

The AGORA

Newsletter of the Rationality and Society Section of the American Sociological Association and the Research Committee 45 on Rational Choice of the International Sociological Association

Winter 2021/Spring 2022



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From the Chair's Desk (ASA)

Gianluca Manzo



Being the chair of the Rationality and Society section is a singular honor and a great responsibility.

Our section first met in Los Angeles in 1994 under the name “Rational Choice”. Since then an impressive list of distinguished scholars chaired the section, including Michael Hechter (our first chair), Douglas Heckathorn, Ronald Burt, Michael Macy, Guillermina Jasso, Siegwart Lindenberg, Scott Feld, David Willer, and, among the younger generation, just to name a few, Andreas Flache, Vincent Buskens and Arnout van de Rijt. Thus, anyone becoming a chair after such impressive line-up of social scientists can only feel honored to continue to serve the section in that position.

At the same time, contributing to maintain alive the section raises a sizeable challenge to any new chair. And here the feeling of responsibility enters the picture. Our section indeed is the second smallest ASA section in terms of members (116, according to December count); only “Evolution, Biology, and Society” currently lies behind us (with 97 members). Even without aiming at competing with the sections at the top of the distribution (namely, the six with more than 1000 members), among which one finds “Race, gender and class” or “Sociology of sex and gender”, our section looks surprisingly small compared to the variety of theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches pursued by its members. A quick glance at the current list of members would indeed show that the section can hardly be reduced to the narrow view of rational choice theory that many

outsiders may associate to the “rationality” label.

So what explains our low membership and what could we collectively do to attract new folks?

Our past chair, Stephen Bernard, explicitly focused on that challenge since his first message to the section through *Agora*. Stephen pursued an active gift-membership policy during the last year and also created a dedicated committee for thinking systematically about the small-N issue our section must face. I would like to continue Stephen’s efforts by stimulating a larger reflection on potential explanations of this state of affairs. Are we weakly attractive because we communicate poorly the diversity of theoretical and methodological approaches covered by the section? Are we weakly attractive because we suffer from a structural negative perception of what is roughly (and wrongly) associated with an individualist stance to sociology? Could a more radical change in the section’s name help –the name was indeed already changed from “Rational Choice” to “Rationality and Society” in 2001?

Actually this was a recurrent discussion within the successive section councils over the last years, a discussion that typically materialized during the section annual business meeting. I suggest to extend this discussion since now to all section members that cherish our section and understand it as a collective good. Please write to me an e-mail containing your own potential answer to the following question: why our section is so small despite the diversity of approaches pursued by its members and the academic quality and visibility of the latter notwithstanding?

Our sessions at the next year meeting in Los Angeles will represent a great opportunity to advance this debate. In particular, Guillermina Jasso’s roundtable-like session on “ASA Rational Choice at 28” promises directly to address the issue of the variety of theoretical approaches currently characterizing our section. On the other side, Milena Tsvetkova’s open session on “Computational and empirical approaches to micro-macro dynamics” has the potential to show to a large audience the range of methodological approaches in which we can cover. Please spread the word about these sections as largely as you can and please do the same as to paper nominations to our paper awards, namely the James S. Coleman Outstanding Article Award and the Best Paper by a Graduate Student (deadline March 31, 2022).

With the hope that the Corona crisis will allow us to meet in person in Los Angeles next August, I wish

you the best for the end of 2021 and a great start to a productive and peaceful New Year.

Award Announcement from the Rationality and Society Section



2022 Rationality and Society James S. Coleman Outstanding Article Award

Nominations, including self-nominations, are encouraged for theoretical, empirical or experimental works in the tradition of analytical and computational sociology, including research on various action theory frameworks. To be eligible for the award, the article must be published within the last two years. Faculty and graduate students are eligible for the award. An article may be submitted to the Outstanding Article Award or the Graduate Student paper award, but not both. Co-authors share the award equally. Nominators should be members in good standing of the American Sociological Association.

