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## **Theory** RC16 Newsletter, Winter 2023

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### **Contents**

#### *Introduction*

The Return of <i>Theory</i> (Editors' Introduction)	Nick Osbaldiston & Frank Welz.....	2
Message from the Chairs	Eleanor Townsley & Frédéric Vandenberghe.....	3

#### *Theorising in Troubled Times*

Theorising in Troubled Times	Raewyn Connell .....	4
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#### *Communications*

In Honor of Bernd Giesen: Some Memories of an Extraordinary Sociologist	Werner Binder & Philip Smith .....	6
Announcement regarding <i>Theory and Society</i> .....		10
New Books by Members.....		11
RC16 Awards 2007-2023.....		11

#### *Opportunities*

Annual Theory Lecture 2024.....		12
Call for Nominations for the Award for Junior Theorist 2025 .....		12
Coming Conferences .....		12
Call for Contributions.....		13
<i>RC16 Board 2023-2027</i> .....		14

# Introduction

## The Return of *Theory* (Editors' Introduction)

Nick Osbaldiston & Frank Welz

*Theory* is back. After a break since late 2019 through the pandemic years, with this issue we would like to resume the biannual publication of our newsletter.

A newsletter does not need to expand the rapidly growing number of articles on our hard disks. Instead, *Theory* should serve the practical communication of internationally all those interested in sociological theory, the basic concepts of theory formation, the theory of society, and the theory of the social. Our newsletter needs your contribution and your interest. Our *Call for Contributions* on page 12 invites you to do so.

The pandemic experiences have shown that digital exchange also needs the intermediate goals of face-to-face meetings such as conferences. Fortunately, we could meet again in person at the ISA World Congress in Melbourne this summer. We can also plan our next interim conference in Innsbruck, Austria, at the beginning of July 2025. Which topic should frame the meeting? Which one is hot?

The overall theme of the congress in Melbourne was *Resurgent Authoritarianism: The Sociology of New Entanglements of Religions, Politics, and Economies*. 3028 sociologists took part in person and 1673 virtually. As always, most participants came from the English-speaking sociology worlds. Among

participants from 106 countries, Australia, USA, India, Japan, Germany, United Kingdom, and Canada, in this order, sent the most congress visitors. According to a report by the conference organizers, the hybrid organization of the conference is a hot potato. Following their survey, practically no one favors holding the ISA World Congress entirely online (1%). However, the online windows of the congress were also much criticized because online speakers would only attend their own panel, and such sessions, as we experienced too, led to minimal participant interest. One morning, I found myself all alone in the audience in a vast hall, listening to the in-person chair and the online presenter.

On the other hand, our impression of the RC16 theory sessions, coordinated by Craig Browne, was excellent. It seems people know each other. There is a common discourse. From time to time, presenters refer to each other. In any case, among the 56 presentations and two further dozen in sessions jointly organized with other Research Committees, there were many stimulating contributions and many follow-up discussions about them.

During the opening session, Raewyn Connell received the *3rd ISA Award for Excellence in Research and Practice*, preceded by Immanuel Wallerstein in 2014 and Nira Yuval-Davis in 2018. Despite her apt criticism of the sociological mainstream, Connell was "optimistic for the next generation" in her acceptance speech and concluded by encouraging "Serve the people, not the billionaires" and, in the spirit of those interested in theory, "Study the Big Issues"!

We are pleased that Raewyn Connell is contributing the core article to our newsletter. Her *Theorizing in Troubled Times* anticipates our RC16 *Annual Theory Lecture* in March 2024. In addition, Werner Binder and Philip Smith remember Bernhard Giesen, who passed away in late 2020. Finally, we draw attention to upcoming dates and conferences. Elections were held in Melbourne for the new RC16 Board and the two Chairs. The latter open this newsletter.



## Message from the Chairs

Eleanor Townsley & Frédéric Vandenberghe

The role of the chairs of the RC 16 is mostly perfunctory, ceremonial and administrative. As incoming chairs, we are responsible for the continuity of the research committee, its functioning and its relations to the ISA. We have to make sure that the world conference and fora are organised, the reports sent in and the monies collected on time. The research community is not just a part of a larger organisation; it is a whole in itself. It is both an institution with a venerable history and it is also a living community of colleagues and friends. Ideas and people come together through communication. The Newsletter is an important mediator in this respect. You may have missed it over the last year or so, but now with the new editors who are willing to give it a new impulse, it should be back on track. The editors have full autonomy and we count on them, as well as on our members, to transform it into an organ of the community of theorists.

