

Minutes of the ISA Research Council Business Meeting Held online on December 18, 2021

Present: 58 participants (RC/WG/TG representatives, ISA Executive Committee representatives, Observers). Information facilitated by Zoom

The meeting was chaired by Geoffrey Pleyers, ISA Vice-President Research
The minutes were taken by Juan Lejárraga, ISA Membership Officer

Welcome and Presentation of the Agenda

Geoffrey Pleyers, ISA Vice-President Research, started the meeting by commenting that there were lots of activities of RC/WG/TG besides big ISA conferences. As mentioned by several RC delegates in previous meetings, each RC/WG/TG works in a competitive international environment, along with other international research networks. Some of them wondered what additional advantage the ISA offers as it charges higher membership fees than other research organizations or networks. Together with the ISA secretariat and Research coordination committee, we have discussed how to improve the service and support we offer to the RC/WG/TG. An open question that was put at the core of this Research Council meeting was: What do you expect ISA to do? What kind of support should we provide to your RC/WG/TG?

Agenda

1. The RC/WG/TG in the ISA and the roles of the Research Council
by Geoffrey Pleyers, ISA Vice-President for research.
2. The Research Council task force on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI), followed by an open discussion by Debra Davidson (RC24)
3. Information about the ISA activities at the UN
by Jan Fritz & Rhoda Reddock (ISA Executive Committee & Research Coordination Committee)
4. Open consultation on the tasks and roles of the ISA Secretariat in the future

5. ISA new social media strategy and offer to support RC/WG/TG online communication. Proposal by the ISA Secretariat & Geoffrey Pleyers

6. 2023 ISA Congress and its calendar by Sari Hanafi, President of the ISA

Questions about the ISA congress by the RC 17 (ESA congress) and RC35 (fees)

7. RC/WG/TG voices in the ISA

-Balance of the activities of ISA EC members elected by the RCs (Research Coordinating Committee)

-Possible questions about the ISA Executive Committee meetings (the meeting Minutes have been sent to the Research Council delegates)

-Information about the ISA global webinar on “Sociology in the world that comes out of the pandemic”

1. The RC/WG/TG in the ISA and the roles of the Research Council

The Research Council was defined by Geoffrey Pleyers as a place not just to be heard but to establish practices from below, from the daily life of the RC/WG/TH. Thus, participation in the various channels is considered fundamental. Geoffrey referred to diversity and inclusion as key themes in the ISA and RCs.

To that end, an ISA Equity Diversity and Inclusion Task Force has been set up by the Research Council. It is chaired by Debra Davidson (RC24). Some 15 members from within that group have divided in two subgroups focused on development and dissemination of a member survey for the purposes of identifying members’ concerns and priorities. The goal is to disseminate the survey in early Summer 2022. The other subgroup is to develop a statement of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) principles, which will be presented to the EC for approval. If adopted, the goal is to release the statement at the XX ISA World Congress in 2023. 18 ISA members were also requested to serve on an advisory board to inform about activities within the task force.

2. The Research Council Task Force on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI), followed by an open discussion by Debra Davidson (RC24).

Debra Davidson presented the conceptual framework of EDI:

Equity requires removing systemic barriers and biases that prevent individuals of certain groups from having *equal opportunity to access and benefit from the association*. To achieve this, ISA leadership and members must first develop a strong understanding of the systemic barriers faced by individuals from underrepresented groups (e.g., women, non-binary people, persons with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples, racialized and ethnic minorities, individuals from the LGBTQ2+ community), and secondly, put in place impactful measures to address these barriers.

Diversity refers to the acknowledgement and respect for the presence of difference within any collective group. In discussions of social equity, diversity addresses differences in social group membership related to geography (global North versus global South), race, Indigenous identity, class, gender identity or expression, sexuality, disability, ethnicity, and religion, and also the worldviews, ways of knowing and methods applied to scholarship. A diversity of perspectives and

lived experiences is fundamental to achieving excellence in scholarship and moving the discipline of sociology forward. Diversity is about uniting rather than dividing to address systemic discrimination within its organization.

Inclusion speaks to a sense of belonging, and recognition of citizenship, including the ability to engage and succeed in a given institution, program, or setting. Inclusion calls for recognizing, reducing, and removing barriers to participation created by social disadvantage or oppression. The goal of inclusion is to ensure that all individuals are valued and respected for their contributions, are equally supported, and have equal opportunities to engage in the governance of our association.

Debra Davidson asked for feedback to know how the statement is progressing. She also reminded that this was an ad-hoc group, and that a stable body should be created.

Sari Hanafi, ISA President, was glad of the advancement of the reflection, since he considers diversity a part of his presidential project. The mechanism for elections in National Associations (NA) has already been changed. More diversity of RC Presidents -more representative of ISA members- is the direction ISA should be moving.

The Task Force on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion received several compliments for its coordination and cohesive plan. It was recommended to work in liaison with Human Rights Committee that is exploring harassment. Also, given that ISA is member of International Science Council (ISC), it was proposed that ISA join the ISC Gender Equity in Science Committee.

Geoffrey Pleyers considered the Task Force on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion a good example of what can be done in the Research Council as RC/WG/TG delegates work together on crucial issue for their committee and for the ISA. In order to achieve diversity, proactiveness was lauded, putting emphasis on concrete ways of doing: Which policies and experiences work? What are good practices? A better sociology will come out of this effort towards diversity.

