranean that are working to develop new approaches to traditional scientific itineraries.

Furthermore, the human and social sciences constitute, for us, an approach making a large place for innovation, experimentation, basic research or action-research. This meeting has been, in this context, not only a means of mutual knowledge exchange, but “a case” of cultural and civilizational dialogue.

We can argue that the so-called debatable “Clashes of Civilizations” has been surpassed in Manama: the “First Euro-Arab Meeting for Young Researchers in Social Sciences” has represented an unicum in the Euro-Arab debate on sociology, gathering together different views and constituting a network of individuals from different countries with the same goal: to be a collective.

The meeting was an unforgettable experience and a “change of viewpoint”, both intellectually and human. It was a real, unpublished and human journey which will irrevocably play a role in our vocation as researchers.

We participants were twenty Master’s and PhD level students from eleven countries: Algeria, Canada, France, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Tunisia and the United States. We experienced a “fascinating scientific adventure” that gave us an incredible opportunity to explore our worlds, our points of view, and our opinions on the sociological and scientific world that lies beyond our cultural and theoretical structures. We had the chance to gather together and experience one of the most important acts of respect which is in need in a polarized society like ours: a confrontation, a debate and a productive discussion. The core of this debate was to examine every side of important and often controversial issues in an atmosphere of reasoned argument and respectful discourse, and in Manama we debated deeply on several issues.

Debate is a method for improving critical thinking and to better understand the “Other”. In that occasion, the “Other” was a colleague from another country with another story, another background and another educational context. This is the reason why the meeting was of extreme and considerable importance underlining the more that significant contribution of a transnational, patient, determined and open approach to a world affected by common issues.

The First Euro-Arab Meeting for Young Researchers in Social Sciences – although young in spirit, it was deep and sustainable in its vocation – was an opportunity to find ambitious and enthusiastic colleagues from different countries and cultures. It was fitting that the meeting took place in Bahrain, which, as a cultural mediator, is a real actor for development in its region and a transnational and multiracial cultural floret with a strong identity.

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We young social scientists were all researching for the common good: the sublimated knowledge which comes from the collective discussion, mutual understanding and coexistence.

Photos: Top left - All student participants, Above - a panel discussion

Meryem Achraf (National Institute of Urban Planning and Urbanism, Rabat, Morocco)
Nicolamaria Coppola (Università degli Studi Roma Tre, Rome, Italy)
In addition to European Sociologist, which has been published by ESA since 1994, the association currently publishes two international peer reviewed journals through Routledge. The first of these, European Societies, has been published since 1994. This journal is currently edited by Michalis Lianos (University of Rouen, France). More recently, ESA’s second publication, the European Journal of Cultural and Political Sociology, was established in 2014. This journal is currently edited by Ricca Edmondson (National University of Ireland, Galway) and Eeva Luhtakallio (University of Tampere, Finland).

Both journals can be directly accessed by over 2100 ESA members as benefit of ESA membership. All members can access these journals through the ESA website’s members’ area.

European Societies

Top Three Articles Downloaded in 2015 from the Last Two Volumes

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Volume (Issue)</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Title of Article</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tr>
<td>16 (2)</td>
<td>Marloes de Lange, Maurice Gethuizen &amp; Maarten H.J. Wolbers</td>
<td>Youth Labour Market Integration Across Europe: The impact of cyclical, structural, and institutional characteristics</td>
<td>572</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 (2)</td>
<td>David Raffe</td>
<td>Explaining National Differences in Education-work Transitions: Twenty years of research on transition systems</td>
<td>351</td>
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<tr>
<td>16 (4)</td>
<td>Sören Petermann &amp; Karen Schönwälder</td>
<td>Immigration and social interaction: Do diverse environments matter?</td>
<td>323</td>
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European Societies - Impact Factor

<table>
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<th>Year</th>
<th>2-year Impact Factor</th>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
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<tr>
<td>2013</td>
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European Journal of Cultural & Political Sociology (EJCPS)

Top Three Articles Downloaded in 2015 from the Last Two Volumes

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<td>1 (1)</td>
<td>Gili S. Drori, Markus A. Höllerer &amp; Peter Walgenbach</td>
<td>Unpacking the globalization of organization: from term, to theory, to analysis</td>
<td>1151</td>
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<td>1 (1)</td>
<td>Pertti Alasuutari &amp; Ali Qadir</td>
<td>Epistemic governance: an approach to the politics of policy-making</td>
<td>742</td>
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Submitting a Manuscript to the EJCPS

The study of culture is the fastest growing area in both European and North American sociology. After years of mild neglect, political sociology is also re-establishing itself as a central plank of the discipline. The European Journal of Cultural and Political Sociology aims to be a forum not so much for these fields of study considered separately, as for any work that explores the relationship between culture and politics through a sound sociological lens.

The journal takes an ecumenical view of ‘culture’: it welcomes articles that address the political setting, resonance or use of any of the arts (literature, art, music etc.), but it is also open to work that construes political phenomena in terms of a more philosophical or anthropological understanding of culture, where culture refers to the most general problem of meaning-formation. As for work that lies between these poles, it might address the relationship between politics and religion in all its forms, political symbolism past and present, styles of political leadership, political communication, the culture of political parties and movements, cultural policy, artists as political agents, and many other related areas.

The journal is not committed to any particular methodological approach, nor will it restrict itself to European authors or material with a European focus. It will carry articles with an historical as well as a topical flavour.

Please submit your article online via the journals ScholarOne™ Manuscript site: https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/recp
At the 12th Conference of the European Sociological Association (ESA) that took place in Prague, Czech Republic in August 2015, seventeen individuals representing universities from across Europe were elected to serve for two years on ESA’s Executive Committee (2015-2017). There are some a couple of old faces that have served as members of past executives, but most are newcomers, elected for the first time. Whilst the names of those serving appear on the association’s website, ESA members rarely get to know the sociologists who work tirelessly to ensure European Sociology maintains its relevance amongst the cacophony of voices that seek to gain influence in a world in which the production of knowledge often is considered secondary to the market-driven forces steering national and European research programmes.

In keeping with past issues of European Sociologist, the following article introduces the members of ESA’s 2015-2017 Executive Committee by asking them four brief questions:

1. What led you to become a sociologist?
2. In which area(s) of sociology are you most interested? Why?
3. Which of your professional activities (publications, research projects, teaching, etc.) are you proudest of? Why? Their responses are listed in alphabetical order.
4. Which knowledge can sociologists offer contemporary society?

The responses of each Executive Committee member are listed alphabetically.

1. What led you to become a sociologist?

I believe it was a combination of my curiosity, good role models and living environment. I went to the university to study philosophy, but later changed my major. It was the beginning of the nineties in Estonia, society around me was changing rapidly and learning theories and methodologies to grasp this change better became really attractive for me. As my graduation thesis about the club-cultures received positive feedback both academically and publicly, it gave me the courage to continue, and my first experience at an international conference convinced me that sociological research is an activity that I would like to be involved in.

2. In which area(s) of sociology are you most interested? Why?

I have always identified myself as a youth researcher, previously especially as a subculture researcher. I became interested in youth cultures when I was young myself and for some reason never lost that interest. Recently, I have been studying youth participation society in a wider sense and I am familiar with problems young people face today. In our society, which is in crisis, in many ways young people tend to be in the most difficult situation. No one can frame their life experiences merely with their own culture and country anymore: young people today share similar problems and are interconnected in several ways. I believe that youth studies could have the greatest importance to impact society and youth issues need to be acknowledged, analysed and solved on a global level. That makes it thrilling and demanding at the same time.

3. Which of your professional activities (publications, research projects, teaching, etc.) are you proudest of? Why?

From my recent work, several things might have had the potential to contribute to the development of youth studies. In 2013, I organized the Nordic Youth Research Symposium in Estonia, which hopefully furthered the international discussion. Together with my colleague I edited the book ‘In search of…’ New methodological Approaches in Youth research, which explores most contemporary ways to understand young people better. I believe the European project with 15 partner countries Memory, Youth, Political Legacy and Civic Engagement, in which I participated, has also had a crucial importance on making sense of young people’s lives and social participation.

4. Which knowledge can sociologists offer contemporary society?

Sociology helps to conceptualize and grasp the world – maybe today, in general terms, we need to know more about the conditions of acceptable organization as well as solidarity in society. Also, globalisation and glocalisation processes are of great importance for making sense of very different spheres of society. Besides, I think sociologists could also contribute in more practical terms if they would be integrated into decision-making processes alongside policymakers.
4. Which knowledge can sociologists offer contemporary society?

Sociology can offer a unique perspective on society from global, regional and local levels and offer comparative insights to the issues our societies face.