As co-chairs of RC 16, we feel we have a responsibility to maintain the vitality and centrality of theory at the heart of sociology. RC 16 was created back in 1981 when social theory was vibrant. By now the excitement of the “new theoretical movement” has waned and we are increasingly seeing a retreat to sociological theorising at the macro-, meso- and micro-levels. If sociology as a whole has moved to the Left politically, theoretically, it has moved to the centre. While we welcome creative theorising at all levels and want to contribute to the consolidation of paradigmatic sociologies (cultural, pragmatic, relational and other sociologies), we also think it is important to strengthen social theory as a space of articulation between philosophy, critical theory and the “Studies”. When the world is falling apart, sociology’s turn inwards has to be accompanied by a turn outwards so that we can reconstruct the social sciences at the same time as we are trying to reconstruct societies.

Our vision for the RC is that it operates as a community of social theorists who balance the

best of the sociological tradition with an openness to interdisciplinarity and global engagement. To make sure that we remain focused on the common interest of our members, we have taken three initiatives. We have set up a consultative group, composed of former chairs of the RC, who will meet annually to come up with new ideas, themes, projects and propositions. We will organise an Annual Theory Lecture to honour a distinguished intellectual in our community. We will also sponsor a periodic Theory Café where several members discuss a recent book. Both the Annual lecture and the Theory Café are conceived as online events, but they could also be hybrid if there is interest in organising a place-based event among RC members. We are also open to suggestions for Theory Café books and local sponsors. Let us know if you are interested.

We are delighted to announce that Raewyn Connell has agreed to be our first RC16 lecturer. “Theorising in Troubled Times”, the title she has chosen for her lecture, may well become our guiding theme for the next four years. It will be followed by the opening of the Theory Café with a roundtable discussion the week after of her book *Research, Politics, Social Change*. The two events will take place in March, at different times so that our friends and colleagues from the East and the South may follow the event without having to wake up in the middle of the night.

Finally, we are extremely happy to announce that we will be holding the midterm meetings in July 2025 in Innsbruck, Austria. It will be hosted by Frank Welz, who’s also one of the editors of our Newsletter. We will also work together with RC 8 (History of Sociology) and RC 35 (Conceptual and Terminological Analysis) to organise some sessions at the ISA Forum in Rabat, which will take place immediately after our midterm in Innsbruck. Both the midterm and the World Conference in Korea in 2027 will offer an occasion to celebrate the life work of Jeffrey Alexander, the founder of our Research Committee. In 2027, the elder statesman in cultural sociology and sociological theory will turn 80.

# Theorising in Troubled Times

## Theorising in Troubled Times

Raewyn Connell<sup>1</sup>

### *Why do social research?*

I had a clear purpose when I began, back in the mid-1960s. The war in Vietnam was building towards its horrifying peak. Australia, a minor player in that war, was ruled by a corrupt, reactionary gang of politicians and businessmen. It was a deeply unjust society: the rich living in mansions, the poor struggling for basic living conditions, indigenous people treated with particular viciousness. In my studies I was being taught to concentrate on small and remote problems, while the world was in flames. I asked myself what kind of knowledge really mattered in this world, and social science came top of the list.

I had some busy years in the student movement, campaigning, writing manifestos, marching in demonstrations and trying to start collectives. When I began an academic job, a longer-term effort became possible: building research and teaching programmes, and connecting with groups able to use research findings. Therefore, as well as writing articles for academic journals and papers for conferences, I wrote and spoke in other forums: for unions, social movements, the Labor Party, teacher organizations, literary magazines and mass media. Later I wrote some reports for governments and for the United Nations, and when the Internet arrived, with a colleague's help I set up a website

[www.raewynconnell.net](http://www.raewynconnell.net).



Sari Hanafi and Raewyn Connell  
(photograph by Frank Welz)<sup>2</sup>

### *About the author*

I was born during World War II and grew up in the shadow of the atom bomb - literally, as eastern Australia was downwind from British bomb tests in the 1950s. I'm descended from families who joined the British invasion of Australia in the 19th century and helped create a settler colony. I've had class privilege, race privilege and language privilege. I went to public-sector schools and universities in Australia and was given an excellent colonial education. I gained a love of history and literature, an interest in psychology, a curiosity about natural science, and a grounding in several European languages, only one of them dead.

