Final Report as ISA Vice-President of Research 2018-2023

Geoffrey Pleyers

Being the Vice President for Research of the ISA for the past five years has been challenging and demanding. It was also an insightful learning process that has allowed me to become familiar with the main aspects and most activities of the International Sociological Association - such as presiding over the 2021 ISA Forum at the highest point of the pandemic, taking part in an ISA PhD laboratory in Tunisia and the Council for National Associations meeting in Slovenia, and hosting an Executive Committee meeting at my university in Belgium. It was a collective learning process for each of these projects, and more particularly for the Research Council meetings. Together with over 100 RC, WG or TG delegates who took part in some of the seven meetings of the Council, we learned to deal with complex issues in virtual meetings that gathered 50 to 80 delegates from all continents. We proved that such meetings could be insightful spaces of debate and deliberations and efficient spaces for collective decision-making. More importantly, we showed that a collective dynamic with the RC/WG/TG delegates could bring a new dynamism to our association and build collaborations and trust among the actors of the ISA.

Each of these projects has required the collaboration and support of colleagues committed to the ISA. Over the years, increasingly, I have come to appreciate the magnitude and importance of the work of our Executive Secretary, Izabela Barlinska and have enjoyed working with her successor Cecilia Delgado, who acted as a social media manager and then as deputy Executive Secretary. I want to express all my gratitude to both of them for their largely invisible, but crucial, work. Sari Hanafi, our ISA president, has supported each of my initiatives and granted me his trust and friendship to develop them. I would also like to thank my colleagues who acted as Vice Presidents – Eloisa Martin, Filomin Gutierrez and Sawako Shirahaze – for this period and with whom I shared ideas and projects, as well as the members of the Research Coordination Committee who have been active in a range of tasks.

The new dynamism of the Research Council would not have been possible without the dozens of RC/WG/TG delegates who trusted me in this new collective process and attended our long virtual meetings, which required some of them to stay up late on Saturday night, and others to wake up as early as 5 am. I did my best to consider their suggestions and meet their expectations in making the Research Council the heart of a new dynamic. It is our shared legacy to the ISA.

Over the past five years, my work and activities as ISA Vice-President for Research have developed around seven axes:

1. President of the 2021 ISA Forum of Sociology
2. Future ISA Forums and Congresses
3. The Research Council
4. Improving communication and building trust between the ISA and the RC/WG/TG
5. Supporting the RC/WG/TG
6. Actively including the RC/WG/TG in new initiatives
7. Other commitments as VP for Research and member of the Executive Committee
1. President of the 2021 ISA Forum of Sociology

From July 2018 to February 2021, most of my work as VP Research has been dedicated to preparing the fourth ISA Forum. The pandemic required us to re-organise it three times. The Forum was first organised as a regular Forum to be held in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in July 2020, then postponed to February 2021, and then organised as an online Forum. We offered a possibility for RC/WG/TGs to update their programs and re-open the call for abstracts at every stage. It represented a considerable amount of work for the ISA secretariat, the RC/WG/TG programme coordinators and session organisers, the Local Organizing Committee, as well as for me, as the president of this Forum. It was the first major international congress in social sciences to be held online.

A 10-page report of the Forum was presented to the Research Council, the RCC and the Executive Committee in March 2021. You will find it in the annexes of this report. Here are some key facts.

- Forum theme: **Challenges of the 21st Century: Democracy, Environment, Inequalities, Intersectionality**. [Link here](#)
- 3516 participants from over 100 countries, 56% female, 25% students
- More than 800 panels, two plenaries, six semi-plenaries (co-organized with the regional sociological association) and eight common sessions (organised by RCs and thematic groups of the regional sociological association)

Main Innovations:
- A mechanism that allowed fairer allocation of panels for large and more active RC/WG/TGs. In other Forums and congresses, large RCs were disadvantaged considering the number of members by allocated sessions.
- RC/WG/TGs were regularly informed about the Forum preparation process, with five “VP Research letters” dedicated to the Forum.
- Collaboration with regional sociological associations to promote the Forum. Three semi-plenary sessions run by ALAS & CLACSO. CLACSO and ALAS (Latin American Association of Sociology) were crucial in mobilising colleagues from Latin America for this ISA Forum.
- A semi-plenary panel with five presidents of regional/international associations of sociology and social sciences.
- Tribute sessions to sociologists: Immanuel Wallerstein, Marielle Franco and Eric Olin Wright.
- The first “Professional Development Sessions” organised by RCs.
- Free rooms were to be provided by local partner universities for RC/WG/TG pre-conferences at the Federal University of Porto Alegre. These events were unfortunately cancelled due to the pandemic.