2. In which area(s) of sociology are you most interested? Why?

My areas of interest are gender, youth, development, the environment and education because these issues are still very important problem areas.

3. Which of your professional activities (publications, research projects, teaching, etc.) are you proudest of? Why?

All of them are activities separately with pride for me. I spend hours with my students, which keeps me energetic. As for my research, being able to investigate the above problem areas together with a talented research team brings be a great deal of pleasure. Additionally, I feel that our publications are also important in sharing the insights we produce.

4. Which knowledge can sociologists offer contemporary society?

Sociology can offer a unique perspective on society from global, regional and local levels and offer comparative insights to the issues our societies face.

1. What led you to become a sociologist?

I graduated from the Faculty of Geography at Moscow State University where I studied economic and social geography. At that time there were no sociological faculties or departments in the universities, since sociology in the USSR for a long period was claimed as being a ‘bourgeois’ science. However, during my undergarduate studies there was a course on political economy (of course, Marxist) and a group of people interested in the social sciences and research, so I started to think how I may switch to this kind of studies. There was the only the Institute of Sociology in the Academy of sciences, where I could study sociology as postgraduate student. For sociology and sociologists a great change and spirit of renewal came about with perestroika. New inspirations were generated by Professor Vladimir Yadov who became as the leader of the Institution of Sociology at that time, and whose sociological way of thinking and open-minded style was the most attractive.

2. In which area(s) of sociology are you most interested? Why?

I am interested in relations between individuals and society – how private issues and identities relate to wider social structures in the societies under transformation. Comparison with other transforming countries gives many insights. By finding similarities and differences one may reveal something behind data that may generate explanations of particular phenomena in one’s own country. Recently I was involved in comparative studies which focused on the effects of transformation in Russia and other eastern European countries and China, in particular. This addressed questions regarding the roots and nature of individualisation in these type of societies.

3. Which of your professional activities (publications, research projects, teaching, etc.) are you proudest of? Why?

Managing comparative projects with my colleagues from Poland, China and other countries is one part of my work of which I am proud. Besides comparable data and publications there is another good thing: despite of lots of practical difficulties and cultural views, working together in international teams produce an intellectual synergy from participants and it gives you much more understanding of what is being studied.

I also enjoy teaching sociology to students specialised in economics by offering them different perspectives to look at the world they are living and persuading them to think critically and in an interdisciplinary manner. Some of students started to be interested and do, this is very rewarding.

1. What led you to become a sociologist?

I wanted to be a sociologist because, like many of my friends while in high school, I’d enjoy activities in leftist groups. Prior to 1980, Turkey’s political environment made turning to in this profession attractive to me; I wanted to look more analytically social problems I saw around me.

2. In which area(s) of sociology are you most interested? Why?

My areas of interest are gender, youth, development, the environment and education because these issues are still very important problem areas.

3. Which of your professional activities (publications, research projects, teaching, etc.) are you proudest of? Why?

All of them are activities separately with pride for me. I spend hours with my students, which keeps me energetic. As for my research, being able to investigate the above problem areas together with a talented research team brings be a great deal of pleasure. Additionally, I feel that our publications are also important in sharing the insights we produce.

4. Which knowledge can sociologists offer contemporary society?

Critical thinking and a sociological imagination are the most powerful tools of sociologists compared to other social sciences, especially in the days in which we live. The contemporary world needs it, however does not recognise its value much. Knowledge within the frame of dominant discourses is easy to consume, but there is always a space for sociological critics to undermine such constructions in order to reveal other alternatives and new approaches. Sociologists can do more to deconstruct ideological and other stereotypes, to create productive humanist discourse. Sociologists can offer sociological theories theories that can help to discover the hidden causes of what we see on surface of social reality.

Comparative social studies as an experimental research design can contribute to better understanding of variety of societies and causes and consequences of social development.
1. What led you to become a sociologist?

We live in societies that are shaped by vast inequalities. Understanding inequalities requires critical theories and critical empirical research about society so that we are better able to change society towards the better. This is an important task for the social sciences and the reasons why I am interested in this broad field of study.

2. In which area(s) of sociology are you most interested?

I am in general interested in critical theories of society and Marxist-inspired theories because modern society is inherently a general system of the accumulation of various forms of power such as monetary capital, influence, reputation, et cetera. These different types of accumulation tend to come along with various forms of inequality, exploitation, and exclusion. Critical social theory is a key foundation of sociology and of key importance. I am also interested in theorising the role of communication, the media and the Internet in society.

3. Which of your professional activities (publications, research projects, teaching, etc.) are you proudest of? Why?

I do not like the idea that me or any other academic should be professionally proud of something because I am sceptical of the logic of performance, evaluation and celebrity that academia has imported from the world of capitalism. Capitalist and Taylorist logics of accumulation and measurement have changed academia towards the worse and threaten its autonomy. We should reverse this trend and logic and safeguard that universities are independent institutions and spaces for critical thinking, critical knowledge production and critical public debate.

4. Which knowledge can sociologists offer contemporary society?

Sociology in general and therefore also sociology in Europe should understand itself as critical sociology. Critical sociology can offer better understandings and critiques of the problems of contemporary societies, a knowledge base for the praxis needed to find solutions to the many problems our societies face today: economic crisis, wars, environmental devastation, social inequalities, precarious labour and unemployment that affects young people especially, the racist exclusion and treatment of refugees seeking shelter from war in Europe, the EU’s financial-imperialist treatment of Greece that has resulted in the destruction of an entire society, vicious cycles of violence, in which the only response to violence is violence that generates more even more violence as response, the emergence of totalitarian surveillance societies, et cetera. Society faces many challenges. Critical sociology is not the solution, but it can help to create knowledge for a better understanding what is going and offer spaces for reflecting on how to act in response to the multi-layered crises we face.

5. What can sociologists offer contemporary society?

Part of what sociology can offer is encapsulated in the ‘sociological imagination’ that was also part of the theme for the last ESA conference. With this, sociology can offer an interface between various social sciences, the humanities and also natural sciences; just as you can already see in various research networks and at the ESA conferences. While sociologists might not always have the answers to the structural and urgent issues in contemporary society, they tend to have pertinent questions – and they can provide ways of thinking beyond existing social orders.
1. **What led you to become a sociologist?**

I had in fact studied economic geography and demography before I turned my attention to sociology. I obtained my degrees from Charles University in Prague in 1980’s, when rather orthodox Communist Party still ruled the country and when almost all social sciences were under tight ideological control of the regime. In contrast to that, the party ideologues considered the study of internal migration, commuting, or demographic behavior as rather “technical discipline”. After regime change, I started my PhD in political geography. In 1993 I joined the Institute of Sociology which made me a sociologist after two decades.

2. **In which area(s) of sociology are you most interested? Why?**

Owing to my professional background, I am interested in social and socio-spatial inequalities, comparative politics, local and regional governments and their policies, and housing research. These areas seem to combine what I consider interesting to study, substantially relevant, and area still somewhat neglected by both mainstream sociology and mainstream geography. In short, I am interested in how spatial context in which people/local governments live influence their behaviour. In the last years, I am increasingly interested in the study of behaviour which has an important environmental impact and how national/regional conditions influence research and scientific ideas themselves.

3. **Which of your professional activities (publications, research projects, teaching, etc.) are you proudest of? Why?**

I am proudest when I see that any of my professional activities had an impact – be it on scientific or political discussions, or on people. Such an impact reminds me that research is not only fun, but also important for society.

4. **Which knowledge can sociologists offer contemporary society?**

I think that sociologists are particularly good at highlighting the complexities of life and the unintended consequences of our action. We can show why things do not always go as planned, and why humans do not respond to a mechanical approach to logic. Thanks to these capabilities, sociologists can develop solutions that respect human beings with their inherent complexities and that are sensitive to social influences.

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**Tomas Kostelecký**  
Institute of Sociology, Czech Academy of Sciences, Czech Republic

1. **What led you to become a sociologist?**

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4. **Which knowledge can sociologists offer contemporary society?**

The contemporary society is very complex. Yet, even complex societies have to be governed somewhat. I believe that the sociological analysis of the contemporary society (or maybe rather “societies”) can contribute to understanding of what is going on, and, hence, to decrease the level of risk and insecurity with which the governments and regulators on various levels of governance (from local to global) make their decisions.
1. What led you to become a sociologist?

Actually, I must say that I did not choose to become a sociologist... it just happened to me in the early 1990s when I was studying political science at the University of Florence (Italy). That was a particularly hard phase of the Italian contemporary history, since our society had been dramatically affected by the homicides of two popular anti-mafia judges: Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino. That year – it was 1992 – I had the chance to attend, among others, the class of Applied Sociology fully devoted to the sociological analysis of the mafia phenomenon and its effects on the overall society and culture. It was during those lessons that I realized that sociology and its research tools could represent a very useful resource for providing, or at least attempt to provide, some explanations and answers to complex problems affecting the everyday life of people. Since then, I have always tried to engage in an action-oriented social research.

