

# Research Committee 36 Alienation Theory and Research



RC36

Newsletter 34

July 2020

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# Research Committee 36 Alienation Theory and Research

## A letter from the RC 36 President

Dear friends, colleagues and members of RC36:

Recent events have brought about unforeseen changes not only in our professional lives, but in our personal lives as well. We have been forced to change the ways in which we work, often having to use new technologies to meet each at a distance rather than face to face, while our daily lives have been deeply affected both by direct challenges to our own well-being, and by the efforts undertaken to cope with the ongoing public health crisis. In such circumstances, we must hope that those close to us have not had to endure the most difficult and trying consequences.

One of the most obvious effects upon our own professional activities has been the postponement or cancellation of a range of local and international meetings and conferences across the social sciences and humanistic disciplines. One of the most high-profile scholarly events so affected is the IV ISA Forum of Sociology, which has been rescheduled for 23-27 February 2021 in Porto Alegre, Brazil. It must be said, however, that important questions remain concerning whether it will be possible to hold the Forum on these new dates, regardless of whether or not they are convenient for those of us who have teaching obligations at that time of the year. The ISA's commitment to our Brazilian colleagues was discussed at some length after social tensions obviously beyond the control of our hosts began to emerge, and there was general agreement that it was necessary to demonstrate our solidarity with them during a challenging period of time. The Forum was thus postponed, rather than cancelled or moved to another venue. RC36 has remained steadfast to this point that the scholarly program we submitted to the Forum will be successfully completed as now scheduled. Nevertheless, it is our opinion that present circumstances make it impossible to guarantee that the new dates for the Forum will not be disrupted by public health concerns and social unease.

It has come to our attention that various members of our RC36 community will find it difficult for a variety of reasons to be in Porto Alegre next February. Some have already clearly stated that they cannot plan to

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come. While we would like to encourage all of our members to register for the Forum and plan to participate in person, it is unfortunately perfectly understandable that there are those who will be unable to do so. We also assume that this may be the case with other Research Committees as well. In addition, it remains very difficult at the moment for any of us to begin making more detailed plans to attend the Forum because of the disturbances concerning travel options that have taken place.

Please notify us of your concerns in this regard. Having a good idea of the actual status of RC36 in respect to the Forum will make us better able to address the situation as it continues to develop and engage in exploring various options with the organizers if that becomes necessary. Perhaps online sessions might be an alternative, although that could be challenging in respect to the level of digital infrastructure needed by all participants. Simply stated, we must be prepared to respond in the best way possible in the light of what happens in the course of the next few months.

Another activity that has been significantly affected regards the second interim conference that we are required to organize prior to XX ISA World Congress of Sociology, which is planned for 24-30 July 2022 in Melbourne, Australia. Our status as a research committee depends upon participation in at least two interim conferences between successive World Congresses. A point of concern at the moment is that it is quite unlikely that international meetings of any scope can be organized for the remainder of 2020. This makes it necessary for our Research Committee to either organize or participate as a committee in at least one additional conference between the upcoming Forum and the 2022 World Congress. It may indeed become necessary to organize in some way participation in two additional conferences if planning for the Forum is further disturbed. There is a significant degree of flexibility concerning how such interim conferences can be arranged, and any of you who have suggestions for how we might proceed in this matter are welcome to contact the RC36 Board at your early convenience.

On a positive note, RC36 has played an active role in organizing and sponsoring a survey concerning the changes that have taken place in society and personal life consequent to the Covid-2019 pandemic. We responded to the rapidly-changing situation by taking advantage of an opportunity to cooperate with colleagues at the Institute for Population and Human Studies, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, in preparing

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an international comparative study that addresses alienation on both personal and societal levels from a combination of psychological and sociological perspectives. While many others have also begun more or less similar types of studies, we were among the first in Europe to do so. An initial short-term quantitative survey is utilized in an empirical approach that, in turn, provides a basis for follow-up qualitative studies that also develop theoretical knowledge. We have data from a number of European countries, including non-EU members, as well as data from Asia, South America, and North America. Data is now being analyzed and initial publications are being prepared. We hope that, among other things, this work will help raise the scholarly profiles not only of those involved in the analyses and publications, but also the profile of RC36 as well.