To prepare for this congress, I attended the annual congress of the Brazilian Society of Sociology in Florianopolis in July 2019, where I met several members of the Local Organizing Committee and the Congress of the Latin American Council of Social Sciences (CLACSO) in Buenos Aires in October 2019.
2. Future ISA Forums and 2025 Congress

2.1. Three reports on the ISA Forums of Sociology
Learning from previous experiences is crucial to maintaining and improving the quality of ISA events. It was particularly the case for the 2021 Forum, as it was the first online Forum. The lessons and learnings from the challenges, successes and limits must be passed to the following ISA Executive Committee to allow them to build on this experience. Reports gathering experience and opinions on crucial issues related to the Forum were also used to ensure that decisions about the future ISA Forums Fora and Congresses were taken based on factual information and debates where different opinions could be expressed.

1. “Towards the first ISA virtual Forum”, 15 September 2020
Report on the consultation of RC presidents and RCC members concerning the 2021 ISA virtual Forum and suggestions for the event.

2. 2021 Forum Report, March 2021
This report presents a balance of the 2021 Forum and aims at contributing to passing on some experiences, good practices and challenges to the next ISA RCC and Vice-President for Research and to the Forum and Congresses programme committees and Local Organizing Committee.

It was published and discussed in several arenas of the ISA, including the RCC, the EC and the Research Council. It points to some of the successes of the 2021 Forum but also identifies some of the challenges we faced, some lessons learned and points that may be improved for future Forums Fora and Congresses.

3. The next Forum: Online or On-Site?
A broad consultation of the RC/WG/TGs and among the members of the RCC was organised to gather the argument in favour of an online or an “onsite” ISA Forums. The intermediary results were presented to the Research Council and the Executive Committee. The final report, written with Allison Loconto, has provided the ground for an informed discussion and decision process for the 2025 ISA Forum. It gathers good practices and recommendations that will help improve the organisation of online or hybrid ISA congresses and forums and RC/WG/TG meetings in the future. The report is available here.

2.2. Consultations about ISA 2025 Forums
An innovative deliberation process has been implemented to gather the arguments, consult the RC boards and members and deliberate in the Research Council. This deliberation process is described in the VPR Letter 10. It resulted in a 10-page report synthesising the arguments in favour of both options (VPR Letter 11).
A new consultation was organised in 2022. The report was published in VPR Letter 18.
2.3. Requests to the LOC of ISA Forums and Congresses

Following proposals by the Research Council and the RCC, the following requests have been made to the Local Organizing Committees of the 2020-2021 Forum (that was planned in Porto Alegre, Brazil), the 2023 Congress in Melbourne and the 2027 Congress in South Korea. These points were also listed in the call for bids for the 2025 ISA Forum.

We asked the LOCs to

• Ease the process of getting a visa for participants who need it; making this a priority.
• Provide affordable housing & solidarity housing (1.000 student rooms will be available at low cost on the campus for the 2027 congress!)
• Ensure that the party at the end of the congress is affordable for students.
• Provide rooms for RC that want to organise pre-conferences on the day before the Forum.
• Adopt practices towards greener forums: Implement greener practices, when possible, in the Forum/congress (vegetarian options, local food when possible, ...)

2.4. 2023 World Congress

1. The Research Council meetings and the VPR Letters have been useful spaces to diffuse information about the congress and consider suggestions made by RC/WG/TG delegates. The ISA Executive Secretary, as well as the ISA presidents and the Local Organizing Committees, attended most of the Research Council meetings and answered the delegates’ questions and requests about the 2023 Congress.

2. For the first time in a congress, four Professional Development Sessions have been proposed and will be organised by RCs: two sessions on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in the RCs and the ISA (Debra Davidson, RC24); ISA and the RCs at the United Nations (Jan Fritz, RCC); Time organising to be an efficient researcher (Sandra Torres, RC11)

3. Together with the ISA secretariat and the members of the RCC, we have been available for questions and requests by the RC/WG/TG programme coordinators and presidents.

4. The Research Council and the RCC asked the LOC to pay particular attention to the following proposals:
   o Include affordable housing in the housing list provided to the participants and set up an initiative for solidarity housing
   o The Congress party should be affordable for students and at a reasonable price for all participants
   o Ask the host university or other local universities to provide free rooms for RC pre-conferences on the day or the two days before the Congress

5. I acted as a member of the Congress Programme committee & the RCC was responsible for selecting the eight integrative sessions.

6. Proposing sessions at the congress is a way to contribute to the success of the congress as well as to keep in touch with the tasks and challenges of session organisers and programme coordinators. Together with Mar Griera (RC22), we proposed a session on “Religion and social movements” that received 54 abstract proposals.
3. Research Council

3.1. A new collective dynamic

While much of my time and energy as VP Research focused on the ISA Forum until February 2021, ever since, my main focus has been on creating and consolidating the new collective dynamic in the ISA Research Council.

The Research Council is the assembly of the delegates of the 67 ISA Research Committees, Working Groups or Thematic Groups. Before 2021, the Research Council met once every couple of years during the ISA congresses and Forums. The content of the meetings was mainly informative.

