

# The AGORA

Newsletter of the Rationality and Society Section of the American Sociological Association and the Research Committee on Rational Choice of the International Sociological Association

Winter 2016/Spring 2017

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2016-2017

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## From the Chair's Desk

Dear Rationality and Society  
Members:

**This year we had again a very successful set of activities during the ASA in Seattle. It started with a very interesting pre-conference (together with the Mathematical Sociology Section) organized by Jun Kobayashi, Masayuki Kanai, Kikuko Nagayoshi, John Skvoretz and Doug Heckathorn. The conference was opened with an keynote by Doug Heckathorn on the history of the Rationality and Society and Mathematical Sociology Sections. (For more about the conference see page 3 of this newsletter.) As a section, we also started collaboration with the Section on Altruism, Morality and Social Solidarity organizing a joint invited session. This year we will continue this collaboration with an open session on Morality, Rationality, and Collective Action. Please consider submitting to this session if you are interested in discussing research with this other section. In addition, we will organize again a more empirically and a more theoretically oriented session. Thanks to Arnout van de Rijt and Jane Sell for organizing these sessions.**

**We had great winners of our section prizes. Emily Erikson won the James Coleman Outstanding**

Book Award for her book “Between Monopoly and Free Trade” (Yale University). The Best Graduate Student Paper Award was given to David Calnitsky and Jonathan Latner (University of Wisconsin-Madison) for their paper “Basic income in a small town: Understanding the elusive effects on work.” An honorable mention was granted to Valentina Assenova (Yale University) for “A Bayesian Learning Model of Adoption Behavior in the Presence of Social Heterogeneity and Inequality.”

We welcome our new council members: Jane Sell as chair-elect, Neha Gondal as new Secretary-treasurer, and Katrin Auspurg as new council member. We thank Anthony Paik, Robert Shelly, and Jun Kobayashi for all the work they did for the section. Also we thank Jacob Dijkstra for maintaining the website for many years and welcome Wojtek Przepiorka as the new web master for our section’s website. Please take a look at the complete new look and feel of our website: <https://sites.google.com/site/rationalityandsocietysection/home>. Wojtek has, for example, archived as many as possible of earlier AGORA issues. If you would happen to have issues that are not yet uploaded to the website, please email them to Wojtek.

The new calls for nominations for our awards can also be found at our website (<https://sites.google.com/site/rationalityandsocietysection/awards>). Please send your nominations for the James Coleman Outstanding Article Award to Katrin Auspurg ([katrin.auspurg@lmu.de](mailto:katrin.auspurg@lmu.de)) and for the Graduate Student Paper Award to Jun Kobayashi ([jun.kobayashi@fh.seikei.ac.jp](mailto:jun.kobayashi@fh.seikei.ac.jp)). See more details in this newsletter.

Also in 2017, there will be many other conferences that might be interesting for our membership. For this occasion, I would like to mention especially INAS 2017, June 8-9 in Oslo (<http://www.sv.uio.no/iss/english/research/news-and-events/events/conferences-and-seminars/inas2017.html>) and the ICSD 2017, June 20-23 in

Toarmina (<https://amsterdamcooperationlab.com/conference/>).

Finally, I would like to thank Jane Sell for all her efforts in compiling this newsletter. I wish you all a very inspiring and productive 2017!

## RATIONALITY AND SOCIETY 2017 AWARDS:



### **Rationality and Society James Coleman Award for Outstanding Article**

**Nominations, including self-nominations, are encouraged for theoretical or empirical works in the rational choice tradition broadly construed, including alternative decision theoretic frameworks and applications of theory to empirical problems. Eligible articles must have been published in 2015 - 2016.**

**Nominations should be submitted to Katrin Auspurg by email ([katrin.auspurg@lmu.de](mailto:katrin.auspurg@lmu.de)) by March 1, 2017. Please include author’s name(s), institutional affiliation and institutional address, and full contact information including preferred email address, telephone number(s) and mailing address.**

#### **Committee members:**

**Katrin Auspurg, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München (chair)**

**Martin Abraham, Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nuremberg**

**Pamela Emanuelson, North Dakota State University**

## **Rationality and Society section award for Best Paper by a Graduate Student**

**Nominations, including self-nominations, are encouraged for theoretical or empirical works in the rational choice tradition broadly construed, including alternative decision theoretic frameworks and applications of theory to empirical problems. Eligible authors are students currently enrolled in a graduate program who will not have received the PhD at the time of the ASA meeting, August 12-15, 2017. Multi-authored papers are eligible if none of the authors has a PhD.**