Please include (1) a brief statement (1 or 2 paragraphs) by the nominator of the reason the article deserves this award; and (2) an electronic copy of the article.

Nominations should be submitted to Arnout van de Rijt by email (Arnout.VanDeRijt@eui.eu) by **March 31, 2022**.

Committee Members:

Arnout van de Rijt (Chair), European University Institute

Jane Sell, Texas A&M University

Milena Tsvetkova, London School of Economics

2022 Rationality and Society section award for Best Paper by a Graduate Student

Nominations, including self-nominations, are encouraged for theoretical, empirical or experimental works in the tradition of analytical and computational sociology, including research on various action theory

frameworks. 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 5-9, 2022. Multi-authored papers are eligible if none of the authors has a PhD. An article may be submitted to the Outstanding Article Award or the Graduate Student paper award, but not both.

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; and (2) The nominated paper, double-spaced with author's name and other identifying information removed.

Nominations should be submitted by email to Yoshimichi Sato (yoshimichi.sato.a5@tohoku.ac.jp) by **March 31, 2022**.

Committee Members:

Yoshimichi Sato (Chair), Tohoku University

Mary Brinton, Harvard University

Werner Raub, Utrecht University

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.

From the President's Desk

Jun Kobayashi



Dear colleagues,

What did year 2021 mean to you? For us RC45 members, the year will be remembered with a memory of the first ever online ISA Forum of Sociology. Lasting from February 23 to 28, we RC45 organized 6 fascinating sessions.

Coming year 2022 should be regarded as a preparation period for XX ISA World Congress of Sociology in 2023. It will be held in Melbourne, Australia, from June 25 to July 1, 2023.

Although originally planned on-site in the Southern Hemisphere, the conference is most likely to use a hybrid format. Due to accessibility from the Global South. So, you can either visit the venue or attend it online from your office as you wish. The final decision will be made later.

A progress report. ISA Research Council meeting was organized on December 18, which Masa joined as the RC45 Secretary-Treasurer. Important deadlines below and a possible hybrid format were notified.

Important deadlines for the Melbourne World Congress
May 2 - 31, 2022, Call for Sessions

July 1 - September 30, 2022, Abstracts submission

Any RC45 member can propose sessions. Bring your fresh and innovative ideas! And do not be shy to submit your abstracts in September. Once successfully accepted, your paper will be assigned to a session and appear on the online program on May 9, 2023.

In 2023 June to July, we gather at the World Congress.

After that, a next ISA Forum will be there in June or July 2025. A venue is undecided.

Good news. I cannot be more excited to introduce our new newsletter editor, Lucas Sage. We all know long-term limitless contributions of Wojtek Przepiorka, his predecessor. As Wojtek stepped down, Lucas kindly agreed to fill out the position. From this issue, Lucas works on the ISA side along with Masa Kanai on the ASA side. No doubt he takes over Wojtek's creativity. See "Students on the Market" in this issue for his details.

As always, my deepest thanks go to our editors, Masa and Lucas. I wish all of you a peaceful yet productive new year.

Students on the Market:

Lucas Sage

(Sorbonne University/University of Trento)



Lucas Sage is a Ph.D. student in sociology at Sorbonne University and at the University of Trento. In his Ph.D. dissertation, he analyzes the mechanisms generating wage inequality both between demographic groups—such as gender and education—but also within these groups. Indeed, the variables traditionally used to explain how much a person gets paid, only account for a small portion of the total wage variance. A common explanation to this puzzling empirical pattern is that these differences are due to unobserved inter-individual ability differences. Yet, ability differences alone are only a part of the story. They are multiplied by sorting

processes: highly able workers tend to work in the highest paying organizations and in the highest paying occupations. This produces a cumulative (dis)advantage phenomenon that contributes to explaining both between- and within-group wage differences. To conduct his research, Lucas uses both statistical methods and agent-based models.