I have taught in three Australian universities and two in the USA, and have taught on shorter stints in Canada and Germany. I have been a union member all my working life; I'm now a life member of the National Tertiary Education Union. I have belonged to several professional associations in social science, and have been to more conferences than I could shake a stick at. Being a professor in rich countries meant money and visa privilege for international travel. I have visited about thirty countries for lectures,

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<sup>1</sup> University of Sydney, Australia

<sup>2</sup> ISA President Sari Hanafi presented the 3rd ISA Award for Excellence in Research and Practice to Raewyn

Connell at the Award Ceremony on June 25, 2023, at the XX ISA World Congress of Sociology in Melbourne, Australia

seminars, conferences, interviews and discussions, and have benefited from a vast amount of kindness and hospitality.

#### *About the work*

When I was invited to put together a collection of my best work, I wanted to show how knowledge developed through time. I chose pairs of papers (one earlier and one later) in five areas where I had done a lot of work: research on masculinities, the social theory of gender, the Australian ruling class, the sociology of education, and global-South perspectives in social science. (Advertisement: the collection is *Raenyn Connell: Research, Politics, Social Change*, Melbourne University Press, 2023).

I've also been involved in research on adolescence, children's political thought, sexuality in the AIDS crisis, studies of intellectuals, studies of managers, gender equity reforms in the state, sociology of health, and more. A great deal of that work has been done collaboratively, so I've been a member of multiple research teams over the years. And I have come to appreciate how much academic knowledge production rests on the labour of non-academic workers - the operations workers (clerical, maintenance, technical, administrative, professional and more) of the universities. I'm glad to be in the same union with them.

#### *About theory*

I've published some books and articles that are, so to speak, labelled as theory: *Southern Theory*, *Gender and Power*, *Which Way is Up?* and papers in journals which have 'Theory' in their names. Yet most of my theoretical work has been done in the course of empirical projects - the work on masculinities would be a good example. I've come to see 'theory' not as a separate field of knowledge, and certainly not as an option, but as a necessary moment in a continuing process of knowledge production and circulation. A form of intellectual practice, if you like, that connects with other forms, and depends on them as they depend on it. It's a view I've tried to spell out in *The Good University* (another advertisement! Zed Books, 2019) where I talk about research-based knowledge as the product of collective labour.

Which brings me back to the purpose. Both working with colleagues and working individually,

I have hoped to produce a realistic social science, grounded empirically and flexible about method. I emphasise practice, things actually done in specific situations; and social agency, the capacities of people and groups to transform their situations. I try to recognize the here-and-now-ness of practice, its embodiment and its place, in local or in global terms.

The main aim has been knowledge relevant to struggles for social justice - and in the times we live in, that has become more important than ever. That purpose requires analyses of social structure, mapping existing patterns of power, privilege and oppression and trying to understand their dynamics, as well as attention to agency. A concern with agency has a strong consequence: we must be concerned with the effects of action, the downstream. The historicity of social life is fundamental; social science must concern time, transformation, and possibility. To grapple with questions of social justice - which now include survival in the face of authoritarianism, violence and environmental catastrophe - is to be concerned with pathways towards structural transformations. There is no shortage of work for sociology.

# Communications

## **In Honor of Bernd Giesen: Some Memories of an Extraordinary Sociologist**

Werner Binder<sup>3</sup> & Philip Smith<sup>4</sup>

The (cultural) sociology community mourns the recent loss of Bernhard Giesen (1948-2020), who was known as Bernd to many members of RC16 personally. Bernd suffered in his final years from a degenerative disease, which exacted a cruel toll on his body and once brilliant mind. In the active decades before this misfortune, he had been highly productive scholar, who by the time of his death, had accumulated several thousand citations. Perhaps more important he had a multiplier effect by shaping the intellectual life of countless young scholars.

Born in 1948, Bernd grew up in a middleclass Catholic household in post-war Germany and studied later at the University of Heidelberg, where he was strongly influenced by the historian Reinhart Koselleck. He nevertheless decided to pursue a career in sociology. His trajectory was remarkable. After only two years of doctoral studies, he was awarded his PhD at the University of Augsburg in 1974. He earned his 'postdoctoral degree' (Habilitation) at the University of Münster in 1980 and finally became appointed to a Chair at the University of Giessen (yes, Prof. Giesen from Giessen) in 1982. At the time of his appointment, he was only 34 years old, which makes him one of the youngest, if not the youngest, full professors in the history of German sociology.