**Nominations should be submitted by email to Jun Kobayashi ([jun.kobayashi@fh.seikei.ac.jp](mailto:jun.kobayashi@fh.seikei.ac.jp)) by March 1, 2017.**

**Nominations should include two electronic files: (1) A cover page with the paper title, paper abstract, author's name(s), institutional affiliation and institutional address, the name of the author's faculty advisor, and full contact information including preferred email address, telephone number(s) and mailing address. (2) The nominated paper, double-spaced, beginning with title and abstract but with author's name and other identifying information removed.**



## **Report on the Sixth Joint Japan-US Conference on Mathematical Sociology and Rational Choice (reported by Jun Kobayashi)**

The Sixth Joint Japan-US Conference on Mathematical Sociology and Rational Choice was held at Sheraton Seattle hotel the day before the ASA annual meeting. It was cosponsored by ASA Rationality and Society Section, Japanese Association for Mathematical Sociology, and ASA Mathematical Sociology Section. Organizers, thus, consist of the three groups: Jun Kobayashi (Seikei University), Masayuki Kanai (Sen-shu University), Kikuko Nagayoshi (Tohoku University), John Skvoretz (University of South Florida), and Douglas Heckathorn (Cornell University).

The conference has its origin in 2000 in Hawaii. This time it focused on advancement of mathematical and rational choice theoretic sociology. We divided it into four parts: a keynote speech by Doug Heckathorn, a training workshop with three senior advisers (Doug, Andreas Diekmann, and Mitch Sato), a poster session, and three oral sessions. There were no parallel sessions. We had 38 participants and 24 presentations.

The organizers gave Best Papers Awards to:

Marc Höglinger, “Can Social Norms Help Overcome a Public Good Dilemma? The Case of Organ Procurement”

Kazuhiro Kezuka, “Late Marriage and Transition from Arranged Marriages to Love Matches: A Search-Theoretic Approach”

Shinya Obayashi, “Group Expansion by Collective Reputation: Game-theoretic Analyses of Collective Action”

Wojtek Przepiorka, Lukas Norbutas, and Rense Corten, “Information Sharing Promotes Cooperation in Illicit Causes: Evidence from an Online Market in the Dark Web”

Some selected papers were recommended to submit to special issues on the conference in the *Journal of Mathematical Sociology and Sociological Theory and Methods*.

I have participated in all the six conferences from Hawaii. The conference seems like a cradle, with a warm and encouraging atmosphere. I hope it bridged the three groups and inspired a lot of new ideas.

**International Conference at the  
Congressi Stefano Franscini  
(CSF) of ETH Zurich, Monte Verità,  
Ascona  
21-26 May 2017**

**Organizers:**

**Andreas Diekmann, Karin Kurz, Ulf  
Liebe, Peter Preisendörfer, Stefan  
Wehrli**

**Conference Office: Stefan Wehrli,  
ETH Zurich**

[enri2017@ethz.ch](mailto:enri2017@ethz.ch), <http://www.socio.ethz.ch/enri2017>

Both local environmental problems (air and water pollution, soil contamination, toxic waste) in



wealthy and in developing countries as well as global risks (climate change, loss of biodiversity) are mainly due to emissions from industrial and agrarian production, energy provision, transportation and household consumption. Researchers from economics, sociology, social psychology and political science have explored opportunities to reduce environmentally harmful activities. Monetary incentives are clearly effective in market economies but sometimes cause side effects and may be, under certain circumstances,

detrimental to the intrinsic motivation of pro-environmental behavior. Economists have developed new instruments and institutions such as ecological tax reform or emission permits. Sociologists, social psychologists and political scientists have focused on citizens' environmental consciousness and its possible impact on individual behavior and on social movements and voting.

New and innovative research pays attention to the effects of “soft” incentives and explores the interplay of new technologies and environmentally responsible behavior. While environmental research is often based on survey methods an increasing number of new findings stems from experimental research, field experiments, and randomly controlled intervention studies. Moreover, researchers employ simulation models or develop and apply models of strategic interaction based on game theory. There is also a long-standing tradition of research on designing institutional rules to mitigate the “tragedy of the commons” and to test hypotheses on common pool resources (CPR) in lab or field experiments.