In closing, I wish to reiterate that the Board welcomes your input concerning the upcoming IV ISA Forum of Sociology. We have to be prepared for all related eventualities in these unsettled times, which may well continue into 2021. We also need your suggestions for how to address the need for at least one, and possible two interim conferences prior to the XX ISA World Congress of Sociology in 2022. Our status as a Research Committee depends on meeting this obligation. Perhaps some type of online forums will be useful in this regard, but we clearly have much to do in any case. Finally, please inform us concerning your ongoing scholarly and professional activities so that we can draw the attention of the larger community to the work of RC36. Alienation is both an important research theme and a social problem as well, and its value in casting light upon what is happen in the world is perhaps now greater than it has ever been.

Respectfully,

Andrew Blasko, Secretary-Treasurer RC36

Michael J. Thompson, President RC36

**RC36 Statement on Racism**

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RC36 has a clear stance concerning racism – it is one of the most vile evils in the history of human civilization that has the power to magnify the impact of many of the other evils that we have also created. Moreover, it epitomizes alienation in both thought and action in a manner that obstructs any sense of decency and freedom regarding both individuals and society as a whole. Justice, liberation, and human fulfillment are rendered impossible when our lives are scarred by racism in any of its multitude of forms.

Certain particularly despicable instances of racism have recently drawn public attention in a manner that has not been seen in decades. Such unfortunate events are nothing new, but one took place in circumstances that rendered its character so unmistakably clear that it was difficult for even the most jaded individuals to ignore it. As the resulting public protests swept the globe, that episode drove people to speak out against other similar examples of ethnic and racial hatred – an innocent woman murdered in her bed as she slept by law enforcement officials, a man shot dead while jogging near his home by private individuals who were convinced he must have been engaged in criminal activity because he was not of European background, a person shot in the back and killed as he ran away from an attempted arrest for drunken driving. Persistent public actions on the scale we have seen have perhaps not taken place since the height of the civil rights movement in the United States in the 1960s, if not longer.

We must be hopeful that this outrage against structural and institutional injustice will lead to changes for the better in the substance of contemporary societies. Yet the scale and scope of the anger that has been unleashed challenges our ability to grasp what has happened and clouds our sense of what needs to be done. We must continue to be engaged if we are to pursue the path forward, but that path itself is at times obscured by the lack of a clear and shared sense of the direction that we should take. The issues facing us, which are complex and manifold, have been expressed through a range of opinions and ideologies from across the political spectrum, and the utmost dedication is required if we are to unravel their roots, histories, and consequences, both as individual

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factors, and as associated with other elements. Our powers of observation, reflection, and thought need to be cultivated and exercised to the full if we are to act as productively as possible.

Efforts to understand, combat, and eliminate alienation go hand-in-hand with the struggle to eliminate discrimination against minorities in our communities. RC36 as a scholarly organization is committed in its support of all undertakings to eliminate racism as an evil that drives a wedge between people and distorts our humanity. Each person is an end, not a means, and it is necessary to provide everyone with equal opportunities for their development. Any meaningful humanism begins with egalitarianism, and it must lead to policies and actions that safeguard and sustain egalitarianism so that all of us may be free.

The Officers of RC 36, Alienation Theory and Research, July 2020

# Research Committee 36 Alienation Theory and Research

## **A Letter from the President of the International Sociological Association: ISA Forum in Porto Alegre postponed February 2021**

Dear members of the ISA,

In the context of this global pandemic and in these dark times, our thoughts are with you and with your beloved ones.

As you may already know, the Executive Committee of the ISA decided to postpone the IV ISA Forum of Sociology in Porto Alegre, Brazil, to February 23-27, 2021.