Since 2021, the role of the Research Council and its place in the ISA have changed dramatically. In 28 months, the Research Council has become one of the ISA's most active and vibrant bodies. RC/WG/TG delegates have met seven times for meetings between 3 and 6 hours, each attended by more than 50 delegates. The Research Council was consulted on every major decision made by the ISA, took initiatives on topics that mattered to RC/WG/TG delegates and opened the space for fruitful discussion between the RC/WG/TG delegates and some of the main actors of the ISA (our ISA president, the VP for finance, the head of the Congress Local Organizing Committee). By providing regular information and updates on the work and decisions made by the ISA and opening spaces for Q&A sessions where every topic could be discussed, the Research Council has contributed to improving mutual understanding and building trust between the ISA and its RC/WG/TG.

The Research Council has also contributed to deepening the democratic processes in the ISA. It did this in two ways:

- by opening ways for regular consultations of the RC/WG/TGs and votes on the main questions raised by the ISA.
- by ensuring that people participating in consultations and votes have been well informed and received all the required arguments to form their opinion. In an open association like the ISA, democracy is less about counting votes than it is about ensuring that votes are based on open decision-making processes and well-informed voters.

The active participation of 54 to 80 delegates in each Research Council meeting has proven the strong commitment of the RC/WG/TGs to the ISA dynamic and their availability to take an active part in our association and its main decisions. It also acts as an insightful space to share experiences, ideas and opinions about the ISA and RC/WG/TG practices and a platform for RC/WG/TGs to take new initiatives. Doing so shows how a collective dynamic may contribute to a new dynamism in our association.

The ISA president, Sari Hanafi and Executive Secretary, Izabela Barlinska, attended every Research Council meeting and listened to RC presidents' and delegates' suggestions, proposals and requests. Dan Woodman, head of the World Congress Local Organizing Committee, attended most meetings to deliver updated information to the RC/WG/TG about the 2023 congress. Cecilia Delgado has taken an active role in every session since September 2022 as a social media manager and future executive secretary. Sawako Shirahase attended the second meeting to answer the questions about ISA finances, and all the members of the current EC-RCC attended most of the Council meetings.
3.2. Three main roles
Since 2021, the Research Council has played three crucial roles in the ISA:

1. Information and discussion about the ISA, the Congress and the EC.
   - The Research Council has been an efficient space for the ISA Executive Secretary, President and Vice-Presidents to inform and consult RC/WG/TG delegates. Q&A sessions have been an essential part of every meeting.
   - The work and decisions of the EC, RCC, and ISA sub-committees (e.g., on the 2025 Forum) have been reported and discussed.
   - Experience and balance of the ISA Forum

2. Deliberations, consultations, and participation in the ISA major decisions
In previous exchanges and the first Research Council meeting, RC/WG/TG delegates stated they wanted to be more systematically informed and consulted about the ISA’s major decisions. They complain about a lack of information and transparency. They expressed a feeling of “not to be heard”, “sufficiently consulted”, or “taken into account” by the ISA.
Ever since, the Research Council has provided a channel to associate our RC/WG/TG to the ISA’s major decisions (postponing the congress, the profile and roles of the future ISA Executive Secretary, the ISA strategy for communication and social media, holding the 2025 Forum on-site …) as well as to improve the mutual understanding between the RC/WG/TG leaders and the different actors of the ISA.

3. Sharing experiences and good practices among RC/WG/TG
A crucial role of the Research Council is to open a space for RC/WG/TG delegates to share their experiences and good practices, and to take joint initiatives. In addition to the open discussion during the Research Council and in the mailing list, RC/WG/TG delegates have shared good practices, challenges and proposals in two ad hoc sub-committees dedicated to specific topics: the task force on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and the ad hoc committee on RC/WG/TG (online) elections. Beyond the quality of their reports, these committees have opened paths for new collaborations among the RC/WG/TGs.
   - Ad hoc commission to recommend practices for good, transparent and fair elections (2023). This commission was chaired by Aaron Pitluck and composed by David Dueñas Cid, Marcel Fournier, Helma Lutz and Cecilia Delgado-Molina.
   - The task force “Equity, Diversity & Inclusion” is chaired by Debra Davidson. Its members are Alice Abreu, Christiana Constantopoulou, Melanie Heath, Hannah Holleman, Lara Maestripieri, Mario Mayong Aguja, Karim Murji, Ignacio Rubi, Rhoda Reddock, Tina Uys, and Lucie Vidovićová.
3.2. Eight Research Council meetings

First Research Council Meeting, 6 March 2021.
Seventy-three delegates representing 59 RC/WG/TGs.
The 5-hour meeting was a vibrant space of discussion and resolutions. Most delegates had consulted
their RC or board members before the meeting.
This first meeting has paved the way for more frequent consultations of the RC/WG/TG leaders, better
communication/information to the RCs about the ISA, and a better understanding of how the ISA works
and the different considerations it has to take into account when making decisions.
Full agenda here

Second Research Council Meeting, 10 April 2021
Main topic:
- Postponement of the next ISA congress to 2023,
- Balance of the ISA Forum,
- ISA finance: ISA VP for finance Sawako Shirahase exposed replied to the questions raised by
  the RC/WG/TG delegates
- Communication among the RCs and with the ISA.
Full Agenda here

ISA Assembly of Councils, 1 May 2021
The Assembly of Councils comprises the Research Council and the Council of National Association.
The decision was taken to postpone the ISA Congress to June 2023 and hold it in Melbourne.