**(conference—continued)**

New data sources are accessible via the internet. Particularly, geo-coded data are helpful for investigating the impact of various features of the social context and infrastructure on environmental behavior. Furthermore, the analysis of data in a geographic-information-system (GIS) is relevant to determine the impact of environmental burden (e.g. noise, particulate matter, air pollution) on citizens' health and subjective perceptions of environmental risks.

The international and interdisciplinary conference will bring together researchers mainly from the social sciences (sociology, social psychology, economics, political science, ethnology) to exchange ideas, present and discuss innovative research and new methodological approaches to various aspects of the human dimensions of environmental problems and risks.

Here are some examples of research questions:

- People's perception of risks is often vastly biased compared to objective probabilities of detrimental events. Which factors increase or diminish the bias and what is the implication of biased risk perception for environmental policies?
- What is the impact of "soft incentives" (information feedback, social norms, "default options", symbolic rewards, etc.) versus monetary incentives on pro-environmental behavior?
- Which type of institutional rules will promote and sustain cooperation in social dilemma-type environmental problems?
- What are the distributional implications of norms and institutions to further pro-environmental behavior? Do low-income households lose disproportionately through increased carbon taxes and energy prices? Are minorities and low-income households particularly affected by environmental burdens?
- What are proper institutional schemes to tackle problems of climate change, common pool resources, energy saving, etc.?
- Field experiments and intervention studies in developing countries are of particular importance.

Do the effects of institutional schemes depend on cultural context? Which methods and technologies work best in developing countries?

- How can the acceptance and social diffusion of new, eco-friendly technological devices (fuel-efficient cars, electric cars, household technology, etc.) be supported?
- Rebound effects and "moral licensing" counteract the savings of environmentally friendly technologies and behavior. How can unintended side-effects be reduced?
- What are the pros and cons of various methods (experiments, field experiments, survey studies, simulation studies) to test hypotheses on pro-environmental behavior?
- What is the added value of "big data" from power companies, warehouses, telephone companies, internet search or experimental research with smart devices (e.g. "wearables", smart meters, smartphones) for environmental policies?

The conference will offer a platform for the exchange of ideas for experts developing, testing and applying theories of environmental behavior; the perception and management of environmental risks; and the effects of institutional regulations to mitigate environmental problems on diverse social sciences. Invited participants are from a variety of countries and have different disciplinary backgrounds.

We welcome further contributions. Contributions (title, abstract, manuscript if available) should be submitted no later than 31 January 2017 to the conference office ([enri2017@ethz.ch](mailto:enri2017@ethz.ch)). Please mention whether you are applying for a conference presentation or a poster session. See the conference website: <http://www.socio.ethz.ch/enri2017> for a description of the venue and for conference fees.



## Research Committee on Rational Choice RC45

The general objective of Research Committee 45 on Rational Choice is to advance the development of Rational Choice Theory. This includes its application to various explanatory problems across social science disciplines, its empirical test, its theoretical development and comparison with alternative approaches. The Rc tries to achieve this general objective by promoting the international exchange of scientific information across disciplinary borders.

### President

Antonio M. CHIESI, University of Milano, Italy,  
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### Secretary-Treasurer

Antonio M. JAIME-CASTILLO, University of  
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## From the President's Desk



### Antonio M. Chiesi

Dear RC45 Members,

Although the next World Congress seems still far away, the ISA Secretariat has already called all the RCs for the organization. As you may know, the theme of the Congress, Toronto, July 15-21, 2018, is devoted to a general theme, which is very crucial in the present affairs of our globalized world: "Power, Violence and Justice. Reflections, Responses and Responsibilities".

I think that RC45 can give an important contribution, both in terms of theoretical insight and empirical analysis. We all share the assumption that rational choice is inbuilt in any human decision. The more so in power relations, in decisions concerning the use of or the reaction to violence and the pursuit of justice. Although power, violence and justice are related to basic social sentiments, actors can take advantage in dealing with them rationally in comparison with those who are overwhelmed by emotions. "Power, violence and justice" are based on social sentiments, as Elster reminds us, and originate action tendencies.