Recent Publications of Interest

Articles:

Adriaans, Jule, Stefan Liebig, Clara Sabbagh, and Guillermina Jasso. 2021. "What's in a Word? Just vs. Fair vs. Appropriate Earnings for Self and Others." *Social Justice Research* 34(4):397-427.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11211-021-00380-1>.

Erikson, Emily and Hirokazu Shirado. 2021. "Network Structure, Property, and the Division of Labor." *American Sociological Review*, 84(4): 759-786.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/00031224211027893>.

Frey, Vincenz and Arnout van de Rijt. 2021. "Social Influence Undermines Crowd Wisdom in Sequential Decision-Making." *Management Science* 67(7): 4273-4286.

<https://doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.2020.3713>.

Jasso, Guillermina. 2021. "Linking Input Inequality and Outcome Inequality." *Sociological Methods and Research* 50(3):944-1005.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/00491241211014245>.

Jasso, Guillermina. 2021. "The Methods and Surprises of Sociological Theory: Ideas, Postulates, Predictions, Distributions, Unification." Pp. 17-36 in Seth Abrutyn and Omar Lizardo (eds.), *Handbook of Classical Sociological Theory*. New York, NY: Springer.

https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-78205-4_2.

Jasso, Guillermina, and Moshe Semyonov. 2021. "Editorial: Immigration in the Global Era: Migrants and the People and Laws at Origin and Destination." [Frontiers | Editorial: Immigration in the Global Era: Migrants and the People and Laws at Origin and Destination | Sociology \(frontiersin.org\)](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-78205-4_2).

Kas, Judith, Rense Corten, and Arnout van de Rijt. 2021. "The Role of Reputation Systems in Digital Discrimination." *Socio-Economic Review*.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/ser/mwab012>.

Lo Iacono, Sergio, Wojtek Przepiorka, Vincent Buskens, Rense Corten, and Arnout van de Rijt. 2022. "COVID-19 Vulnerability and Perceived Norm Violations Predict Loss of Social Trust: A Pre-Post Study." *Social Science & Medicine* 291:114513.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2021.114513>.

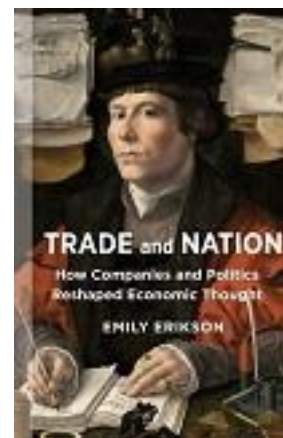
Edited collection of articles (with downloadable E-Book):

Jasso, Guillermina, and Moshe Semyonov. 2021.

Immigration in the Global Era: Migrants and the People and Laws at Origin and Destination.

[Immigration in the Global Era: Migrants and the People and Laws at Origin and Destination | Frontiers Research Topic \(frontiersin.org\)](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-78205-4).

Books:



Erikson, Emily. 2021. *Trade and Nation: How Companies and Politics Reshaped Economic Thought*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Description:

In the seventeenth century, English economic theorists lost interest in the moral status of exchange and became increasingly concerned with the roots of national prosperity. This shift marked the origins of classical political economy and provided the foundation for the contemporary discipline of economics. The seventeenth-century revolution in economic thought fundamentally reshaped the way economic processes have been interpreted and understood. In *Trade and Nation*, Emily Erikson brings together historical, comparative, and computational methods to explain the institutional forces that brought about this transformation.

Erikson pinpoints how the rise of the company form in confluence with the political marginalization of English merchants created an opening for public argumentation over economic matters. Independent merchants, who were excluded from state institutions and vast areas of trade, confronted the power and influence of crown-endorsed chartered companies. Their distance from the halls of government drove them to take their case to the public sphere. The number of merchant-authored economic texts rose as members of this class sought to show that their preferred policies would contribute to the benefit of the state and commonwealth. In doing so, they created and disseminated a new moral framework of growth, prosperity, and wealth for evaluating economic behavior. By using computational methods to document these processes, *Trade and Nation* provides both compelling evidence and a prototype for how methodological innovations can help to provide new insights into large-scale social processes.