He also stressed that while the task force suggestions to improve practices and rules at the ISA level, it is at least as important to gather good practices set up in RCs and to foster ways to improve EDI in the RC/WG/TG. Finally, he reminded that two “Professional Development Sessions” have been allocated to the Task Force on EDI at the next World Congress of Sociology.

Global Dialogue magazine was mentioned as a very well-done project tackling diversity and dialogue, not celebrated enough.

A call was made to think very seriously how to attract more members from the Global South and to include mechanisms for maintaining the commitment of members to democracy.

3. Information about the ISA activities at the UN

by Jan Fritz & Rhoda Reddock (Executive Committee & Research Coordinating Committee)

More involvement of RC and NA with United Nations activities (workshops, conferences...) was asked for, as well as ISA budgetary support. Since UN has regional bodies, NA can interface in these regional offices.

More direct representation from the people who are elected was requested. The activities can be announced in ISA website section “Acting globally”. To learn about and to disseminate RC activities

with UN, RCs were requested to email Jan Fritz and Rhoda Reddock. These should be RCs' activities, not by individuals. A commitment of the ISA to support UN-RC activities was requested.

4. Open consultation on the tasks and roles of the ISA secretariat in the future

Izabela Barlinska, ISA's Executive Secretary for more than 30 years, will retire after Melbourne Congress, and a process to choose a new Executive Secretary will open. It was considered an occasion to think strategically about the needs, roles, and functions of the Secretariat. Izabela Barlinska was congratulated for her dedication to ISA and considered by many members of the Research Council to be irreplaceable.

By mid-January the EC will issue an advertisement with a deadline of 2-3 months to submit applications. Help for targeting and recommending people was called for.

A debate on whether a headhunter could also be used also to get a strong pool of candidates ensued, and whether the provenance should be from academia and social science. Headhunters may come from administration, somebody warned. That knowledge from sociology should be required was a shared criterion.

Prompted by a question, Izabela Barlinska clarified concisely the role of the Executive Secretary: to follow up decisions by EC paying attention to every detail. She showed gratitude to RC/WG/TG officers for many years of cooperation and to the staff of the ISA Secretariat for their constant support; she vowed to help the new person to get involved.

5. ISA new social media strategy and offer to support RC/WG/TG online communication Proposal by the ISA Secretariat & Geoffrey Pleyers

EC has increased time and money for ISA Secretariat to improve the visibility of RC activities. To be efficient, RC need to inform the Secretariat (via email, sharing tweets with the @isa_sociology handle) of their events and publications, which will be diffused through different outlets: isagram, twitter, Facebook, and RC own webs, under Forthcoming Activities. Different support for RC was offered for those who are familiar with social media, and those who are not.

Geoffrey Pleyers explained the "new strategy" to support RC/WG/TG digital communication that was presented in [a document](#) sent to all the RC/WG/TG delegates.

ISA Secretariat clarified that announcements are selected based on international scope or interest and are posted in ISA official languages.

Geoffrey Pleyers announced that an ad hoc committee will review how to set up RC websites. Many questions remain: how many RC are interested in having their own RC? Will it be cheaper if ISA hosts them? Shall we harmonize the different RC webs? In the past, RC presidents tend to host their web in their university. But this has made difficult the transition of the RC web from one board to the next one.

Someone raised the issue that we usually communicate between sociologists and that we should also communicate with society. This would legitimate sociology in times of crisis. A professional (a journalist) was suggested as a possible help. International Science Council was mentioned as an example of an organization who, beyond academic reports, has recently addressed communication to the wide public.

6. 2023 ISA Congress and its calendar

Sari Hanafi, President of the ISA, announced that ISA World Congress will be a hybrid meeting-

ISA changed the year of its congress and that affects other organizations. A question regarding communication with European Sociological Association (ESA) was posed by the RC17 representative. Sari Hanafi assured there was good coordination with ESA.

David Strecker (RC35) raised several questions about a use of the ISA reserve fund, public availability of financial data, and reports by the RCC members about the relation of top-down administration and bottom-up will formation.

Sari Hanafi explained that ISA main resources are publications and membership fees; congresses rarely make money. Because of Open Access publications, ISA will be losing half of its income obtained from royalties. Regarding the reserve available, ISA is earning money from this endowment, which serves as a safety cushion in case things go bad and provides stability. A RC requested more information about this money, and after deliberation, the EC said the information shared was sufficient. However, the President said the suggestion of what to do with the money regarding reduction of congress fees, or to give more participation of the Global South, will be raised.

7. RC/WG/TG voices in the ISA

- Balance of the activities of ISA EC members elected by the RCs (Research Coordinating Committee RCC)

RCC members were requested to provide reports about their activities as representatives of the RC/WG/TG. Three EC members sent their reports (Allison Loconto, Hiroshi Ishida, Susan McDaniel). Tova Benski was not informed about it due to a communication problem. The other RCC members report are still expected.

Geoffrey Pleyers closed the meeting by reminding about an upcoming webinar, *Sociology in a time of multiple crises*, that hopefully will become an ISA book. He urged to use the Research Council mailing-list to communicate among RCs and to share the good practices, ideas and questions with other RC/WG/TG presidents and delegates. isa-researchcouncil2021@listes.uclouvain.be