All activities that have been prepared for the Forum will be maintained and the abstract selected for the Forum in July 2020 remain valid for the Forum in February 2021. Preliminary sessions program is available at

<https://isaconf.confex.com/isaconf/forum2020/webprogrampreliminary/programs.html>

We have set a new calendar that allows Research Committees, Working and Thematic Groups to update and re-open some of their panels to new participants to replace the colleagues who will not be able to join us in February 2021.

16 - 25 October 2020: RC/WG/TG publish Calls for new abstracts

26 October – 12 November 2020: **Submission of new abstracts via online platform**

24 November 2020: Authors are notified about the acceptance or rejection of their abstracts

15 December 2020: Presenters final registration deadline

The RC/WG/TG will start diffusing the new calls for abstract in September. We hope you will join us in Porto Alegre for this 2021 ISA Forum of Sociology that will be a unique opportunity to learning from colleagues from all

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continents and sharing analyses of the crisis, its social impacts and the world that will emerge out of it. In the meanwhile, please keep safe and take care of yourself and of the people you love.

Sari Hanafi, President of the International Sociological Association

Geoffrey Pleyers, ISA Vice President for Research and President of the IV ISA Forum of Sociology



# Research Committee 36 Alienation Theory and Research

## Program IV ISA Forum of Sociology

### RC36 Program Coordinators:

Michael THOMPSON, William Paterson University, USA, [thompsonmi@wpunj.edu](mailto:thompsonmi@wpunj.edu)

Vessela MISHEVA, Uppsala University, Sweden, [vessela.misheva@soc.uu.se](mailto:vessela.misheva@soc.uu.se)



### Sessions:

Wednesday, 24 February 2021

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09:00-10:30

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[Globalization, Alienation and Cultural Patterns of Right-Wing Extremism](#)

10:45-12:15

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[Alienation in the 21st Century: Revisiting, Reevaluating, Recentering](#)

14:15-15:45

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[Alienation and the Reactionary Right](#)

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16:00-17:30

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[RC36 Business Meeting](#)

**Thursday, 25 February 2021**

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09:00-10:30

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[Democratic Institutions, Critique and Alienation](#)

10:45-12:15

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[Alienation, Disalienation and Selfhood](#)

14:15-15:45

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[Alienation and Self-Alienation](#)

16:00-17:30

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[Registers of Alienation and the Authoritarian Turn Globally'](#)

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Friday, 26 February 2021

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09:00-10:30

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[The Effects of Alienation on Democracy](#)

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## RC 36 Officers/Board Members

Position	Name	Organ. affiliation	Country	Year
<b>President</b>	Michael J. Thompson	William Patterson University,	USA	2018-2022
<b>Secretary and Treasurer</b>	Andrew Blasco	Bulgarian Academy of Science	Bulgaria	2018-2022
<b>Publications Chairperson</b>	David G. Embrick	University of Connecticut	USA	2018-2022
<b>Board Member</b>	Dirk Michel-Schertges	Aarhus University	Denmark	2018-2022
<b>Board Member</b>	Johannes Lemke Hans Bakker	University of Guelph	Canada	2018-2022
<b>Board Member</b>	Tova Benski	College of Management Academic Studies	Israel	2018-2022
<b>Board Member</b>	Emma Engdahl	University of Gothenburg	Sweden	2018-2022
<b>Board Member</b>	Miri Gal-Ezer	Kinneret College	Israel	2018-2022
<b>Board Member</b>	Terry Malez	York University	Canada	2018-2022
<b>Board Member</b>	Olga Simonova	Higher School of Economics	Russia	2018-2022
<b>Ex-officio Past-president</b>				
<b>Board Member</b>	Devorah Kalekin-Fishman	University of Haifa	Israel	
<b>Board Member</b>	Lauren Langman	Loyola University of Chicago	USA	
<b>Board Member</b>	Vessela Misheva	Uppsala University	Sweden	