

RC 20 Newsletter, July-December 2020

From the President: This is a relatively short newsletter. It includes some recent publications by RC20 members, although I'm sure that the list is not complete, and an essay by Hans Bakker proposing a comparative historical study of the rural urban matrix. I expect to have more material for the summer newsletter, since the World Forum of Sociology will be held in late February 2021. Although it will have to be held online, but we still have a full program of interesting papers and I am looking forward to having a fruitful exchange of ideas. I thank Kseniya Kizilova and Marita Carballo for their work in organizing the program, and Fumiya Onaka for help with this newsletter—David Weakliem

Publications by RC20 Members

Khutkyy, Dmytro. 2020. "Internet Voting: Challenges and Solutions. Policy Paper." *European Digital Development Alliance*, (https://europeandigital.org/files/19/Internet_Voting_Challenges_and_Solutions_EN_G.pdf).

Khutkyy, Dmytro. 2020. "How Citizens' Assemblies Can Strengthen Democracy?" *European Digital Development Alliance* (<https://www.europeandigital.org/how-citizens-assemblies-can-strengthen-democracy>).

Georg P. Mueller, "Virtual Encounter Simulations: A New Methodology for Creating Conflict Data." In P. Mariani and M. Zenga (eds.), *Data Science and Social Research II* [SEP], pp. 293-303. Cham, Springer, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-51222-4_23

Abstract: "This article presents a new methodology for generating knowledge about group conflicts by the use of social surveys, which mainly inform about characteristics and values of the interviewees. The method is based on the idea of simulating virtual encounters between pairs of persons from the same and different groups in order to determine the value-conflicts between the related individuals. For a more subjective assessment of the situation, inter-group conflicts are compared with intra-group conflicts. This results in a new typology, which allows to conceptualize asymmetrical conflict. The proposed method is applied to the analysis of the national identities in the French- and German-speaking parts of Switzerland. It turns out, that the two groups have less conflict about "Swissness" than the traditional methods of analysis suggest."

Publications by RC20 Members (continued)

David Weakliem, *Public Opinion*. Cambridge: Polity 2020.

David Weakliem, 2020. "Politics, Ideology, and the Economy." Pp. 108-24 in *A Modern Guide to Economic Sociology*, edited by Milan Zafirovski. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2020.

Why Not do Comparative Historical Sociological (CHS) Studies of the "Rural-Urban Matrix"?

Hans Bakker

The idea of using a Comparative Sociological to study rurality and urbanism is not new. But a thorough-going comparative analysis of the importance of the more rural and the more urban throughout history has not been undertaken without a heavy Whig History emphasis on the importance of the city as we know it today. There is such a thing within the ASA as *urban* sociology. However, there is no section on *rural* sociology. Studies of "communities" may touch on rurality, but rurality per se or the linkages between the rural and the urban are not key features of community studies today. Yet in terms of intersectionality in the U.S. and Canada (as well as many other places) it is hard to fully grasp race, gender, class and other key aspects of a society without looking at the linkages. For example, the denial of full equity in land rights to African-Americans is a topic that does not often hit the headlines. The patriarchal nature of the family farm in the 19th century and the echoes of that today in U.S. politics (despite the ways in which mass media have modified what it means to be truly "rural") are apparent to many journalists. Yet what constitutes "rural" today is quite different from what constituted rurality in the days of Thomas Jefferson or Abraham Lincoln. Within the Capitalist Mode of Production, the use of rural slave labor in the U.S. was mainly a rural affair, even though many rich plantation owners in addition to plantation houses also had a house in a more urban place (e.g. Charlotte, South Carolina) where they kept "house slaves".

Many years ago a separate Rural Sociology Association (RSS) was formed. The RSS members often attend the ASA, but few ASA members who are not rural sociologists attend RSS conferences (or the International Rural Sociological Association [IRSA] conferences). Sessions on rural sociology at the ASA are rarely well attended. That is not surprising. There is a very "urban" and even "metropolitan" emphasis in sociology generally. Indeed, many textbooks hardly mention the really rural places and many people regard even large towns of 50,000 people are "rural". But there was a time when London, England, had fewer than 50,000 inhabitants. Anyone who has read Max Weber's comment on the importance of urban places for the emergence of modern capitalism will know that the modern capitalist city was not only different from pre-capitalist urban agglomerations (e.g. Rome) but resulted in the emergence of the class that in French is called the *bourgeoisie*. The burgher class was all important to the rise of modern capitalism and the very slow dissipation of many feudal institutions. Then during the nineteenth century the importance of the rural

declined and the importance of key cities kept increasing geometrically. Yet when we think globally the rural certainly has not disappeared.

It would be useful to have some discussion of the of a "rural-urban matrix" throughout history. J. I. (Hans) Bakker edited a book (2015) with the title *The Methodology of Political Economy: Studying the Global Rural-Urban Matrix*. The title is a bit audacious, but the key point is found in the sub-title. However, in that book the authors did not deal with the subject in a *thoroughly* comparative and historical manner. There are lots of hints but no one chapter carefully examines the notion of the rural-urban matrix in many locations at many different times during the last 6,000 years or so. Hans Bakker would be very happy to talk with anyone who might have suggestions or might want to point to key academic articles or books he may have overlooked. Perhaps it might be possible to do a focused edited book on this topic. Contact him at: hbakker@uoguelph.ca