Bernd started his academic career as a critical rationalist and as a theorist of societal evolution. Under the influence of anthropology and postmodernism, his own sociological thinking evolved, slowly drifting towards historical and then finally cultural sociology. In his mature thought, diverse cultural patterns took the place of universal notions of rationality and the explosiveness of unpredictable historical events displaced gradual societal evolution. Neverthe-

less, Bernd never lost himself in the study of empirical details but remained committed to the theorization of social phenomena, to the development of conceptual schemes and typologies that could be applied across cases. So it is that he served in the early 1980s as the speaker of the "Sociological Theories" section of the German Sociological Association and remained a theorist for all his life. As a professor, Bernd built his reputation with a monograph offering an evolutionary perspective on postmodernity (Giesen 1991), a book on the historical formation and varying cultural codes of German national identity (Giesen 1998/1993) and its successor that explored codes and rituals of collective identity more generally (Giesen 1999; see also Eisenstadt & Giesen 1995). For Bernd, collective identity was a contingent cultural construction, sustained by codes and rituals, later also myths and icons, but at the same time a necessary precondition for social life.

With his scholarly reputation firmly established, Bernd accepted a full professorship at the University of Konstanz, where he became a major institutional player. His arrival helped to stabilize the renown and productivity of the sociology department at Konstanz. Its reputation had been built in the 1970s by some of Germany's most important sociologists of the postwar decades, such as Ralf Dahrendorf and Thomas Luckmann. By the time Bernd arrived there was the familiar Weberian problem of charismatic succession. With his energy and brilliance Bernd was more than up to the task of offering new leadership. In Konstanz, he not only became one of the leading figures of the collaborative DFG-project "Norm and Symbol" but also helped to resource-build the Cluster of Excellence "Cultural Foundations of Integration" that thrived in Konstanz for many years. With generous funding that was distributed without concern for rank or national identity this nurtured so many books, PhD theses and the ambitious projects of scholars from around the world. In Konstanz, Bernd surrounded himself with a close-knit team of students and postdocs, who produced some of the most innovative and

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<sup>3</sup> Masaryk University Brno, Czech Republic

<sup>4</sup> Yale University, New Haven, USA

fearlessly non-standard work in German sociology. His students were unusually devoted and found themselves supported as they made risky choices for thesis topics or proposed theoretical gambits. Anything but a Beckmesser pedantically enforcing dogma, Bernd pushed his students to become more cultural, less buttoned down, more daring. The most damning verdict he would speak about the work of his students, but also of his peers, was that they did not offer anything new. He preferred thought-provoking essays that took chances over solid but boring academic craftsmanship any day.

Bernd was also one of the most transatlantic sociologists and social theorists in Germany. But whereas others turned to pragmatism, ethno-methodology and phenomenology to build theoretical bridges, Bernd increasingly looked to cultural sociology. His decades-long friendship and collaboration with Jeffrey Alexander<sup>5</sup> started in the 1980s, during the latter's short-lived 'neo-functional' phase. It developed congenially as both moved towards a neo-Durkheimian cultural sociology. An early fruit of their collaboration was the edited volume *The Micro-Macro Link* (Alexander et al. 1987), for which they wrote the introduction. Much later the two became part of a group that pioneered the increasingly influential concept of cultural trauma (Alexander et al. 2004). Bernd brought to the project his concept of a 'trauma of the perpetrators', which reflected on the profound sense of guilt that had become part of the German identity from the 1960s on – something that his own generation had experienced and propagated. More generally Bernd tied collective identity to exceptional figures, such as perpetrators, victims and heroes, a framework that he elaborated and applied in a separate monograph (Giesen 2004).

Once Bernd had moved to Konstanz and Jeffrey Alexander to New Haven, the collaboration intensified, involving by this point many of their students and colleagues. Among the fruits of this intellectual exchange and cooperation are the much cited and agenda-setting co-edited volumes on *Social Performance* (Alexander et al. 2006) and *Iconic Power* (Alexander et al. 2012). These played