2. In which area(s) of sociology are you most interested? Why?

After several years spent investigating the most hidden part of our society – such as organised crime and criminal markets –, during the past decade I have been particularly focusing on both theoretical and historical aspects of the sociological thought – since my teaching activities are mostly related to the history of sociology – and empirical research related to migration, gender studies, and the various declinations of identity, recognition and otherness within European societies. In this regard, my latest preferred field of research deals with the struggle for recognition by Muslim minorities, especially women, in the private as well as public sphere in Europe. This interest was the outcome of my major research on Islamophobia after 11/9 that I carried out in the early 2000's, as part of my PhD research, which led me to observe and meet several young women living in Europe who were trying to perform and, in way, invent a different way of being Muslim within Western societies.

3. Which of your professional activities (publications, research projects, teaching, etc.) are you proudest of? Why?

Teaching is probably among my preferred activities, since this offers me the opportunity to establish very close contacts and discussions with a wide audience – my students – who is always very stimulating and challenging. Most of them come from Naples and the surrounding area: one of the most wonderful Italian southern cities, but also one of the most complicated one from a socio-economic perspective due to wide asymmetries which affect the society (social and economic deprivation in various areas and, most notably, the presence of a strongly rooted criminal organization, i.e. Camorra, which actually heavily affects several spheres of the everyday life). However, these conflicts and contradictions are also among my most precious sources of sociological imagination and academic commitment. If I have to indicate the activity I am proudest of, I would say the coordination of a Master's degree programme related to the analysis of organized crime phenomena and the social reuse of assets seized to mafia, launched few years ago by the Department of Political Sciences of the University of Naples, which hopefully will help in providing a proper cultural background to young people who want to concretely operate in this interesting field.

4. Which knowledge can sociologists offer contemporary society?

I think that sociologists can be of some help in attempting to disseminate as widely as possible their peculiar capacity of linking the particular to the general, the personal experience to the wider society – what Charles Wright Mills called some years ago the “sociological imagination”. In this regard, sociology, I think, forces each of us to establish an ongoing dialogue with ourselves and the others and to question readily-made explanations, simplifications, prejudices, and common sense. In think that sociology may be a powerful tool which can enable people to provide sense to their experiences and become makers and protagonists of their own life.
1. What led you to become a sociologist?

I am an economist by training but found sociology better suited to ask the right questions as to how societies function, what their main problems and challenges are and how to analyze those with appropriate theories and methods.

2. In which area(s) of sociology are you most interested? Why?

My focus lies on classical and modern social theory, social structure and social inequality with respect to economic, political and cultural sociology. Why? I am interested in how people find a place in society, what kind and amount of life-chances as well as resources they dispose of and how they lead their life. The relationship of life-chances and the conduct of life in the context of value-spheres and life-orders (Max Weber) as well as the habitus and practices of persons and status groups (Bourdieu) defines my current research-programme.

3. Which of your professional activities (publications, research projects, teaching, etc.) are you proudest of? Why?

Publications: (with Steffen Sigmund, eds.), *The Max-Weber-Handbook* (in German, Stuttgart: Metzler 2014) apropos Max Weber’s 150th anniversary bringing together the analytical knowledge of a Weberian research programme we have today by well-known Weberian scholars. “Pierre Bourdieu. A systematic introduction” (in German Berlin: Suhrkamp 2014) which characterizes the entire oeuvre of Bourdieu and its rationale. Research projects: “Life-chances and the Conduct of Life of different Status Groups in Germany today”. Teaching: My theory-courses and the felicitous experience that in every new generation of students genuine sociologists are born (or made). Plus the fact that the many doctoral students I supervised all found a full-time job, well-paid and on a life-time basis which sounds like a miracle in the labour market of social sciences.

4. Which knowledge can sociologists offer contemporary society?

Mechanisms of how societies function; the making (and minimizing) of power asymmetries and forms of social inequality; intellectual knowledge of self-reflection pertaining to one’s own self and one’s own society; the critical foundation of constitutive elements of a good life and the prerequisites for a successful conduct of life. Sociology has to be a radical, analytical, critical and public discipline in order to be useful for society. In short: Sociology is the mirror of society!
1. What led you to become a sociologist?

Even from my adolescent years I was interested in understanding social issues and I had dreams of changing the world to create a better social reality with more justice and solidarity. My first degree in Political Sciences opened a window, among others, for sociology which was one of my favorite courses. At that time my first choice was a career in Public International Law and Human Rights but certain obstacles, due to the political regime of that period, and thanks to the influence of my Professor of Social Law, Social Policy and Sociology (Gregory Kassimatis, President of Athens Academy at that time), changed my plans. He offered me a university position in sociology. Since then sociology has captured my interest and I have been devoted to this discipline.

2. In which area(s) of sociology are you most interested? Why?

My educational background in political sciences, law, economics and sociology influenced my sociological interest in a wide range of areas during my academic life. Gender, economic sociology and the sociology of work and organizations were the main areas of my interest. Currently, besides gender issues I am mostly interested in (sociological) theory because every area in sociology draws on theory. Another area of my recent interest is the sociology of law, an area very little developed by sociologists in Greece, on which I have some ideas for research projects.

3. Which of your professional activities (publications, research projects, teaching, etc.) are you proudest of? Why?

It is difficult to single out these activities, because they are closely related. Teaching is for me the most valuable experience and I am very proud of the achievements of my former students, especially the ones who have chosen to have a career in sociology. In this context, I feel satisfied in my work as Institutional and Academic Coordinator in designing and organizing at European programme titled “Gender Equality and Employment: an interdisciplinary approach” at the University of Piraeus. This has enriched the knowledge and experiences of students and of other members of the academic community with a gender perspective. I would also like to mention my involvement for the foundation of Professional Associations in Greece, especially the Hellenic Sociological Society (HSS) and the organization, when I was President, of the International Conference of HSS, which gave me the opportunity to have some discussions with Ulrich Beck that I will always remember fondly. It is difficult for a writer to say “I am proud of what I have written” because writing is a work in progress which gives you satisfaction the time you finish a book, a paper or a research report. Finally I feel honored for having been elected to the Executive Committee of ESA and I would like to thank my colleagues for their support.

4. Which knowledge can sociologists offer contemporary society?

Sociology provides the tools, both conceptual and methodological, to better understand the complexity and the various dimensions of contemporary social reality. Sociology also may influence the efforts to solve or diminish social problems, especially during periods of crisis, aspects of which many societies face today. Sociology seems to be the discipline that can reveal the complexity of social phenomena by advancing the dialogue among the social sciences and promoting an interdisciplinary approach for the study of these phenomena.
### Marta Soler
University of Barcelona
Spain

1. **What led you to become a sociologist?**

   As junior researcher, I participated in the monthly seminar "With the Book on Hand" debating the most relevant books of social theory, like "Economy and Society" or "Theory of Communicative Action". I could link those readings to the research I was then doing in a deprived area of Barcelona, on how working class low literate people read classic literature, listened to opera and became community leaders. I became a sociologist to contribute to the development of social theories that can help the transformation of societies. In this way, societies support our work, as I wrote in an article published recently by *Nature*.

2. **In which area(s) of sociology are you most interested? Why?**

   My main interest is on the dialogic democracy that overcomes inequalities. Actually, the social sciences were born with democracies and remain linked to them. The work at my research center (the Centre of Research in Theories and Practices that Overcome Inequalities) focuses on successful actions that lead to reduced inequalities. Dialogic democracy is at the basis of these actions, as well as at the basis of the communicative methodology of the research we carry out to identify and create them. Citizens are increasingly asking us to contribute to the societal goals they are democratically deciding.

3. **Which of your professional activities (publications, research projects, teaching, etc.) are you proudest of? Why?**

   I am now publishing a book with Springer explaining the way my research center is creating sociological theories and doing research. Besides what I just said about dialogic democracy, the book also tells how seminars "with the book on hand" help to easily identify and overcome the inevitable mistakes when theories are individually created. For instance, in a previous work with the philosopher of language John Searle, I identified Habermas’ mistake in understanding Searle’s speech acts theory and created, as a result, a communicative acts theory.

4. **Which knowledge can sociologists offer contemporary society?**

   Sociologists can develop the knowledge that can help overcome the major problems societies face, and thus enable social and political impact. For instance, I now coordinate SOLIDUS, a H2020 research project about solidarity in Europe during and after crisis. Rather than focusing on eroded solidarities or mistrust among Europeans, the study identifies the actions that create successful conditions for solidarity and living together. Sociology, today, can offer the best research about possibility, and then contribute to society with scientific evidence of the social impacts already accomplished through such research.