Third Research Council Meeting, 12 June 2021
Deliberation and vote on the ISA online or offline Forum
51 RC/WG/TG participated in this meeting and the vote.
The vote was almost evenly split between the two options, with the tiniest majority in favour of an on-
site forum and a strong will by the RC/WG/TG to support the Forum process in whatever format.
The 10-page report on the deliberation process and the vote results is available here.

Fourth Research Council Meeting: 18 December 2021
58 participants.
- Consultation on the roles of the ISA Executive Secretary;
- Reports from the Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Task Force
- Reports on ISA activities at the UN
- Presentation and discussion of the new social media strategy
- RCs in the ISA
- Information about the next congress.
Full agenda: here
Minutes: here.
**Fifth Research Council meeting, September 2022**
Sixty-six delegates from RC/WG/TG took part in this meeting.
Main topics:
- 2023 World Congress (pre-conferences, registration fees, housing...);
- Meet with the new social media manager (Cecilia Delgado);
- RC/WG/TG at the UN
- Balance of the EDI Taskforce
- Report on the 2022 EC and PhD Lab
Full agenda: [here](#)
Meeting & follow-up: [here](#)

**Sixth Research Council Meeting - January 2023**
- RC/WG/TG internal election
- Information and Q&A about the nominations of candidates for the election of the ISA Executive Committee 2023-2027
- Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA): information, implications for RCs
- New collaborations with the United Nations Special Rapporteurs
Full agenda: [here](#)
Minutes: [here](#)

**Seventh Research Council meeting - May 2023**
64 participants
- ISA World Congress in Melbourne (Sari Hanafi, Dan Woodman & Geoffrey Pleyers)
- Social media strategy at the Congress and beyond (Cecilia Delgado-Molina)
- RC internal elections (Aaron Pitluck, RC02 & Geoffrey Pleyers)
- Meet the new ISA editors - Global Dialogue (Breno Bringel) & International Sociology Journal (Gabriel Kessler)
- First report on a charter proposal on “Equity, Diversity & Inclusion” (Alice Abreu, RC23)
- Inequalities among ISA members when attending international events (Maria Eugenia Longo, RC30)
- Early report on the 2025 ISA Forum of Sociology (Allison Loconto).
The agenda was sent by e-mail to the Research Council mailing list.
Minutes [here](#)

**Eight Research Council meeting: On June 25 in Melbourne (on-site!)**
4. Communication with and among the RC/WG/TGs

My priorities have been improving communication among RC/WG/TG presidents and between RC/WG/TG presidents and the ISA officers and Executive Committee. This effort has been instrumental in fostering a spirit of mutual support and collaboration among the RC/WG/TGs. RC/WG/TGs presidents play a central role in their committee, connecting it with the ISA general initiatives and projects.

During these five years, I have maintained regular contact with many RC/WG/TG presidents and officers. I have also created new tools to foster communications among the 57 RCs and 8 Working or Thematic Groups, including the RC/WG/TG presidents directory I have set up and updated. Since 2021, the Research Council meetings have provided a space for the RC/WG/TG delegates to get to know each other and share their perspectives.

These communication tools and the series of reports have required time and energy. Since 2022, I have benefited from the efficient support of Cecilia Delgado for the design and a part of the content of these materials. I hope the next VP Research will benefit from this support since the start of her mandate.

4.1. RC/WG/TG presidents directory.
This directory gathers short biographical notes of 61 RC/WG/GT presidents and a few sentences on their perspectives for their RC/WG/TGs. Available here

4.2. Mailing-lists: RC/WG/TG presidents & Research Council
This mailing list aims to open a space for sharing suggestions, questions, doubts and good practices among RC/WG/TGs. It provides a space to circulate practical information and raise questions about RC or ISA projects and meetings. The list focuses on organisational matters and internal communication of the ISA.

4.3. VP-Research Letters
These letters are addressed to the RC/WG/TG presidents and secretaries. Each one focuses on a specific issue, offering a series of information, calls and reminders. The letters are accessible on the ISA website. Unfortunately, it is currently found on a page that is difficult to access on the ISA website. https://www.isa-sociology.org/en/research-networks/research-committees/isa-vice-president-research-letters

Letter #1: September 2018: Priorities as Vice-President for Research
Letter #2: October 2018: RC president directory, statutes revision & RC activity grants
Letter #3: February 2019: Towards the 2020 Forum of Sociology
Letter #4: April 2020: Postponement of the ISA Forum & new calendar
Letter #5: September 2020: ISA Forum goes online
Letter #6: October 2020: Timetable of the IV ISA Forum & session types
Letter #7: February 2021: Agenda of the first online Research Council meeting
Letter #8: February 2021: 2021 ISA Forum of Sociology
Letter #9: April 2021: Agenda of the second Research Council meeting
Letter #10: May 2021: 2025 ISA Forum: on-site or online?: consultation process
4.4. Reports