an important role in broadening the agenda of the Strong Program in cultural sociology. The endeavors also played a role in training and providing visibility to many of the younger scholars in their networks who served as authors of chapters; and in the cases of Jason Mast and Dominik Bartmanski as co-editors. Arguably, Bernd himself, although he became a key promoter of concepts such as the sacred and the profane, cultural trauma, social performance and iconicity in Germany and Europe, never fully identified with the Yale Strong Program. Indeed, his contributions to the aforementioned volumes often offered counterpoints, which enriched their broader cultural sociological theme. Similarly, his take on Durkheimian theory, informed by Georges Bataille, Mary Douglas and Victor Turner,<sup>6</sup> emphasized the transgressive, ambivalent and ambiguous – much in contrast to Alexander's always tidying binary codes. This perspective was rooted in his growing conviction that social life was constructed around the ineffable, scary and repulsive. For Bernd, culture was not only a social force, but a protective veil shielding us from the 'naked' reality, imposing forms on an otherwise amorphous world, giving meaning to meaningless matter. Behind culture, there was no truth, but something 'raw' and 'shocking', which resisted symbolization but showed itself from time to time at the level of primal experience. Bernd was indeed, adopting a phrase that he used to compliment the bold projects of others, "hunting a big animal".

As the age-related retirement enforced by the German university system approached, Bernd became even more 'extreme' and fearless in his theorizing. He became more otherworldly, less and less concerned with disciplinary approval, citations, refereed publications and awards. So, it is perhaps no accident that witnessed him celebrate his 60th birthday in 2008 by leaping off a Swiss mountain attached to a paraglider. At the bottom we found him grinning like a madman. He could not stop talking about this peak experience and its embodied sensory overload. The fearlessness is also reflected in his final magnum opus, *Zwischenlagen* (Giesen 2010), which

towards Catholicism later in his life). His understanding of rituals and symbols not being a mere decorum but the very essence of social life is opposed to the iconoclasm and disenchantment often associated with Protestantism.

<sup>5</sup> For a personal testimony of this not only intellectual friendship, see Jeffrey Alexander's moving obituary; <https://ccs.yale.edu/news/bernhard-giesen-memorial>

<sup>6</sup> It is probably no accident that Bernd was raised Catholic, like Bataille and Douglas (and Turner turned

contains a theoretical introduction and a broad range of quirky Simmelian essays, brimming with intellectual stimulation. This time the leaps were mental. In the book, Bernd celebrates and analyzes the ‘extraordinary’ as the true foundation of ‘ordinary’ social reality. The book develops a unique (cultural-)sociological perspective on the world, which is then applied to a multitude of phenomena, including laughter and violence, elites and migration, tourism and terrorism, and many more. While not (yet) translated into English, a short summary of the theoretical argument accompanied by a brief discussion of heroism, trash and seduction as extraordinary phenomena has been published in *The Oxford Handbook of Cultural Sociology* (Giesen 2012).

A special mention deserves Bernd’s Konstanzer Meisterklasse, where the two authors of this brief tribute met for the first time in 2007. A paradigm case of how to confront the atomization, alienation, routinization and disenchantment of contemporary academic life (industrial conferences, job markets, tenure reviews, notches on the CV) it has been the start of many lasting friendships, intellectual partnerships and new ideas. The Meisterklasse, which ran from 1999 to 2014 (with a few gap years) introduced an entire generation of younger scholars to cultural sociology and to senior figures from the field and its neighbors in an intimate and demanding setting. The list of masters included towering figures such as Clifford Geertz, Mary Douglas, Thomas Luckmann, Hayden White, Zygmunt Bauman and Shmuel Eisenstadt. Every year at the Meisterklasse, Bernd assumed the role of an intellectual leader, organizer-in-chief, funding guru, master of ceremonies, and generous host. Its highlight was the annual reception in the elegant villa that Bernd and his wife Chrissi lived in on Seestraße. All who attended will remember the feeling of being in an uncanny 21st Century update of London’s John Soane’s Museum. We would drink wine and chat surrounded by Greek statues, Renaissance artworks, modernist designer chairs, taxidermy specimens, and carbon fiber bicycles. Then there was the overwhelming

sensation of listening to the huge stereo system that Bernd had designed and built to his own specifications in his search for aesthetic perfection. Beyond the windows was a terrace, and past that the River Rhine and the waters of Lake Constance, but it was the interior of the apartment that held your attention. Those who had the privilege to work for Bernd as well as the international guests he frequently hosted at his chair, had even more opportunities to enjoy his hospitality. He not only liked being the host, he was also exceptionally good at it. His was a place where your wineglass was always full.