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### Helena Serra
New University of Lisbon
Portugal

1. **What led you to become a sociologist?**

   It’s a difficult question. I had the chance to choose to be a sociologist. Very early I had interest in examining human society within larger social, political and economic contexts. Study the groups, cultures, institutions and the behaviour of human beings gives us a greater understanding of human society. Also the use of results from research, by sociologists, to shape and revise public policies is very interesting; it gives the chance for sociologists to influence efforts to solve social problems.

2. **In which area(s) of sociology are you most interested? Why?**

   The sociology of organisations, the sociology of professions and the sociology of health. I like to link these the areas. Why? I’m interested in understanding the interrelations between organisations and their societal situations, assimilating diverse contributions from other disciplines.

3. **Which of your professional activities (publications, research projects, teaching, etc.) are you proudest of? Why?**

   It’s very difficult to choose one of these professional activities. In my point of view, all of them are related. The outputs from research activity gives rise to publications and is transmitted to students and so on. I couldn’t imagine working only in one of these activities.

4. **Which knowledge can sociologists offer contemporary society?**

   The scientific study of society (or sociology), because of its bearing upon many of the issues of the present world, assumes a great importance. Sociology can provide a body of knowledge that will enable us to control the conditions of social life and improve them.
1. **What led you to become a sociologist?**

I started my sociological studies in the 1980’s in the so called communist bloc in Eastern Europe. So there is no wonder that critical theory’s skepticism toward technocratic governance inspired me decisively. It bothered me that the rule of scientific experts and rational-legal bureaucracy could be effectively legitimised by nationalist ideologies. I am afraid that my concerns are not outdated.

2. **In which area(s) of sociology are you most interested? Why?**

Social theory as well as cultural sociology fascinate me because both keep sociological thinking open toward modes of understanding that do not imitate the methods of the natural sciences. I do not mean to disqualify the “exact method” rather to stress the importance of ethics, aesthetics and normative thinking for sociology. Perhaps this has something to do with the idea that it is precarious to downgrade dilemmas about the good life to technical problems for experts. What more, besides demonstrating the possibility of dialogue between sociology and the humanities, cultural sociologists also produce captivating empirical studies.

3. **Which of your professional activities (publications, research projects, teaching, etc.) are you proudest of? Why?**

I am delighted to keep an eye on my former doctoral students. To realise that years of working together were worthwhile because mutual understandings always make me happy. I wrote a book on transnational migration, my papers usually deal with theoretically pertinent issues related to identity formation.

4. **Which knowledge can sociologists offer contemporary society?**

There are some questions natural science can answer, but there are also questions that cannot be adequately framed and answered from the perspective of natural science. Nevertheless, there are a multitude of answers to these latter question and we cannot delegate the responsibility for accepting or rejecting them to any experts. We can lend a hand to anyone in their effort to understand the world.

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1. **What led you to become a sociologist?**

Pure interest. On the one hand, there was the personal experience of moving back and forth between different social circles that led my early interests from mathematics and philosophy to something “social”, such as sociology or psychology. In addition, intellectually, it has been sociology that introduced to me a new mode of thinking that was far beyond what I had learnt or could learn elsewhere. Sociology invites us to think deeply about ourselves under the conditions of modernity, but unlike philosophy, for example, it furthermore offers the tools for analysing the conditions that underlie our self-understanding.

2. **In which area(s) of sociology are you most interested? Why?**

Historically-based theory. For C.W. Mills individual lives reflect societal transformation. If you like to study (the impact of the Great Recession on) the lives of individuals, it can’t work without theory. Theory raises the big questions, such as the transformation of sovereignty in the current global era. It provides guidance in the face of sociology’s internal fragmentation. It pervades the discipline by providing conceptual tools for sociological research. The good thing with theory is that it emerges everywhere in sociology. Each area in sociology needs and each fact calls for theory. We all draw on theory for building our arguments.

3. **Which of your professional activities (publications, research projects, teaching, etc.) are you proudest of? Why?**

Concerning ESA, that shoulders the responsibility for a public good and a more active support of sociologists, I would only be satisfied if our current Executive Committee succeeds in making the first step, that is making ESA’s organisational backbone a more stable and proactive place.

Concerning my research, I have been lucky that my book on the “life-world”, applying historical epistemology to phenomenology, resulted in a new view to see things, that seems to be developing a lasting impact in the field. However, in practical regard, teaching matters most and here I am really glad that the interaction works quite well.

4. **Which knowledge can sociologists offer contemporary society?**

It is time for sociologists! Before the Great Depression, most state jobs were designed for lawyers. After 1929, the state began to hire economists in great numbers. But now, after the Great Recession a third type of experts is needed: sociologists. Only sociology offers the capacity to tackle the big questions without narrowing its view down to one side of a multidimensional coin, e.g. the economy or politics. In regard of migration or the “European” crisis, only sociology is able to put refugee and capital flows into the relevant bigger picture of imbalances between countries and out-of-control inequality in countries.
Introduction

At first glance the Nordic countries looks like a sanctuary for sociology, well-developed welfare states, many welfare state professionals and historical a progressive attitude towards many of the central areas in sociology from social work, youth and children, women, education and so forth. And looking at both Norway and Sweden we find strong sociological disciplinary communities who have contributed to international sociology. We just have to think about sociologists like Robert Erikson, Gudmund Hernes, Richard Swedberg, Jon Elster, Walter Kopi or Göran Therborn – just to name a few. What is striking is that among the many recognised Nordic sociologists there is not a single Danish sociologist. Well, what about people like Gøste Esping-Andersen or Åge Bøttger Sørensen, some would ask. Yes, both were educated in Copenhagen in the late 1960s – Bøttger Sørensen was the first sociologist from University of Copenhagen –, but both earned their PhD in the US and established their careers detached from Danish sociology and academia. So, where are the Danish sociologists? And how can we understand the current state of Danish sociology?

In my new book about Danish sociology I account for the last hundred years plus of sociology in Denmark. Here I will try to both give an impression of the ‘state of affairs’ of Danish sociology as well as providing some food of thought about the conditions of sociological knowledge production and how we can think about our relations with both other scientific disciplines as well as extra academic institutions and interests. It is my hope that this little piece about sociology in a small Nordic country can thus contribute to the level of reflexivity in our discipline.

The history of Danish sociology until 1945 looks very similar to the discipline’s development in other western European countries, yet after 1945 the story changes. In the book I develop an analytical framework analysing the changes in the mental and social structures of the discipline as well as its relations to other fields in order to understand the development of sociology. In the following account I will try to follow that framework.

Early Danish social science

Who was the first Danish sociologist? When was Danish sociology founded? Such questions and their corresponding answers are typical for introductions to various national sociologies. However, more often than not these answers are part of struggles for defining national traditions and presenting the position of contemporary scholars, theories or research projects in a better light, rather than providing insights into the complex historical processes that have shaped sociology in different countries. Thus, in order to understand such historical processes, it is of immense importance that we not only account for ones that succeeded, but also the failed attempts, the challengers, detours, conflicts and compromises. In other words, we need to analyse and study the history and structure of sociology, just as we would study any other social phenomenon. So where do we begin to study the history of Danish sociology?

Of course, there have been attempts to map and account for society and social processes that extend way back into history, but none of these early scholars would call themselves ‘sociologists’ or understand their enterprise in disciplinary terms. However, like in many other Western countries, social science disciplines began forming in Denmark during the late 19th century. Thus, we find the first introduction to sociology published by Claudius Wilkens (1844 – 1929) in 1881. And in many ways Wilkens’ path characterises one of two types of trajectory for the first generation of Danish ‘sociologists’. Trained in philosophy he turned his attention to the emerging sociology inspired by Herbert Spencer, yet despite international recognition Wilkens spent many years teaching as Private Docent before at a late age becoming professor in Philosophy and Sociology at the University of Copenhagen in 1897. After his retirement in 1918 the position in sociology was abolished. The second type of early sociologist followed a more economic or statistical and social policy oriented path. The scholars in this group were mainly trained in economics or statistics and followed a trajectory combining academic research, public policy and political advocacy regarding ‘the social question’. Examples of scholars representing this position and trajectory could be Marcus Rubin (1854-1923) and...
Poul Svejstrup (1848–1911). Both trained in economics and both followed a career path as civil servants, but at the same time they engaged in various public commissions and in early social surveys shedding light on the social problems of their contemporary society. Inspired by social reform movements in Germany and the UK, they imported and applied new statistical tools to public statistics and data obtained from questionnaires to document the social condition. The first two or three generations of sociologists did in many ways follow these two patterns of trajectories, but with no establishment of positions or educational programmes in sociology.

