

XX ISA World Congress of Sociology



Resurgent Authoritarianism:
*Sociology of New Entanglements of
Religions, Politics, and Economies*

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Ad Hoc Sessions will be held at 17:30-19:20 for 5 days, Monday through Friday, June 26-30, 2023

Atmospheres of the infra-ordinary

Session Organisers: Andrea BRIGHENTI and Alice BROMBIN

In this Ad Hoc Session, we seek to retrieve and revive the legacy of Georges Perec's 'infra-ordinary' notion. Perec famously crafted the neologism in order to tackle 'the endotic', as opposed to 'the exotic', of social life, digging into 'the trivial and futile'. Recognising, and even emphasising, triviality inherently evokes, for Perec, the possibility of casting a novel light upon it. Neither ordinary nor extra-ordinary, the infra-ordinary hints that grey, 'surreal' zone in social imagination and action that still looks like a veritable *terra incognita*.

Yet the infra-ordinary is not only a tool to de-familiarise with the ordinary, but more powerfully still, an imperative to push the limits of sociological description in the quest to generate new forms of meaning, and new modes of apprehension of the social: What is the minimal unit of meaning in social life? Where are the thresholds of understandable social phenomena to be set, and, to which extent can such thresholds be pushed farther into the ineffable?

Raising such questions, the infra-ordinary effectively functions as an *ex vivo* probe into social logic. Short of being a well defined research method, the infra-ordinary carries with it a radical questioning about what sociology can do and what it can hope to attain. Indeed, the infra-ordinary foregrounds what is continually missed each time traditional notions of relevance and significance are applied. This is also where notions of atmospheres and atmospherics become important – for atmospheres, too, prove systematically elusive to exhaustive description, even while they are undeniably powerful in their sensory, affective, and cognitive entailments. Not only are the infra-ordinary approach, on the one hand, and an atmospheric take on social life, on the other, naturally complementary, but they are also bound to fruitfully illuminate each other. This Ad Hoc Session invites researchers to reflect on how the social science can approach what resists direct apprehension: How to capture and convey the special colouration of the only apparently all-too-familiar social-scientific situations we observe and experience? How can we talk about something we cannot precisely define and

measure? Is it only poetry that can venture into this terrain, or can the infra-ordinary lay out the ground for a new sociological lexicon, and new possibilities of sociological reasoning?

Memory Politics and Interstate Conflict: Socio-Cultural aspects of Russian State Ideology and the Russo-Ukrainian War

Session Organiser: Angelos GIANNAKOPOULOS

The Ad Hoc Session purports to discuss in which way history in general shapes the present and how, in turn, the present, shaped as it is by public perceptions, influences the establishment of historical consciousness and collective memory. Against the background of this theoretical frame the session plans to exemplify the role of historical memory and public perceptions as a factor of interstate violence vis-à-vis the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. The focus is not on strategic and geostrategic aspects of the war in Ukraine, which are widely discussed in the international media or in the few comprehensive studies currently available. Instead, the session focuses on issues related to Russian state ideology less discussed both in the general public and the academic community, without knowledge of which, however, a comprehensive analysis of Russian offensive policy is impossible. These topics refer to the formation of the Russian nation from the 10th century onwards in the frame of which Christianization in terms of the adoption of the Eastern Orthodox doctrine plays a central role. The session evaluates how these historical events dominate today the Russian cultural self-determination and are transformed into the prevalent state ideology of Moscow as the “Third Rome”. Thus, the first focus examines the way in which the historical past is instrumentalized by state ideology in terms of what we generally call “memory politics”. The second and most important one sheds light on how in turn state ideology makes moral claims and prompts violent action against others. Finally, the session purports to assess how national narratives and symbolic politics influence today state relations and foreign policy by especially evaluating the potential of the European integration project towards the elimination of interstate conflict on the European continent.

Neighbour Culture Around the World: Challenges and Opportunities

Session Organisers: Margret KUSENBACH and Lynda CHESHIRE

While Western theories of socio-structural change tell us that social life has been globalized, the local still matters. In settlements across the globe, the very nature of our sociality requires us to live in close proximity with others. Local neighbourhoods are important sites of familiarity and belonging; places we feel attached to, that we call home, and where we feel a sense of connection with those who reside nearby. Yet, they can also be places of conflict, division, and stigma; where groups with limited resources end up by default; where residents feel the taint of a poor neighbourhood reputation; and where neighbours are, at best, strangers that we do not know and, at worst, a source of annoyance, disruption, and fear. The mutual views and feelings of those who live in close proximity, the norms and expectations that arise in this context, and the ways they manifest through neighbour interactions and relationships have a range of positive and

negative consequences for individual and collective well-being; however, they are also structurally patterned, by social, cultural, political, historical, and spatial contingencies. This proposed ad hoc session invites us to engage with the ways in which our lives remain locally bound within globalized societies by examining and comparing the norms, expectations, and interactions that take place among neighbours in different social and spatial contexts around the world. We refer to these local normative and cultural modes of engagement with co-residents as “neighbour culture” and seek to explore the dynamic interplay between neighbour culture and structural processes. On the one hand, wider structural forces of political and economic change (such as resurgent authoritarianism, urbanization, migration, displacement, disasters, and even global pandemics) have reshaped the ways we live and relate with others at the very local level. On the other hand, neighbour cultures influence how we experience and respond to those larger challenges collectively via conflict and division or via collective action and mutual care

What forms of neighbour culture exist in different local contexts around the world? How do they enable people to respond in times of crisis when local support is needed? How important is neighbour culture to individual and social well-being, belonging, and identity? These and other questions will be explored in this ad-hoc session that brings together social researchers, most of them sociologists, from different countries and world regions who are already engaging in a collective conversation on neighbour culture via a forthcoming book, edited by Lynda Cheshire, entitled *Neighbours Around the World: An International Look at the People Next Door* (2022, Emerald). The authors of the book’s chapters are widely dispersed geographically and have only ever communicated via email. This session seeks to facilitate a live conversation among collaborators and with the audience to re-ignite a scholarly focus on one of the most significant micro-social environments outside of the domestic sphere – the neighbourhood.

Teaching the Sociology of Climate Change across the Sociology Curriculum

Session Organiser: Andrew SZASZ

Ad Hoc Session on teaching the sociology of climate change across the Sociology curriculum, NOT just in Environmental Sociology courses. The Sociology of Climate Change would seem, most naturally, to belong in Environmental Sociology courses, taught by members of ISA’s RC24. I would argue, though, that the breadth of the impacts of climate change -- already observed now and certain to grow more dire in future years -- means that the Sociology of Climate Change should be discussed in many other parts of the Sociology curriculum, in courses taught by members of several other Research Committees.

Matteo Bortolini's biography of Robert Bellah

Session Organiser: Armando SALVATORE

The life of Robert N. Bellah (1927-2013) is paradigmatic of a “magic moment” in global social science: from the urge of post-war modernization theorists to embrace emerging global processes to the critical rethinking of Cold War sociology and the

rejection of its implicit imperialistic narrative, Bellah was at the center of the great intellectual enterprise of professionalizing and globalizing social science. While his early comparative work focused on the societies and cultures of Japan, China, and the Middle East, his interpretive thinking evolved over the decades to embrace the *longue durée* of religious “evolution” and the belief that humanity's great religious and philosophical traditions can all contribute to a more just world only if engaged in a process of continuous mutual learning.

The proposed panel has been assembled including specialists in the fields where Bellah was at his best: the sociology of religion, the history of sociology, sociological theory, and the sociology of culture.