Bernd knew instinctively what many of us only start to realize now, in times of a global pandemic, namely that a productive and creative academia is social in origin. When he conceived of the Konstanzer Meisterklasse, he made sure that there were extended lunchbreaks, events in the evenings, and a day off now and again so participants who were new friends could go swimming and sunbathing, hiking, biking, or head off to Zurich for museums and shopping. The lunchbreak was particularly sacred to him and he would remind the participants, no matter how eminent, not to “cannibalize on our lunch time”. Bernd knew very well that informal conversations over food and drink were at least as important for a vitalized intellectual life as the official presentations and discussions that were the bureaucratically accountable face of the event. Last but not least, Bernd was not only a theorist of social performance but a skilled and passionate actor himself. He had broad performative repertoire and was famed for the versatility of his interaction styles. While fully capable of being an intimidating German professor per the authoritarian stereotype, he could also play the clown, charm and listen with modest curiosity. As much as he enjoyed being on stage, it was also possible to share intimate moments with him. He was an extraordinary thinker who pushed the limits and boundaries of sociology as a discipline, and a friend and mentor who will be sadly missed by so many.

## Iconic Postscript

We include here three photographs that give a sense of Bernd's personality and performative styles. In the first he is a harsh critic of Phil's work, but makes his analytic point with a dash of dramatic irony. In the second he shows his intimate and caring side as he listens to Werner at a table full of suspiciously empty glasses. In the final one he is wrapped in a tablecloth after lunch – the clown and triumphant master of ceremonies.



1 Phil and Bernd exchanging arguments at the Identities in Conflict conference in Brno, 2008  
(photograph by faculty staff)



2 Werner sharing an intimate moment with Bernd, Konstanz Meisterklasse 2011  
(photograph by Julia Sonnevend)



3 Bernd as master performer, Konstanz Meisterklasse 2011  
(photograph by Julia Sonnevend)

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### Announcement regarding *Theory and Society*

Senior editors of *Theory and Society: Renewal and Critique in Social Theory* sent the following statement to the Theory Section of the American Sociological Association. We believe it will also be relevant to many of our members:

We wish to notify section members that as of January 1, 2024, *Theory and Society* is under new editorial management.

Up to now, the journal has been structured as a team of senior editors working in accord with the collaborative model and intellectual vision of Alvin Gouldner when he founded the journal in 1974. In mid-December 2023, the current team of senior editors (the undersigned) was told by the journal's present owners, the Springer Publishing Company, that they had opted for a "completely different view" of the journal going forward.

We also wish to let section members know that we ourselves have resigned from the journal. We will no longer be involved at any stage of the editorial process. Henceforth, all editorial decisions will be made by the new editors. We have no idea who the new editors will be.

In ending our affiliation with the journal, we wish to acknowledge and express thanks on behalf of the social-scientific community to the journal's Executive Editor Janet Gouldner and Managing Editor Karen Lucas for their many years of dedication to *Theory and Society*.

Charles Camic (Northwestern)  
Nitsan Chorev (Brown)  
Gil Eyal (Columbia)  
Neil Gross (Colby)  
Greta Kruppner (Michigan)  
Mara Loveman (Berkeley)  
Chandra Mukerji (UCSD)  
Monica Prasad (Johns Hopkins)  
David Swartz (Boston University)  
Ivan Szelenyi (NYU)

The following resignation letter from the Corresponding Editors, dated January 4, 2024, and addressed to the new Editors-in-Chief, supplements the announcement:

#### *Theory and Society Letter*

We write as Corresponding Editors of *Theory & Society* to collectively tender our resignations.

We did not reach this decision lightly. We take this step because of Springer Nature's decision to choose a new Executive Editor(s) to replace Janet Gouldner without consulting the journal's community of Senior and Corresponding Editors. Springer Nature's unyielding position on this was a clear violation of our profession's academic norms and standards and was fundamentally at odds with the spirit of the journal. Given our long service and dedication to the journal, we were extremely disappointed that at no point in the publisher's effort to install a new Executive Editor was a *single* one of the Senior Editors (nor, to our knowledge, any of the Corresponding Editors) consulted regarding their vision for the future of the journal. Additionally, their attempts to have input into the process of selecting new leadership for the journal were repeatedly rebuffed. We are unaware of any other publisher handling its relationship with an editorial board in such a dismissive fashion.

For us, this is not only about *Theory and Society*, but more broadly, the precedent of for-profit owners of academic journals unilaterally installing their selected editors. At stake here is how much control we academics are willing to give to for-profit publishers who have so much influence over our professional trajectories on the one hand and rely on our uncompensated labor on the other.