Growth and decline
Sociology first gained a real foothold at the newly established university in Aarhus. At the Department of Economics, the German émigré Theodor Geiger (1891-1952) was appointed professor in 1938 in close competition with Danish candidates. Geiger had been in Denmark since 1933 and contributed with an extensive introduction to sociology in 1939. Geiger’s time in Aarhus was very productive. During the 1940s he published a number of both empirical and theoretical studies on law, social structure and advertising and economic competition alongside engaging himself in the building up international sociological institutions and journals after the war. And Geiger could have been a starting point for an institutionalisation of sociology in Denmark. However, after his early death in 1952 Geiger’s professorship was turned in to a professorship in economics, the funding Geiger had obtained was returned to the foundations and the money obtained by his research assistant for updating the sociological literature was used on economic literature.

In Copenhagen the situation wasn’t much better. Since the late 1930s there had been an obvious need for improving the university’s capacities in sociological research. Sociology was a part of the requirements in the economics programme, but it had long been neglected. It took more than ten years from the first steps being taken in the years after the war until the Norwegian sociologist Kaare Svalastoga (1914-1997) was appointed professor. This prolonged process was marked by numerous troubles from conflicts about allocation of the professorship, relevant qualification of the applicants, applicants declining the position and in the end a public professor competition. In the end the professorship went to Svalastoga partly because he had acted as teacher in sociology since the early 1950 with some success. With Svalastoga the University of Copenhagen found a productive sociological researcher specialised in the latest quantitative methods from the United States and in social stratification, but the university had also hired a stubborn positivist without connections to Danish academia or to the Danish state bureaucracy and no capabilities in institution building.

From the late 1950s Danish higher education expanded and so did sociology – and not only at the university. In 1959 the National Centre for Social Research (SFI) was established and at the Copenhagen Business School sociologists and broad minded researchers engaged in sociological discussions. In the 1959 the first students enrolled in a programme in sociology at University of Copenhagen and in 1964 a professor in cultural sociology was appointed at the Faculty of Humanities, a programme in cultural sociology was introduced, and more sociology professors were hired. The number of students exploded and a number of more or less qualified researchers with different backgrounds were hired at the Department of Sociology under Svalastoga. All in all, the future looked promising for sociology in 1967. However, twenty years later these two sociology departments were being dismantled and the sociology degree programmes had been closed by the ministry of education.

The years from the late 1960s to the late 1980s were, for sociology, marked by a growth in students and loud, irreconcilable conflicts between both students and staff, between different fractions of younger sociologists, and between sociologically inclined institutions and the state bureaucracy. The subjects of these conflicts ranged from disagreements about student involvement and facilities to conflicts about theory and method to the means and ends of sociological research. In this way the conflict was very similar to what happened in other western countries during the late 1960s and early 1970s. However, the consequences for sociology were much more severe in Denmark than in any other comparable country.

The conflicts between sociologically inclined institutions and state bureaucracy first came about in the late 1970s following the establishment in 1972 of new a university in Roskilde. Here it came to very loud confrontation between students, the young leftist faculty and the state. Despite resistance, the composition of educational programmes was changed with the closing of the social work programme in favour for a programme in business studies after a yearlong conflict between students, teachers and the ministry of education.

The clashes were no less severe at the University of Copenhagen. In 1976 the Ministry of Education reduced the number of students admitted to the sociological programmes dramatically turning sociology in to small programme when compared with the other social science programmes at the same university (and in Denmark). Alongside this economic challenge the two sociology departments were haunted by internal conflicts and lacked well established and well connected professors to represent sociology in struggles at the university and with the ministry. They were in other words severely weakened with little internal coordination and little support from within the university that in the early 1980s faced a
strong critique from the ministry. From the point of view of the ministry the sociology departments had three problems: the quality of the education they offered (the employment of their candidates) and the capacity and the quality of the research they produced. In 1986 the ministry decided to stop admission to the sociology programmes, demanding a ‘restructuring’ of the departments. Thus the sociology departments had in ten years gone from admitting more than 100 students a year to being administratively closed.

The staff at the two departments, who were mostly younger sociologist recruited in the early 1970s, tried to avoid redundancy and struggled to maintain the sociological environments they had built up in the 1970s and early 1980s. The process of closing and reopening the Department of Sociology at the University of Copenhagen took more than four years – much longer than any of the involved parties had imagined when the conflict started in 1986. The process involved the intervention of Harvard professor Aage Bøttger Sørensen, first as an ‘external’ referee deciding in favour of the visions coming from the ministry and later as broker between the sociologists, their trade union and the Ministry of Education. The end of the story was that in 1990 the two sociology departments closed and a new one opened. Former staff had to apply for their positions - some did, but only four were recruited. Many didn’t apply and got jobs at other universities in Denmark and Sweden. But it wasn’t 1994 that a new degree programme in sociology admitted students. There was in other words an almost ten-year long interruption to sociological education in Denmark and the Danish sociological community learned the hard way that university research and education must also be accountable to the state even in a liberal democracy like Denmark. Since then, Danish sociology has re-emerged under this constraint.

Reestablishment
In the past 25 years sociology has re-emerged and been re-institutionalised in Denmark. Overall Danish sociologists have followed two major strategies in legitimising themselves and the knowledge they produce. First of all, they followed an academic oriented strategy focused on building up academic credibility and relations to other disciplines and academic institutions. On the other hand, sociologists followed a policy oriented strategy focused on building up relations to various non-academic interests and institutions. The concrete form and weighing of the two strategies varied between institutions according to the local configuration of other disciplines, academic traditions and in relation to non-academic audiences. But at all academic institutions sociologists (and other social researchers) navigated institutional environments marked by ‘neoliberal’ or new public management reforms to higher education similar to the changes sweeping through higher education all over Europe.

In the following I will discuss three institutions where sociological research and education was re-institutionalised in the 1990s and 2000s in order to show how different local configurations provided room for different strategies and forms of legitimising. There are of cause sociologists producing sociological research at other institutions, but these three contain larger populations of sociologists and illustrate the different local expressions of the two general strategies.

The reorganised Department of Sociology at University of Copenhagen followed a loudly voiced strategy focused on re-establishing the credibility of sociology as an ‘ordinary’ discipline among social sciences. In the words, the new head of department at the Department of Sociology would focused on ‘general sociology’ on an international level. This strategy was expressed in research and in the organisation of education by the stressing the importance of on the one hand research methods – especially quantitative methods – and on the other classical sociological theory – especially those not associated with Marxist theory – as the corner stones of the new department. However, from the middle of the 1990s the department simultaneously worked on building up relations to governmental research institutions and different parts of the welfare state bureaucracy through different research projects and post-doctoral training, and in this way it followed a more policy oriented strategy that ensured resources for research in the central areas of the welfare state along with opening up job markets to its graduates. Nonetheless, a ‘general’ and ‘academic’ sociology has remained the dominant strategy for legitimising the department.

In was not only at the University of Copenhagen that a discipline oriented sociology emerged in the 1990s. At Aalborg University – established in the 1970s as a transdisciplinary university – sociology was established in 1997 with the opening of the second Danish sociology programme and the first outside the University of Copenhagen. Here sociology and sociologists had played important roles in the social science program from the middle of the 1970s onwards, especially in providing courses in theory and methods. In contrast to other social science disciplines, the sociologists at Aalborg had not strived to form discipline oriented programmes or departments. But in the early 1990s sociologists began offering courses and specialisations in sociology and building up alliances both at Aalborg University and with people and institutions outside the university in order to ensure support for a sociology programme. This sociology degree programme was established at the Department of Social Work and in the years following its creation the old rivalry between social work and sociology was played out here. Who should serve as support-subject to whom? With the establishment of sociological research programmes and research groups the sociological environment slowly distanced itself from social work and took up a form of cohabitation.

However, in most places sociologists did not establish distinct disciplinary programmes. Here the sociologists

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at Roskilde University serve as an example of how they worked out strategies to establish themselves at cross-disciplinary institutions and often in departments dominated by other disciplines. Since the closing of the social work program in the early 1980s, there had been the desire for a sociology or ‘soft’ social science programme at Roskilde University, and in 1994 the social science program admitted its first students. Regarding research, the sociologists had to balance demands from disciplinary oriented political scientists conducting research into local government, growing demands for external funding and collaboration, and the critical tradition of Roskilde University. The sociologists thus embarked on research on empowerment, the organisation of local social work, civil society and marginalisation – all areas that could enter into dialogue with their political science colleagues and competitors and which attracted funding from municipalities, ministries and foundations.