Reports by the VP Research

- Report on the 2021 ISA Forum (10 pages) [here](#) and in the annex.
- Suggestions for an online Forum, written with Allison Loconto
- Four annual VPR activity reports

Reports by Research Council ad hoc committees and thematic reports by the RCC

- A greener ISA, by Koichi Hasegawa, with Allison Loconto on food-related issues (2019)
- More inclusive RCs: How to include more researchers from B & C countries? by Allison Loconto & Rhoda Reddock (2019)
- Report by the Ad hoc commission to recommend practices for good, transparent and fair elections (2023)
  This commission was chaired by Aaron Pitluck and composed by David Dueñas Cid, Marcel Fournier, Helma Lutz and Cecilia Delgado-Molina.
- First report on a charter proposal on “Equity, Diversity & Inclusion” (2023)
  By the EDI Task Force chaired by Debra Davidson. Members of the ad hoc committee: Alice Abreu, Christiana Constantopolou, Debra Davidson, Melanie Heath, Hannah Holleman, Lara Maestripieri, Mario Mayong Aguja, Karim Murji, Ignacio Rubi, Rhoda Reddock, Tina Uys Lucie Vidovićová.
5. Supporting the RCs

RC/WG/TG delegates have expressed their gratitude to the ISA secretariat for the help and support provided during these complex years on numerous occasions.

Throughout these five years, together with the members of the RCC, we have maintained regular contact with RCs and made ourselves available for information and support. More specific help and support have been provided on the following issues:

5.1. RC Internal democracy

- Hiroshi Ishida has provided advice and efficient support to the RCs conducting a statutes revision process.

- The evaluation and reports on the RC grant requests were prepared and coordinated by Tova Benski.

- RC election process in 2018: A limited number of RCs faced problems concerning their internal election process in Toronto. With the support of the ISA secretariat, we dealt with the contestation of the electoral process in four RCs, the absence of an election for one of them.

- Support for RC dynamic and observers at RC/WG internal election processes in 2023
  - Jan Fritz, Tova Benski, Nazanin Shahroki, Rhoda Reddok & Geoffrey Pleyers

- Adapted rules will apply for the 2022 RC internal elections, notably with a request to send the number of votes obtained by each candidate.

- In their 2019 meeting in Manila, the RCC and the EC indicated the need to implement the rule that limit the number of consecutive mandate as RC/WG/TG president to two terms. Coordinating a group of international scholars requires time, energy, and creative initiative. Eight years is a very long period to maintain the level of motivation and energy in such a project, which is why many RCs are in favour of limiting it to one single term. Extending it to three terms (12 years) increases the risk of building a group around one person rather than on a research field and with a collective dynamic.

- The RCC suggested that the RC/WG/TGs consider opening a new position among their officers: “RC online media coordinator”. This person may be elected or nominated by the newly elected board.

5.2. New TG proposals

- New TG have been approved: TG9 Sociological Teaching, TG10 Digital Sociology, TG11 Violence & Society
  
  Note: We aim to limit the number of new thematic groups and strengthen the existing ones. However, emerging fields in the discipline deserve their space in the ISA and will bring new initiatives and themes.

- WG05 “Emotion and Society” was admitted as a Working Group in 2020.
6. New initiatives for RC/WG/TG

6.1. A new social media strategy for the RC/WG/TG

While the ISA and some of its publications have been active and highly visible on social media, RC/WG/TG activities, publications and news were seldom included in the ISA social media communication. A social media strategy built on more robust support for RC/WG/TG social media was proposed and discussed with the secretariat in 2021 (VPRL #13). It was then presented and discussed during the December 2021 Research Council meeting.

This new social media strategy notably builds on the following proposals:

- The communication strategy on Twitter will be improved by adding creative content to the ISA messages, using pictures and hashtags when possible, and composing tweets targeting different audiences.
- The ISA Secretariat will offer specific help both to the RC/WG/TGs that are already active on Twitter and to those who have no Twitter accounts and may thus rely on the ISA Twitter account to disseminate their activities and calls.
- For the RC/WG/TG that have a Twitter account and for those of you who are already familiar with and active on social media, please make sure to include @isa_sociology in the important tweets of your RC/WG/TG to make their identification and further dissemination by the ISA easier. It is worth noting that to ensure a consistent diffusion strategy, the ISA Secretariat may select the tweets that are most likely to interest an international audience.
- For those less at ease using social media, the ISA Secretariat can disseminate news about their RC/WG/TG activities and publications directly on the ISA Twitter account. It will also provide practical advice for better communication.
- A vital point was added in January 2022 and supported by the ISA president and four VPs: the social media communication strategy should focus on content, events and publications created by the ISA National Associations, RC/WG/TGs, Publications or Executive Committee.

