

International Sociological Association
RC 20
Comparative Sociology

June 2012 Newsletter

Strasbourg: 29 June, 2012

Dear colleagues,

With the Buenos Aires forum little more than a month away, we have just put the finishing touches to our Research Committee's program (see hereunder). I must say that I find this type of exercise increasingly difficult to handle as time goes on. Indeed, the program coordinator's position is not an easy one, caught as he is between the harsh realities of official deadlines and the need to accommodate the individual circumstances of the many participants. Though the whole process started over 18 months ago, we only received final confirmation from some paper-givers at the beginning of this very week – putting certain panels in jeopardy. Furthermore, the computerised planning system still has trouble dealing with certain tasks, such as doubling sessions, eliminating others and reallocating time-slots – all of which are necessary adjustments given the relative popularity of themes and the number of acceptable papers received.

I think it is very important to hold congresses and fora outside of the usual Euro-American locations as it creates greater opportunities for exchange with social scientific communities that are not always sufficiently heard there. My only regret is that material and logistic problems have prevented a number of young scholars from making the trip to Argentina.

I look forward to seeing many of you in August and wish you all a pleasant summer break in the meantime.

*Jean-Pascal Daloz
RC 20 Chair*

Second ISA forum of Sociology Buenos Aires (August 2012)

Final Programme

Please go to:

<http://isaconf.confex.com/isaconf/forum2012/webprogram/Symposium23.html>

Project suggestion on Sociological Schools of thought and Comparative Analysis

One of the tasks of a research committee is to define common axes of reflexion that can mobilise the interest of a broad section of members. In this perspective, I would like to suggest the question of comparative analysis in sociology and how it has been tackled by various schools of thought as a possible theme for the next few years. The idea would be to organise a symposium in Strasbourg in 2013, under the aegis of our RC, and dedicate one or two sessions at the 2014 Yokohama Congress to this subject. I look forward to discussing this further during our business session in Buenos Aires with those of our members who will be attending. In the meantime, I would like to take this opportunity to ask whoever may be interested in such a project to contact me with potential suggestions. What I have in mind for instance would be papers on the Weberian, Durkheimian, Eliasian, Bourdieusian... traditions' relation to the comparative approach.

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International Institute of Sociology Congress

During the 40th IIS congress in Delhi, a session on 'Processes of Civilising, De-civilising and Post Colonisation', was proposed by RC 20 members: Stephen Vertigans and Robert van Krieken. It was held on February 19. Because of the tragic loss of Willfried Spohn, who was the planned chair, the role was taken by Irena Veljanova, University of Western Sydney.

It consisted of four presentations as follows:

I) 'Ecologization, Moralization and Civilization: On the Development of Climate Change as a Social Problem' by Amanda Rohloff, Brunel University, London

II) 'Socio-cultural Network Analysis Exemplifying Process-oriented Methodology' by Fumiya Onaka, Japan Women's University, Tokyo

III) 'Doxic Experiences of Health: On 'Civilised' and 'Backward' Health Related Behaviors of Macedonians in Australia' by Irena Veljanova, University of Western Sydney

IV) 'Encounters and Recognitions, as Proceeding and as Methodology in the Process of Civilizing' by Gilles Verpraet, CNRS Sopiapol, University Paris Ouest

The session was well attended by researchers from all over the world and there were valuable questions and answers. One of most remarkable arguments from the floor which fitted both the congress setting and the session title was that there might be no term which precisely corresponds to 'civilization' in Indian language. It could be translated by the word 'samskrti', but its true meaning is 'culture'.

Fumiya Onaka, Japan Women's University

Recent and forthcoming publications by RC 20 members

- Sasaki, Masamichi and Robert M. Marsh (eds) *Trust: Comparative Perspectives*, Leiden: Brill, 2012

- The *Concise Encyclopedia of Comparative Sociology* co-edited by Masamichi Sasaki, Jack Goldstone, Ekkart Zimmermann and Stephen Sanderson, will be published from Brill Academic Publishers this year.

- Robert van Krieken, *Celebrity Society*, London: Routledge, 2012.

- <https://www.facebook.com/Celebrity.Society.Book>

On television, in magazines and books, on the internet and in films, celebrities of all sorts seem to monopolize our attention. *Celebrity Society* brings new dimensions to our understanding of celebrity, capturing the way in which the figure of 'the celebrity' is bound up with the emergence of modernity. It outlines how the 'celebrification of society' is not just the twentieth-century product of Hollywood and television, but a long-term historical process, beginning with the printing press, theatre and art.

By looking beyond the accounts of celebrity 'culture', Robert van Krieken develops an analysis of 'celebrity society', with its own constantly changing social practices and structures, moral grammar, construction of self and identity, legal order and political economy organized around the distribution of visibility, attention and recognition. Drawing on the work of Norbert Elias, the book explains how contemporary celebrity society is the heir (or heiress) of court society, taking on but also democratizing many of the functions of the aristocracy. The book also develops the idea of celebrity as driven by the 'economics of attention', because attention has become a vital and increasingly valuable resource in the information age.

"A major book by a major sociologist. This is sociology at its best: it make the obstinately familiar both more remarkable and more intelligible. Those idiotic magazines one sees in the doctor's waiting room will never seem the same again."

Professor Stephen Mennell, University College Dublin

"Much has been written about the cult of celebrity today, but Robert van Krieken's lucid, perceptive, critical and timely book stands out from earlier discussions of the topic. Particularly welcome are his displacement of attention from the celebrities themselves to the culture that produces them, and his placing of today's celebrity society in a tradition that goes back to the courts of early modern Europe."

Professor Peter Burke, University of Cambridge

- Max Haller, Markus Hadler, Gerd Kaup, "Leisure time in modern societies: A new source of boredom and stress?", *Social Indicators Research*, vol. 80, 2012 (already available on the Internet).

Information about Sociopedia

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