Sociologists followed these strategies at many other places from business schools through cross-disciplinary university departments to government research institutes. On the one hand evoking the ‘classical heritage’ of sociological theory and on the other employing its fact producing techniques in the service of different ministries, municipalities and civil society organisations to build up relations and the credibility of the discipline.

Perspectives
In the past twenty years Danish sociology has gone from being almost excluded from the academic landscape to a situation whereby sociology and sociologists are well recognised and institutionalised with several departments, educational programmes, a national journal and yearly conferences. However, the story of Danish sociology reminds us of the fragile configuration of sociology. Even in societies like the Nordic welfare states, academic freedom is relative and sociology must constantly affirm its usefulness to powerful interests in society. To obtain some degree of freedom sociology and sociologists have had to position themselves strategically in relation to both other academics as well as political interests.

Looking beyond national issues and the Danish sociological landscape, the story of sociology in Denmark raises questions for the European community of sociologists about how to relate to powerful political institutions. On the one hand it reminds us that academic freedoms and institutions cannot be taken for granted but are something that we need to strive for continuously. At a European level, negotiations about the implementation of Horizon 2020 remind us of this. Here, the usefulness and legitimacy of the social sciences – especially critically inclined and engaged social science – has been questioned by powerful societal interests. In situations like this, we need to follow a double-edged strategy, insisting on the one hand that the huge challenges Europe faces form migration and unemployment to global warming and political conflict are not solved with technological fixes, but require social scientific explanation and political and sociological answers that take moral, cultural, democratic and economic conflicts and dilemmas seriously. On the other we need to insist that one of the core values of the European social model is the autonomy of science. Thus, we need to successfully argue for sufficient funding and demand that independent academic institutions be supported at a European level also.
Indian Sociology meets ESA

At the invitation of the Indian Sociological Society (ISS), the European Sociological Association (ESA) and the ISS have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on December 27th, 2015 in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India. According to the document both parties commit themselves “to seek ways and means to increase co-operation and discussion between their organizations and between sociologists in Europe and India” (cf. MoU on the ESA website). On the occasion of signing the MoU, Frank Welz (ESA’s President) interviewed his colleague Anand Kumar (President of the ISS).

(ESA) The theme of your current 41st All-India Sociological Conference is Development, Marginalization and People’s Movements. On campus, we visited the Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (www.kiss.ac.in) that is empowering indigenous children from the hinterlands of India including tribal groups by providing free education from Kindergarten to Post-Graduate studies with vocational and extracurricular training, free lodging and boarding for 25,000 students. Ms. Medha Patkar, a very well-known social and environmental activist, offered the inaugural speech. Is Indian Sociology deeply anchored in society and or has this anchorage just been the aim of your ISS presidency?

(ES) You often taught at European universities and you invited ESA to sign the Memorandum, why is it interesting for Indian Sociology to maintain ties to European colleagues?

(ES) Finally, the same question the other way, what would you recommend to European sociological debates or intellectual culture to possibly learn from Indian sociology?

(ES) One of the major difficulties for European sociology is language. Your conference accepts papers in English and Hindi but there are dozens of further languages in India. How does Indian Sociology cope with the language problem?

(ES) It is true that the English language is the major channel of communication among the Indian sociologists. Knowing the value of Indian languages in understanding the Indian society and its complexities, we also have a number of regional associations which conduct their activities, including journal publications and conferences in the regional languages without denying the value of English as a medium of scholarly work.

(ES) Your conference attracted more than 2000 sociologists from all over the country. Nevertheless, my impression is that the influential figures in Indian Sociology stem from the metropolitan universities such as JNU New Delhi, Delhi University or the Mumbai Indian Institute of Technology. Is there a center-periphery hegemony in Indian Sociology?

(ES) Indian sociology is in direct dialogue with Indian society and polity since independence. Our engagement in understanding the grammar of Indian society started during the colonial days in response to the colonial construction of Indian realities. It became more India-centric through triple threats about the village India, the caste system, and modernization processes since our becoming a sovereign and democratic republic from 1950 onwards. But the concern about decoding the intertwining of development, marginalization and peoples’ movements is a recent focus emerging from the visible consequences of the paradigm shift in favour of liberalization, privatization and globalization inaugurated in 1990s. It is true that getting the ISS national convention inaugurated by an activist-leader like Medha Patkar may be a unique initiative, but I believe that there is immense value in promoting an interface between committed activists and concerned sociologists.

(ES) You often taught at European universities and you invited ESA to sign the Memorandum, why is it interesting for Indian Sociology to maintain ties to European colleagues?

(ES) Every student of sociology in India recognizes that the roots of sociology are located in European academic traditions. Similarly, all major European universities and institutes have sociologists who are engaged in understanding Indian society and culture. It is another matter that the knowledge of sociological classics written in German, French, Spanish, etcetera, have been accessed by us through their English translations. The signing of a MoU with the European Sociological Association now provides us with much needed channel for sustained and closer cooperation, for joint initiatives to enrich sociology.

(ES) Finally, the same question the other way, what would you recommend to European sociological debates or intellectual culture to possibly learn from Indian sociology?

(ES) We have inherited a legacy of the prominence of metropolitan centres of higher learning in nearly all disciplines of knowledge. The central universities are another source of better facilities for teaching and research in the social sciences. But the Indian Sociological Society’s activities, including the Research Committees, the Managing Committee, and national conferences are carried out by scholars from all parts of the country without any hegemonic role played by sociologists based at the metropolitan institutions.

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There is a language divide in international sociology. How does Slovenian sociology cope with that?

The fact that all important sociology text production (books and journals) is published in English (and to a smaller degree in the French and German languages also) creates many problems for sociology in small languages such as Slovene. Apart from that there is also a bibliometric problem that is created through the publication in journals in mostly these languages. This causes important obstacle to the normal development of our discipline. Namely, our social problems seem uninteresting for international sociological production and in many ways areas stay under researched as publishing on them in our own journals is not rewarded in a way that counts in processes of academic promotion or research funding.

Which are the main problems Slovenian sociology is coping with?

A lack of awareness of the importance of basic sociological knowledge (and knowledge of social sciences in general) in society in general contributes to the feeling that what is needed is practical, economic and technical knowledge that will immediately solve all the problems of the society.

Diminishing of the core sociological knowledge production at the expense of “market” interests and “new”, “special” and small topics is also a serious problem.

Please offer me one suggestion that ESA could do for sociology in smaller countries.

I would suggest to ESA to be more open to topics and problems that are important for these countries. ESA should also offer a support to collaboration and exchange between the sociological communities of small countries.

In November 2015 the Slovene Sociological Association (SSA) celebrated its 50th Anniversary in Ljubljana. On this occasion, Milica Antić Gaber (President of the SSA) has been interviewed by Frank Welz (ESA’s President).

Congratulations on your birthday, Milica! Today we have to celebrate the positive things. Considering the present, of which activities or contributions of Slovenian sociology are you most proud?

In relation of sociology and Slovene society there are several important contributions to be underlined. The most important contribution of generations of founding fathers and mothers (in 1960s and 1970s) of sociology as an academic discipline in socialist times in Slovenia (and Yugoslavia) was bringing in to the forefront the importance of social sciences and sociology for enabling insights in the development of society with the aim: to improve the quality of life of the citizens. With this in mind they collaborated closely with the then decision-makers at different levels. The important research topics of that time were: the role of religion, urbanisation and importance of the public opinion.

The important contribution of the generations that followed (end of 1970s and 1980s) was the critical questioning of the development in then socialist state – lack of democratic political liberties and grooving inequalities that proved to be the main source of future disintegration of the country.

Sociological knowledge in the last two decades has contributed a lot to the formation of relatively well developed subsystems of our society – from political structures to social wellbeing.

All in all, sociology constantly opens new and important social issues, that after are often transformed into political issues. It supports the burning issues of marginalized groups and their emancipatory potential.

Now, second, looking back over 50 years and considering your current conference theme – Sociology between Producing Knowledge and Shaping Society –, has Slovene Sociology succeeded in shaping society or did historical changes succeed in shaping Slovene sociology?

There was definitely a mutual relationship between Slovene sociology and Slovene society. On the one hand as I described earlier, during some critical periods sociology did play an important role in shaping society, but on the other hand historical changes have influenced Slovene sociology in a way that it opened up to new areas of social inquiry, new special fields of research, new theoretical overviews, etcetera.

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European Sociological Association (ESA) & Italian Sociological Association (AIS) Joint Conference

From memories to the future. Collective memories and horizons of expectations in contemporary Europe, Naples, June 4th to 5th, 2015.