➢ Complete report on the proposals for a new social media strategy for the ISA and the RCs [here](#)

While ISA social media started to include more content from the RC/WG/TGs in 2022, this new social media strategy was implemented and very much improved with the temporary hiring of Cecilia Delgado Molina, who acted as ISA social media manager from September 2022 to April 2023. Her work during these few months will have a lasting impact on ISA social media, particularly in the active policy to disseminate RC/WG/TG activities, publications and news. While working as a social media manager, Cecilia Delgado actively participated in the Research Council. She presented her strategy for the ISA social media and made concrete proposals for the RC/WG/TG at three research council meetings.

➢ Report on the new strategy in September 2002: on page 5 of the [VPR Letter 16](#)

We set up a new group with Cecilia Delgado: the RC/WG/TG online media managers. A mailing list has been set up, and the first training for social media managers was organised by Cecilia. This group will host training for RC/WG/TG social media managers and foster mutual support among RC/WG/TG social media.

➢ Link to the full report and advice for social media managers: [RC/WG/TG Social media managers meeting 2022](#)
6.2.  Collaboration opportunities with the United Nations

Supporting the ISA representatives at the UN and opening up to more collaborations with RCs

During this term, the RCC has actively supported the work and initiatives of the two ISA Senior Representatives at the United Nations, Jan Marie Fritz (ISA Executive Committee) and Rosemary Barberet. We have asked the ISA representatives to open more possibilities for RC/WG/TGs to actively participate in these initiatives and work on better coordinating the activities connected to the UN by different RCs. Jan Fritz was invited to report on these activities at the UN on three occasions in a Research Council meeting. She has gathered information and calls connected to this initiative on this page.

As VP Research and support for the ISA senior representatives at the UN, I introduced and/or chaired the following panels:

- Opening session “Protecting the rights of older adults”, UN Open-ended Working Group on Ageing, NYC & online, 4 April 2023

New collaboration opportunities for RC/WG/TG with UN Special Rapporteurs

RC/WG/TG have been invited to collaborate with the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Olivier de Schutter. He has prepared a report on the “working poor” that he will present at the UN General Assembly in October 2023. This report aims at documenting this phenomenon and providing a rigorous assessment of the rise of this "precariat". This assessment will notably include a gender dimension that will identify why women are more affected than men and a generational dimension, focusing on the vulnerabilities facing young workers and their sub-standard forms of employment.

Some RCs responded collectively to the initiative. Over 30 RC/WG/TG members contributed to the report by sending their recent research and report on the working poor. An online meeting will be organised with the UN Rapporteur over the summer. He has been invited to present the report at a future ISA event.

The modalities of this collaboration will be evaluated after the publication of the report before reaching out to other UN Special Rapporteurs to implement similar collaborations and exchanges. Complete report available in the VPR Letter #20: March 2023

6.3.  RC/WG/TG collaborations with the ISA editors

While the ISA journals and publications have reached a high level of quality and diffusion, they are often perceived as disconnected from the RC/WG/TG activities. Developing more connections between the ISA publications and the RC/WG/TG will be mutually beneficial, as it will provide high-standard publication outcomes for some RC/WG/TG activities and increase the dissemination of our journals.
Two recently appointed editors were invited to present their perspectives and proposals for deepening the collaboration with the RC/WG/TG at the May 2023 Research Council meeting: Gabriel Kessler (International Sociology) and Breno Bringel (Global Dialogue). This meeting set the bases for renewed collaborations during and after the ISA congress.

7. Other commitments as Vice-President & EC member

7.1. Hosting the 2022 ISA EC Meeting
Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, holding the ISA EC meeting in Moscow was impossible. On March 2nd, it was decided to host the meeting at my home university, the Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium. There was not too much time to organise such an international meeting, and regular funding for international meetings requires applying at least three months in advance. Gathering the funds required by the ISA was a challenge only met thanks to the support of local colleagues. In addition to the RCC, NALC and EC meetings, three academic panels were organised.

7.2. 2022 ISA Laboratory for PhD students, Tunisia
Mounir Saidani (host of the meeting), Bandana Purkayastha, and I were part of the pedagogical team supervising the 17th ISA Laboratory for PhD students. Twelve international students and 4 Tunisian students were selected to participate in the conference organised by Mounir Saidani in Hamamet, Tunisia, from 5th to 11th September 2022. Link to the report by Mounir Saidani: here

In addition to assessing and advising participant PhD students, I delivered the following two talks:

- **Methodological Workshop**: “Forging the Argument. What do I want to Say in my Dissertation Research?”, XVII ISA International Laboratory for PhD Students, Tunisia, 5-11/09/2022.