Contents:

Acknowledgments

Introduction

1. The Declining Importance of Fair Exchange

2. Transformative Debates

3. Key Actors, Institutions, and Relations

4. Authors and Their Networks

5. Representation, Companies, and Publications

6. Why Not the Dutch?

Conclusion

Bibliography

Index



Manzo, Gianluca, eds. 2021. *Research Handbook on Analytical Sociology*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Description:

Providing an up-to-date portrait of the concepts and methods of analytical sociology, this pivotal Research Handbook traces the historical evolution of the field, utilizing key research examples to illustrate its core principles. It investigates how analytical sociology engages with other approaches such as analytical philosophy, structural individualism, social stratification research, complexity science, pragmatism, and critical realism, exploring the foundations of the field as well as its major explanatory mechanisms and methods.

Chapters examine the ways in which analytical sociology addresses crucial concepts, including norms, structures, context, contingency, action theory, and models of social interactions. Offering an in-depth analysis of cumulative advantage, complex contagions, and network amplification, this comprehensive Research Handbook discusses the range of data sources and methods available to analytical sociologists for empirical research, in particular digital traces, historical archives, game-theoretic models, causal inference techniques, social networks analysis, and agent-based simulations.

Creating a new synthesis of the theoretical and methodological resources required to carry out research using analytical sociology tools, the Research Handbook will be a key pedagogical resource for students and scholars of sociology and sociological theory, research methods, demography, social psychology, economics, and computer science.

Contents:

Preface

Does analytical sociology practice what it preaches? An assessment of analytical sociology through the Merton award

Gianluca Manzo

PART 1 THEORETICAL CONVERSATIONS

1. Understanding the Coleman boat

Petri Ylikoski

2. Analytical sociology, analytic philosophy and analytical Marxism

Daniel Little

3. Analytical sociology and its lesser-known antecedents: structural individualism in European sociology

Werner Raub

4. Analytical sociology and complexity research 100

Michael Mäs

5. Analytical sociology and social stratification research

Carlo Barone

6. Analytical sociology and critical realism

Francesco Di Iorio and Francisco J. León-Medina

7. Analytical sociology and cultural sociology

Filippo Barbera

8. Analytical sociology and pragmatism

Matthew Norton

PART 2 PIVOTAL CONCEPTS AND MECHANISMS

9. Action

Clemens Kroneberg and Andreas Tütic

10. Interactions

Michael Mäs

11. Structure

Emily Erikson and Eric Feltham

12. Norms

Pierre Demeulenaere

13. Coupled contexts

Filippo Barbera and Nicola Negri

14. Contingency and randomness: a modal approach

Ivan Ermakoff

15. Cumulative advantage

Freda B. Lynn and Hannah W. Espy

16. Network amplification

Filiz Garip and Mario D. Molina

17. Complex contagions

Damon Centola

PART 3 PIVOTAL METHODS

18. Archival data

Katharina Burgdorf and Henning Hillmann

19. Digital data and methods

Viktoria Spaiser

20. Advances in mediation analysis

Kinga Makovi and Christopher Winship

21. Experiments

Giuseppe A. Veltri

22. Game-theoretic models

Wojtek Przepiorka

23. Network mechanisms and network models

Christoph Stadtfeld and Viviana Amati

24. Agent-based computational models

Andreas Flache and Carlos A. de Matos Fernandes

25. The many model approach

Scott E. Page

Coda—The past and future of analytical sociology

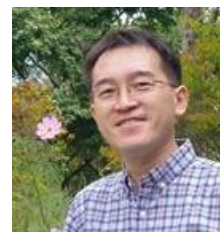
Peter Hedström

Editors' note

It is my great pleasure to welcome Lucas Sage as co-editor of the AGORA! Though the Omicron variant gives us uncertain outlook, I hope things are getting better this year and we meet in person again. (Masa)



Lucas Sage
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