From June 4th to 5th, 2015, the Department of Political Sciences, University of Naples “Federico II” hosted the ESA-AIS joint Conference “From memories to the future. Collective memories and horizons of expectations in contemporary Europe”, organized with the participation of the Labex “Le passés dans le présent”, Université Paris Ouest Nanterre; the Art & Humanities Research Council’s “Care for the Future” research programme, University of Exeter; the Departments of Social Sciences and Economics and Statistics, University “Federico II”, Naples; the Department of Human and Social Sciences, University “L’Orientale”, Naples; and the Department of Political and Social Sciences, University of Calabria, Rende.

The conference was aimed at exploring a number of issues related to the ways in which memories are influenced by the current interests and plans of individuals and groups, and the ways in which the future can be anticipated in the imagination and concretely shaped in action depending on memories themselves. Lectures and papers were focused on the connections existing between the ways in which we represent our past and our horizons of expectations (both from a theoretical and an empirical point of view) and the new generations in Europe. In particular, a focal point of interest was how representations of the recent past merge with the expectations developed by these generations.

The conference has been opened by a joint introduction by Carmen Leccardi (ESA President) and Paolo Jedlowski (AIS vice-President).

The list of guest speakers in the Plenary Sessions included: Barbara Adam (Cardiff University, UK), Giuliana Mandich (University of Cagliari, Italy), Roberto Poli (University of Trento, Italy), Anna Lisa Tota (University Roma Tre, Italy) and John Urry (Lancaster University, UK).

The list of selected speakers for the Special Sessions included Gabriele Balbi (USI, Switzerland) and Simone Natale (Humboldt University, Germany), Karina Horsti (University of Jyväskylä, Finland), Carlos Lopez Galviz (University of London, UK), Barbara Pabjan (University of Wroclaw, Poland).

During the Conference there were eight Parallel sessions on the following topics: (i) Social theory, (ii) Public memories and public representations of the future in Europe, (iii) Conflicts, Migrations, gender differences and generational dynamics, (iv) Working through the past, (v) Postcolonial memories, postcolonial futures, (vi) Social movements, (vii) Urban landscapes, (viii) Social imaginary, daily life, technologies and innovations.

The call for papers to be presented in the parallel sessions received around eighty proposals from eleven different European countries. Of these, forty-six papers were accepted.

Some of the papers have been published in “Futuri”, 6, 2015. Further publications are in progress, including a volume which will be edited by Paolo Jedlowski and Carmen Leccardi (contacts with Policy Press are ongoing).

The organization of the conference was seen as very positive, with high satisfaction amongst the participants both in regard to the general level of hospitality and the quality of lectures, papers and debates within the sessions. In this respect, we wish to thank the Scientific and the Organizing Boards of the Conference, the Department of Political Sciences, University of Naples, and the colleagues Maria Camelia Agodi (former member of ESA Executive Committee) and Monica Massari (currently member of ESA Executive Committee for their wonderful work in organizing the meeting.)
PhD Student Award for the Best Research Paper in the Sociology of the Arts (RN-02)

Research Network 02 is delighted to announce the results of the second edition of the biennial PhD Student Research Award in the Sociology of the Arts. Many PhD Students from several European countries and an Asian country responded to the Call for Papers and submitted an unpublished research paper, whose abstract was accepted at the 12th Conference of the European Sociological Association in Prague. The jury, consisting of board-members of RN-02 Sociology of the Arts, evaluated the papers in a blind review according to the conception, methods, references, sociological relevance and readability. The quality of the submissions was very impressive, and two of the submitted papers were very close in the final evaluation.

The winner of the PhD Student Research Award 2015 is Ms. Eileen Hogan, whose paper is titled “The ‘mixed economies’ of music making: Well-being, citizenship and arts praxis in post-crisis Ireland”. The winner of the Award received a €500 prize, funded from RN-02 membership fees.

Eileen Hogan has a degree in Arts (Music) and a degree in Social Science, and currently lectures in Social Policy in the School of Applied Social Studies, University College Cork, Ireland. She recently completed her PhD at the Institute for Popular Music, University of Liverpool, from which she graduated on 22nd July 2015. Hogan’s research paper, “The ‘mixed economies’ of music making: Well-being, citizenship and arts praxis in post-crisis Ireland”, draws on extensive ethnographic research in Cork city’s music scene. She proposes some conceptual innovations, namely ‘the mixed economy of favours’ and ‘the mixed economy of music-making’, to describe the collaborative, solidaristic strategies deployed by local music producers in the local field of cultural production. Extending Bourdieusian theory, she argues that the local music scene is a site of both struggle and integration, wherein the material, autotelic and social rewards of music-making are upheld. She argues that music producers’ commitment to individual and collective well-being opens up new possibilities for citizenship-oriented thinking within arts praxis, cultural policy and urban planning discourse.

Jury members justified their decision with reference to the “very well structured, comprehensive and clear structure of the paper [which] presents innovative findings and develops recent research further” as well to its excellent prose quality. The prize was formally awarded at the 12th Conference of the European Sociological Association in Prague, during the Business Meeting of the Research Network Sociology of the Arts, on August 26th, 2015.
4 tricks to improve your teaching: 
Quantitative methods

In some countries in Europe, Sociology has fallen far behind other disciplines in its use and interpretation of quantitative evidence. That we are now in the golden age of the social survey, are at the beginning of a new era of administrative and other forms of ‘big’ data, and thanks to the web have literally millions of cross sectional and longitudinal data series only a few mouse clicks away, all make this situation truly debilitating for the discipline. It can no longer afford to mimic the relative disinterest in statistics of its founding figures.

In the UK, the Nuffield Foundation’s Q-Step Programme, the Economic and Social Research Council’s Quantitative Methods Initiative and the British Academy’s High Level Strategy Group on Quantitative Skills have been trying to tackle this deficit, in part focusing on how quantitative methods are taught to students, since this is so important for later training and career paths. Some provisional lessons have emerged from these efforts that may help others trying to do the same. I’d sum up four of the main ones as follows. However, I’d also caution that there is certainly no ‘one best way’ to teach quants: something confirmed by a report I recently helped to produce.¹

1. ‘Statistics Anxiety’ is real. Students used to writing essays where assessment is all about debate and judgment become apprehensive about material where there are definitely right and wrong ways to do things and mistakes can be made. They tend to worry far more about their mistakes than their teachers, who see the mistakes as an inevitable and helpful part of learning. What seems to be decisive is to ensure that students have faith that they will eventually successfully master topics they find difficult to begin with, and that they have confidence that what they are learning is relevant to doing good sociology. Sociology students are not number phobic, nor expect to graduate without doing any quantitative work, nor choose sociology to avoid maths. Rather, these seem to be convenient legitimating myths for students or staff with little interest in quantitative evidence to avoid any quants. I challenge my students to give me some sociological insight that we are now in the golden age of the social survey, are at the beginning of a new era of administrative and other forms of ‘big’ data, and thanks to the web have literally millions of cross sectional and longitudinal data series only a few mouse clicks away, all make this situation truly debilitating for the discipline. It can no longer afford to mimic the relative disinterest in statistics of its founding figures.

2. The best place to teach quantitative methods (and indeed methods generally) is not in research methods modules. It is better to use substantive modules on issues such as class, gender or ethnicity to discuss what kind of empirical evidence is available, how it can be produced and interpreted, and what its implications are for sociological knowledge. This needs the cooperation of colleagues, and that they use empirical material: something that unfortunately cannot always be taken for granted. Stand alone statistics courses, especially if delivered by teachers whose disciplinary background is statistics rather than sociology, seem only to work with students who have both a strong motivation and good maths skills. Leaving it up to students themselves to make the connexion between substantive issues and research methods modules simply means that they will not be made. Students often see ‘methods’ as an odd module best forgotten once passed, until a year or two after graduation students discover it was the most useful course they took.

3. Reading about quantitative methods, or listening to lectures about them is a poor substitute for doing them, and practice with real data is preferable to doing hypothetical examples with SAT scores. Since real data is typically messy and complex, and methods for handling categorical data more advanced than that for continuous variables, a lot of careful preparation work is needed to produce good learning resources. Small group work with postgraduate or post-doc teaching assistants (who are seen as less intimidating) works well and frequent assessments keep students and staff aware of progress and problems. Once students have both the basic skills and the motivation to explore data, once they get excited by it and what they can do with it, more advanced skills become much easier to teach. This is a better learning sequence than working through univariate then bivariate descriptive statistics, then inference, then multivariate, which is often the rather tired old formula found in the textbooks. Innovation in teaching also needs innovation in assessment, since students’ focus may be on the latter. Frequent assessment usually works well (although it means more work for staff) as it forces students to practice, to keep up and to consolidate their knowledge, and also reassures them about their progress.