We emphasize that we are not criticizing the choice of Professors McCaffree and Turner as Editors-in-Chief. Our objections are to the process of selecting new leadership, not the leaders chosen.

Given these recent developments, we have lost confidence that *Theory and Society* will continue to advance the intellectual project founded by Alvin

Gouldner five decades ago, a continuing project that has engaged and excited us over the years. We see no alternative but to resign from our role with the journal.

Sincerely (in alphabetical order),  
Javier Auyero (University of Texas Austin)  
Tim Bartley (Georgetown University)  
Jean Beaman (University of California, Santa Barbara)  
Karida Brown (Emory University)  
Miguel A Centeno (Princeton)  
Katie E. Corcoran (West Virginia University)  
Claire Decoteau (University of Illinois at Chicago)  
Paul DiMaggio (NYU)  
Eva Fodor (Central European University)  
Harriet Friedmann (University of Toronto)  
Marion Fourcade (UC Berkeley)  
Roger Friedland (University of California, Santa Barbara)  
Marco Garrido (University of Chicago)  
Alya Guseva (Boston University)  
Jack A. Goldstone (George Mason University)  
Josée Johnston (University of Toronto)  
Christian Joppke (University of Bern)  
Jaeun Kim (University of Michigan)  
Krishnan Kumar (University of Virginia)  
Magali Sarfatti Larson (Temple University)  
Omar Lizardo (UCLA)  
Tey Meadow (Columbia University)  
Juan Pablo Pardo-Guerra (UC San Diego)  
John N Robinson III (Princeton U)  
Chris Tilly (UCLA)  
Tianna S. Paschel (UC Berkeley)  
Michael Schudson (Columbia University)  
Bruce Western (Columbia University)  
Marina Zaliznaya (University of Iowa)

## New Books by Members

Browne, Craig (2024): *Social Theory and the Political Imaginary: Practice, Critique, and History*. London/New York: Routledge.

## RC16 Awards 2007-2023

Since the previous newsletter was published, the RC16 Sociological Theory has presented the following two awards in 2023 and 2020, respectively:

### *Distinguished Contribution to Sociological Theory Award<sup>1</sup>*

This award is granted to a living thinker who has made a significant contribution to sociological theory over the last two decades at least. It is intended to recognize long term achievement rather than the excellence of an individual book or single idea. The winner of the prize will be a thinker held in high standing by sociological theorists throughout the world.

The award consists of a certificate with citation, to be given to the recipient during an appropriate session of each World Congress of Sociology. The recipient will also be asked to deliver a presentation sponsored by RC16 at the World Congress.

The recipients of the Award to date are:

**2023** Anthony Giddens  
2018 Jeffrey Alexander  
2014 Alain Touraine  
2010 Zygmunt Bauman

### *Award for Junior Theorist<sup>2</sup>*

The award is granted to the best paper in sociological theory authored by one or more junior theorist(s) and submitted to the competition. It is intended to provide motivation and recognition to a promising junior scholar in the field of sociological theory, as well as to encourage graduate student interest and participation in the ISA and RC16.

The award consists of a certificate with a citation and the travel costs of the winner(s) to attend the RC16 Mid-term Conference, up to a maximum of USD \$750. The winner(s) will be allowed to present their work during one of the scheduled RC16 sessions at the conference.

### Past Winners

**2020** Paul Joosse (University of Hong Kong), for his paper *Countering Trump: Toward a Theory of Charismatic Counter-roles*, published in *Social Forces* 97(2): 921-944.  
2016 Larissa Buchholz (Harvard University), for her paper *What Is a Global Field? Theorizing Fields beyond the Nation-State*, published in *The Sociological Review* 64(2): 31-60.  
2012 Dominik Bartmanski, for his paper "How to Become an Iconic Social Thinker: The Intellectual Pursuits of Malinowski and Foucault", published in *European Journal of Social Theory* 15(3): 1-27.

<sup>1</sup> Further information: [ISA website](#).

<sup>2</sup> Further information: [ISA website](#).

# Opportunities

## Annual Theory Lecture 2024 (online)

2024, March Raewyn Connell, *Theorising in Troubled Times* (exact time TBA)  
2024, March *Theory Café* roundtable discussion with Raewyn Connell on her book *Research, Politics, Social Change*, Melbourne University Press, 2023.