7.3. Other tasks in the ISA Executive Committee

- Member of the Programme Committee for the 2023 World Congress.
- Member of the committee on “the future of the ISA” (2021-2022)
- Member of the search committee for a new ISA Executive Secretary (2022)
- Member of the search and hiring committee for the new ISA Social Media Manager (2023)
- Mattei Dogan Award (with Hiroshi, Rhoda and Bandana): This award will be attributed to distinguished social science scholars from the Global South, the ISA Mattei Dogan Award for Global Sociology.
7.4. Participation in RC/WG/TG conferences or national or regional association congresses as an ISA delegate

- Organizer and chair of the panel “Hacia una sociología global. Pensar los desafíos globales a partir de y con América Latina” (“Towards a global sociology. Thinking global challenges from Latin America”, Panel co-organized by the ISA & the Latin American Council for Social Sciences (CLACSO), 2018 CLACSO Congress, Buenos Aires, 19-23/11/2018. (This panel hosted the president and vice-president of the Latin American Sociological Association (ALAS) and prominent sociologists from the ISA.
- “Internacionalización de la sociología: Una perspectiva desde la ISA”, Panel “Internacionalización de la Sociología”, XIII Congreso Español de Soiología, Valencia, 3-6/07/2019,
- “Sociología mundial e América Latina: Perspectiva a partir de los movimientos sociales”, Semi-plenary, Congress of the Brazilian Society of Sociology (SBS), Florianopolis, 9-12/7/2019
- “¿La década de los movimientos sociales?” Plenaria de apertura del Congreso Internacional Pre-ALAS “Emergencia civilizatoria y nuevo sentido histórico”, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 26-29 Agosto 2019.
- “Tres debates sociológicos frente a los movimientos sociales contemporáneos en América latina”, “Forum Movimientos sociales y diálogos de saberes”, XXII Congreso Latinoamericano de Sociología, online talk, 15 March 2022
- “From Crises to Social Transformations: The Role of Social Movements as Producers of Meaning”, Fifth ISA Council of National Associations Conference, Nova Gorica, Slovenia, 21-24/11/2022
- Pre-congreso de la Asociación Latino-Americana de Sociología, “Social movements and decolonial perspectives in the Caribbean region”; Message in the opening session, Santo Domingo, online talk, 15 March 2022
- Closing keynote, “Perspectivas decoloniales y sociología global”, Congreso Pre-ALAS Perú, 29/04/22
- “Social movements during the pandemic. Solidarity, cosmovisions, and social change”, Opening panel, ISA-Research Committee 48 Mid-Term conference “Reinventing the future. Addressing social movement challenges in a post-pandemic world”, University of Huddersfield, UK, online, 21 – 22 July 2022


• **“From Crises to Social Transformations: The Role of Social Movements as Producers of Meaning”**, Fifth ISA Council of National Associations Conference, Nova Gorica, Slovenia, 21-24/11/2022

• Session chair of the opening session “Protecting the rights of older adults”, UN Working group on Ageing, ISA Initiative at the UN, online, 4 April 2023

### 7.5. **Global sociology**


Together with Breno Bringel (RC47), I edited a book that gathered analyses of the first stage of the COVID-19 pandemic by 37 authors from all continents, most of them active members of the ISA. The book was published in Spanish by the Latin American Council for Social Sciences (CLACSO) in 2020. An updated version was published by Bristol University Press in 2022. Both are in open access.


Annex:
Report on the 2021 ISA Forum of Sociology

Geoffrey Pleyers - April 2021

Earlier versions of this report have been presented and discussed at the ISA Research Council meeting, RCC Meeting and Executive Committee meeting in March 2021.

1. General presentation

This fourth ISA Forum took place amid a global pandemic that has shaken our lives and our societies. It gave even more importance to the ISA primary mission: gathering social scientists from all over the world to share their research and analyses. Organizing a Forum during the pandemic and moving it online has been a challenge for our association. To make it happen has already been a success. To gather 3,516 participants in these circumstances and offer them insightful spaces to present and discuss their latest research is an achievement.

This Forum had to be organized three times: first for a regular on-site Forum in Porto Alegre scheduled in July 2020, then as an on-site forum in February 2021 and finally as a virtual event. It would not have been possible without the dedication and largely invisible work of the presidents and programme coordinators of the 57 research committees, working groups and thematic groups that participate in this Forum and are the vibrant heart of our International Sociological Association. Organizing a Forum under such difficult circumstances required a considerable amount of work by hundreds of session organizers, our efficient ISA secretariat, our ISA president Sari Hanafi, the ISA Vice President for finance Sawako Shirahase, the members of its Executive Committee and the Porto Alegre Local Organizing Committee and its chair Hermilio Santos.

When assessing this Forum, we should bear in mind that it was the first virtual Forum organized by the ISA. It was a learning process for the ISA and each of its actors. Thus, it is important to assess it considering that future ISA events will entail a virtual dimension.

This document gathers elements to assessing the ISA Forum on three aspects: the Forum itself, its preparation process and its virtual dimension. It will be completed by the financial report prepared by ISA VP for finance, Sawako Shirahase.