4. All this takes time and curriculum space, especially if students arrive with weak numeracy skills. Getting such curriculum space can be a struggle, since most staff prefer to teach based on their research. But if sociology is a social science, and science is ultimately about scientific research methods, then a vibrant discipline needs to ensure their students understand them. This is not only good for the students, who find that these skills have a premium in the graduate job market, it is essential for the intellectual future of the discipline. Twenty-first century sociology cannot continue to make do with the meagre research skills of its founding figures.

¹ www.britac.ac.uk/policy/MeasuringUp.cfm?frmAlias=/measuringup/
The European Research Council (ERC) is the most prestigious European funding organisation for curiosity-driven research at the frontiers of knowledge. It is boosting scientific excellence in Europe by funding the best research talents from all over the world, following a highly competitive selection process. The model is very simple – one researcher, one institution, one project, and one selection criterion.

Established by the Commission in 2007, the European Research Council has emerged as the first pan-European organisation for funding research at the frontiers of knowledge. It is the EU’s first body funding individual top researchers, from the bottom-up, which core mission is to support frontier research – without discriminating between basic and applied. The selection – made under the responsibility of the ERC’s Scientific Council – is based solely on scientific quality.

With a budget of €13 billion for period 2014 to 2020, the ERC offers attractive five year grants to scientists from anywhere in the world in all fields – Social Sciences/Humanities, Physical Sciences/Engineering, and Life Sciences. As the Scientific Council cares about young talent, no less than two thirds of its budget goes to early-career researchers, to help them fully develop their potential. The Social Sciences and Humanities (SH) Domain get 22% of the total ERC Budget, which means, for 2016, around €350 millions. There are 6 panels of evaluation in SH, the one dealing with (most of) Sociology being the SH3 one. The SH budget is distributed by panels and is driven by Demand.

The ERC provides 5-year individual grants for ground-breaking, high-risk/high-gain research projects through different schemes:

- ERC Starting Grants for early-career, emerging research leaders who obtained their first PhD 2 to 7 years before their application. The funding is up to €1.5 million per grant.
- ERC Consolidator Grants for excellent researchers who are already independent and who obtained their first PhD 7 to 12 years before their application. The funding is up to €2 million per grant.
- ERC Advanced Grants for established top scientists with an excellent scientific track record of at least 10 years. The funding is up to €2.5 million per grant.
- ERC Proof of Concept Grants only for ERC grantees to help them commercialise results from their ERC research. This additional funding is up to €150,000 per grant for a period of up to 18 months.

In its short lifetime, the ERC has achieved a great deal and supports a new generation of top talent. 6,000 researchers have been funded across Europe. The grants have allowed them to set up research teams, employing to date over 40,000 researchers and other professionals.

The grantees often stress the great impact ERC funding has had on their careers and vision. On top of that, research institutions across Europe have been pushed to provide the right environment for top talent. For the first time, we see competition at a European level raising the overall quality of research on our continent.

For more information on ERC’s funding opportunities: https://erc.europa.eu/funding-and-grants/funding-schemes
FOR SOCIOLOGISTS: A DISCUSSION LIST

Cooperation and discussion are vital to academic life. With an email discussion list academics can collaborate on projects and publications, announce conferences, arrange meetings and share news and views. There is a discussion list on the ESA website – www.europeansociology.org – called European-Sociologist and supported by JISCmail service from the UK.

ESA members can post messages on the list by themselves. To date, there are 1466 subscribers on the list. If you wish to join, you can send the following command to jiscmail@jiscmail.ac.uk: join european-sociologist [firstname] [lastname].

WOULD YOU LIKE TO CONTRIBUTE?

If you have a conference report of your ESA Research Network midterm meeting, if you like to respond to a Viewpoint or other article published in European Sociologist (Reader’s comments), if you’d like to Report from your National Association (we would prefer discussions of current challenges and debates) or to contribute a short piece to one of our new series How to fabricate an inspiring paper session, Five tricks to improve your teaching, Sociologists in the news, In Memoriam, or, particularly, Hot from the spot (from your truly European and EU-funded collaborative research project), please contact the editor.

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FOR NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS OF SOCIOLOGY - ESA JOINT CONFERENCES

WANTED: In 2015 ESA introduced a new joint conference scheme. If you are interested in organizing a Your_National_Association-ESA Joint Conference, please contact us at esa@europeansociology.org.

Example 2015: AIS-ESA Joint Conference. From memories to the future: Collective memories and horizons of expectations in contemporary Europe, 4-5 June 2015, University of Naples, Italy.

Requirements:
- At least two members of the scientific committee must be members of ESA’s Executive Committee.
- At least one of the invited speakers must be from ESA (ExeC board or RN board member).

• The meeting must be planned and organized self-sustaining (ESA cannot afford co-financing).
• The conference language must be English.
• The conference announcement must bear the ESA logo.

Advantages: There will be mutual advantages for both sides. On the one hand, ESA-National Association meetings will make national sociologies visible to the English speaking world. It will attract European sociologists to national meetings they would not have attended otherwise. On the other hand, via ESA participation it will bring local sociologists in contact with the European research area. Third, most important for our ESA strategy of supporting the European pluralism of sociology, it will not undermine the national association’s regular meeting. Quite the contrary, offered in English and most probably attracting a smaller community (approx. 100 participants), it will enable the organizers to offer and discuss a more focused specialized theme in contrast to other regular meetings that must include all sections and branches of sociology.


• POLAND: Solidarity in the Time of Distrust, XVI Polish Sociological Congress. [Polish & English] Institute of Philosophy, Sociology and Journalism, University of Gdańsk, Poland. 14-17.09.2016.


• SPAIN: Grandes Transformaciones Sociales, Nuevos Desafíos Para La Sociología. XII Congreso Español De Sociología. [Spanish] Gijón, Spain. 30-06.02.07.2016.


• RN2 - SOCIETY & SPORTS
  Arts and Creativity: Working on Identity and Difference. Faculty of Arts and Humanities, University of Porto, Portugal. 08-10.09.2016.

• RN3 - BIOGRAPHICAL PERSPECTIVES ON EUROPEAN SOCIETIES

• RN4 - SOCIOLOGY OF CHILDREN & CHILDHOOD

• RN5 - SOCIOLOGY OF CONSUMPTION:

• RN9 - ECONOMIC SOCIETY

• RN10 - SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION

• RN11 - SOCIOLOGY OF EMOTIONS
  The 7th Midterm Conference on Emotions. Stockholm University, Sweden. 25-27.08.2016.

• RN12 - ENVIRONMENT & SOCIETY

• RN13 - SOCIOLOGY OF FAMILIES & INTIMATE LIVES

• RN14 - GENDER RELATIONS IN THE LABOUR MARKET & WELFARE STATE

• RN16 - SOCIOLOGY OF HEALTH & ILLNESS
  New directions in health care work and organisations. Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, New University of Lisbon, Portugal. 19-21.05.2016.

• RN18 - SOCIOLOGY OF COMMUNICATIONS & MEDIA RESEARCH

• RN19 - SOCIOLOGY OF PROFESSIONS
  Professions, Knowledge and Organisations. University of Aveiro, Portugal. 08-10.09.2016.

• RN20 - QUALITATIVE METHODS
  Qualitative Methods and Research Technologies. Cracow, Poland. 01-03.09.2016.

• RN21 - QUANTITATIVE METHODS

• RN24 - SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY
  The sociological gaze on science and society relations. Institute of Social Sciences, University of Lisbon, Portugal. 20-21.06.2016

• RN25 - SOCIAL MOVEMENTS
  Allies and Enemies of Social Movements. Scuola Normale Superiore, Florence, Italy. 06-08.10.2016.

• RN26 - SOCIOLOGY OF SOCIAL POLICY

• RN28 - SOCIETY & SPORTS
  Sport in the City – Mobility, Urbanity and Social Change. Copenhagen, Denmark. 04-07.05.2016.

• RN29 - SOCIAL THEORY
  Rethinking social change. Institut d’Estudis Catalans, Barcelona, Spain. 29-30.08.2016.

• RN30 - YOUTH & GENERATION

• RN32 - POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY
  (Dis)locating EUrope: Conflicts, challenges and changes. Vrije Universiteit Brussel, the Université libre de Bruxelles, the Université Catholique de Louvain and the Université Saint-Louis Bruxelles, Belgium. 28-29.10.2016.

• RN33 - WOMEN’S & GENDER STUDIES
  Rethinking the Private and the Public: Gender-Regimes in Postmodernity. TU Dortmund University, Germany. 19-20.10.2016.

• RN35 - SOCIOLOGY OF MIGRATION

• RN36 - EUROPEAN SOCIETIES
  The sociological gaze on science and society relations. University of Lisbon, Portugal. 20-21.06.2016.