The theme of the Congress is not only suggesting analytical insight into ("reflections" on) social action related to the exercise of power, its acceptance, negotiation or dispute; the use of violence and its rejection; the pursuit of justice and its negotiated definition. The study of "responses and responsibilities" have to do with the normative implications of rational action models.

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I am convinced RC45 can contribute to the Toronto Congress in many ways: provide empirical evidence of actual behavior and its analytical interpretation; build computational models studying unanticipated consequences of power; conduct experimental research on reactions to violence; survey changes in what people consider just or unjust.

The ISA Secretariat has invited all the ISA members to submit sessions proposals by mid-January to [isa@isa-sociology.org](mailto:isa@isa-sociology.org) for selection processes. The board members of RC45 have already discussed some possible themes in three different directions. The first direction comprises the official topic of the Congress. The second includes themes that proved to be attractive in previous congresses, not necessarily related to the topic of the Congress. The third covers themes emerging from recent developments of RAT and from neighbor approaches, such as analytical sociology.

The selection of proposals will last until mid-March, in order to avoid overlaps, to merge similar topics or to develop promising subjects. We have to work a lot in the next months and our job is very important to ensure attractive and busy sessions. RC45 is a small but active committee. RAT is still a minor approach in sociology, unlike in other social sciences; but our membership is progressively increasing as long as our approach and methods are gaining consent among scholars all over the world. I have no doubt that we can give a small but significant contribution to the Congress and organize a successful set of sessions.

Today is a foggy day in Milan, the usual winter weather of my city; families are preparing the Christmas nativity scene; shops have already decorated the streets with colorful lights; confectionaries are preparing the typical cake, the *panettone*; supermarkets supply plenty of goodies for the traditional Christmas dinner.

I take the opportunity to wish you a happy new year 2017.

ISA RC45 decided to hold an international workshop on social inequality next summer. Details are shown below. We will send a CFP soon. Please mark the date!

### Second International Workshop of ISA RC45: Social Inequality

Date: September 1, 2017 (9:00am to 6:00pm)

Venue: Utrecht University, The Netherlands

Cosponsors: ISA RC45 on Rational Choice, SSP project

Organizers: Jun Kobayashi (Seikei University), Masayuki Kanai (Senshu

University), Carola Hommerich (Hokkaido University), Vincent Buskens

(Utrecht University, local organizer)

### Recent Publications of Interest:

Jasso, Guillermina. 2016. "(In)Equality and (In)Justice." *Civitas – Revista de Ciências Sociais* 16(2):189-217. <http://dx.doi.org/10.15448/1984-7289.2016.2.23118>

Christine Horne, Pazit Ben-Nun Bloom, Kyle Irwin, Dan Miodownik and Michael Hechter. "The Legitimacy of Alien Rulers," *Swiss Political Science Review*. DOI:10.1111/spsr.12221 (2016).

David S. Siroky, Sean Mueller and Michael Hechter "Center-Periphery Bargaining in the Age of Democracy". *Swiss Political Science Review*, 2 (4) (December 2016), special issue on "Power, Territory and Nationalism"

Siroky, David and Michael Hector. “ Ethnicity, Class and Civil War: The Role of Hierarchy, Segmentation and Crosscutting Cleavages.” Civil Wars 18 (1) (January 2016): 91-107.

Siroky, David, Sean Mueller and Michael Hector. “Cultural Legacies and Political Preferences: The Failure of Separatism in the Swiss Jura,” European Political Science Review, DOI:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S1755773915000399> (2015).

Pfaff, Steven, Michael Hector and Kattie Corcoran. ”The Problem of Solidarity in Insurgent Collective Action: The Nore Mutiny of 1797,” Social Science History, 40: 2 (2016): 247-270 .

Hechter, Michael, Steven Pfaff and Patrick Underwood. “Grievances and the Genesis of Rebellion: Mutiny in the Royal Navy, 1740-1820,” American Sociological Review 81: 1 (2016): 165-189.

Savage, David A. “Those Left Behind: Euthanasia, Suicide and Other Regarding Preferences,” Rationality and Society 28:(2016): 439-452.

Lengfeld, Holger and Jessica Ordemann. “The Long Shadow of Occupation: Volunteering in Retirement,” Rationality and Society 28 (2016): 3-23.



The Annual Meeting will be held August 12–15 in Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