## Call for Nominations for the Award for Junior Theorist 2025

### *RC16 Award for Junior Theorist*

The Research Committee on Sociological Theory (RC16) of the International Sociological Association invites applications for the 2025 Award for Junior Theorist. The award is granted to the best paper in sociological theory authored by one or more junior theorist(s) and submitted to the competition. It is intended to provide motivation and recognition to a promising junior scholar in the field of sociological theory, as well as to encourage graduate student interest and participation in the ISA and RC16.

The award consists of a certificate with a citation and the travel costs (up to a maximum of USD \$750) of the winner(s) to present their work at the RC16 Mid-term Conference to be held in Innsbruck in July 3-5, 2025.

### *Eligibility*

Applicants must be currently enrolled in a Ph.D. program or have received their Ph.D. within five years of the deadline. Papers must have been published or accepted for publication no more than five years prior to the deadline, and must be authored by one or more junior theorist(s); those co-authored with tenured faculty members at a degree granting institution are not eligible. The publication can be in any of the ISA's three official languages (English, French, and Spanish), to a maximum length of 15,000 words. The winner(s) must be a member (or members) of ISA and RC16 at the time of receiving the award and must be available to attend the conference.

### *Nominations*

Papers can be nominated by the author(s), or by a nominator (for example, a book or volume editor, supervisor, or other third party). Deadline for submissions is January 15, 2025. Details of the nominations, including a copy of the paper in electronic form, should be sent to the Selection Committee Chair, Paul Joosse, at [pjoosse\(at\)hku.hk](mailto:pjoosse(at)hku.hk) (kindly include "RC16 Junior Theorist Award" in the subject line).

## Coming Conferences

### *ISA Conferences*

2025, July 3-5	Sociological Theory (RC16) Midterm Conference	Innsbruck, Austria
2025, July 7-11	V Forum of Sociology	Rabat, Morocco
2027, July 4-10	<a href="#">XXI World Congress of Sociology</a>	Gwangju, Korea

### *Further Theory Conferences*

2024, July 4-6	<a href="#">Adorno's Sociology</a>	Innsbruck, Austria
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## Call for Contributions

*Theory* needs your contribution! Please send your ideas for a short essay, a reply, an interview, a reference to your new (published) book or recent dissertation or any other information of interest to RC16 members to the newsletter editors

Nick Osbaldiston (Cairns), [nick.osbaldiston \(at\) jcu.edu.au](mailto:nick.osbaldiston@jcu.edu.au), and

Frank Welz (Innsbruck), [frank.welz \(at\) uibk.ac.at](mailto:frank.welz@uibk.ac.at)

until **May 15th** to be considered for the summer issue, **November 15th** for the winter issue.

Currently, we are particularly interested in receiving short (one page) contributions to our planned series on

- Theorising in Troubled Times
- Theory & War
- Trajectories into Theory
- What is Critical Sociology?
- Teaching Theory: How to (successfully) teach Sociological Theory?

# RC16 Board 2023-2027

## *ISA RC16 Board 2023-2027*

### *Co-Chairs*

Eleanor Townsley, Mount Holyoke College, USA, etownsle (at) mtholyoke.edu

Frédéric Vandenberghe, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, fredericvdbrio (at) gmail.com

### *Secretary/Treasurer*

Paul Joosse, University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, pjoosse (at) hku.hk

### *Newsletter Co-Editors*

Nick Osbaldiston, James Cook University, Australia, nick.osbaldiston (at) jcu.edu.au

Frank Welz, University of Innsbruck, Austria, frank.welz (at) uibk.ac.at

### *Further Executive Board Members*

Kathya Araujo, Universidad de Santiago de Chile, Chile

Craig Browne, The University of Sydney, Australia (Past Co-Chair)<sup>9</sup>

Martina Cvajner, University of Trento, Italy

Mervyn Horgan, University of Guelph, Canada

Jason L. Mast, Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany

Marcus Morgan, University of Bristol, United Kingdom

Ilaria Riccioni, Free University of Bozen-Bolzano, Italy

Hiro Saito, Singapore Management University, Singapore

Erik Schneiderhan, University of Toronto Mississauga, Canada

Daniel Silver, University of Toronto Scarborough, Canada

Csaba Szalo, Masaryk University, Czech Republic

Bradley West, University of South Australia, Australia (Past Co-Chair)

### *Objectives*

Following the RC16 statutes, the goal of the Research Committee in Sociological Theory is

- to organize open interrelationships among its various schools of thought,
- helping resolve its recurring crises and define its future prospects and
- to create an international community among scholars

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<sup>9</sup> Past Co-Chairs are ex-officio members of the board.