Originally, ISA Forums were conceived as events run by and focused on the RC/WG/TG. At the 2018 research council meeting, RC/WG/TG delegates insisted on two priorities for the Forum (and other RC events). They remained at the core of my work to prepare this Forum:

1. A more accessible Forum was a priority for many RCs. (i.e., lower registration fees and costs for participants).
2. Ease and increase the participation of scholars from the Global South.
2. Forum participants

Being able to set up a Forum during the pandemic and with high uncertainties has been a success. Almost all the RC/WG/TG have maintained their participation when the Forum despite the postponement to February 2021 and its move online.

Considering the circumstances, the Forum attracted a high number of participants: 3,525 participants from over 100 countries, 56% female, 25% students. 59% were from category A, 33% from category B, and 9% from category C countries. As expected, compared with the 2016 Forum in Vienna, there was a large increase in the number of participants from Latin America from 424 (2016) to 1,032 in 2021, almost 30%. Most RC/WG/TG underlined that the Forum virtual platform was efficient and very easy to use and that it has provided a good online experience.

Beyond the number of participants, the aim of an international Forum is to ensure speakers good conditions to present their research, a fair audience and a good quality of papers. Many speakers and RC/WG/TG programme organisers expected the audience to be a bit larger. However, most panel gathered a sufficient audience to ensure good discussion of the papers. 15-20 people attended most RC/WG/TG sessions, a similar number to on-site panels in previous Forums for many RCs. Opening the access to these sessions beyond the registered participants by live-streaming them and diffusing the information in social media would have increased the audiences.

A virtual Forum was a new experience for many participants. Most had to combine the Forum with teaching, regular university commitments and family commitments. Several RCs asked for setting panels on Sunday, as no teaching and professional meetings are taking place on that day. The sessions on that day benefited from larger audiences (above 30 participants for most of them).

Strong participation by scholars of the Global South

Global South was well represented in the Forum main sessions and most RC/WG/TG. Most of the RC/WG/TG grants and all the solidarity fund were used to pay for the registration of colleagues from the Global South. Unfortunately, some RC/WG/TG failed to provide their list of colleagues entitled to registration grants. It would have allowed more colleagues to take part in the Forum.

- Five speakers from the Global South among eight speakers in the opening and closing plenaries
- Five semi-plenaries (out of 8) were organized by professional associations from Latin America
- Five common sessions out of 11 focused on the Global South. At least half of the speakers from most of the other common sessions were based in the Global South
- The plenary panel that gathered the president of professional organizations focused on strengthening the contribution from the global South: CODESRIA, CLACSO, ALAS!

Highest participation of host country scholars in plenary sessions

In spite of the Forum moving virtual, it was essential to us to consider this Forum as a space of dialogue with Brazilian sociologists. The participation of Brazilian sociologists exceeded the participation of any host country in previous ISA Forums and recent Congresses. The talk by Rita Segato (University of Brasilia) talk in the opening plenary was a major contribution to this Forum. The opening session also
entailed an intervention by the president of the Brazilian Sociological Society and a moving tribute to a Brazilian sociologist, Marielle Franco.

The LOC and the Brazilian Sociological Society (SBS) have organized three of our eight semi-plenary sessions where Brazilian sociology could represent itself directly. Six Brazilian scholars were involved in the five other semi-plenary sessions (four as panellists, two as chair/organizers). In addition, a common session (i.e. semi-plenary) co-organized by 9 RCs was dedicated to Marielle Franco. Dozens of other Brazilian colleagues organized panels and joint sessions in our RC/WG/TG. At least a dozen Brazilian colleagues acted as programme coordinators for their research committee. We have all learned so much from our Brazilian colleagues during this Forum and are very grateful for that.

As the Forum moved virtual, the LOC proposed to produce a series of sociological movies to share some challenges faced by Brazil and by Porto Alegre inhabitants. This series was realized by Hermilio Santos, with funding initially destined for the ISA Forum. In spite of receiving these short movies less than 48 hours before the start of the Forum, the ISA secretariat was able to make them available online during the Forum.

As it happened in some previous ISA Forums or Congresses, some misunderstandings and tensions occurred with the chair of the LOC. The move to a virtual Forum was a new situation that transformed the relationship with the LOC. We should have better managed the invitation to the presidents of the SBS and to the chair of the LOC to our plenary sessions. However, it should not overshadow the fact that we also received various messages by members of the Local Organizing Committee and of the Brazilian sociological society to congratulate the ISA on this successful Forum. Here is one of them: “Although the circumstances are very different from what we have initially imagined for this Forum, it’s inspiring to see it happen with such quality. Even more, to see this Forum as an outstanding moment to endorse the sociology we believe in. Congratulations!”

Collaboration with regional organizations
This Forum was going to take place in Porto Alegre, Brazil. It was the opportunity to strengthening the global dialogue with our Latin American colleagues, whose theoretical, epistemological and analytical contributions help us to understand the global challenges of our times. The virtual Forum was an opportunity to strengthening our partnership with the Brazilian Sociological Society (SBS), the Latin American Sociological Association (ALAS) and the Latin American Social Science Council (CLACSO). They organized semi-plenary sessions at this Forum. We have extended this partnership to other regional associations. The Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) and the vice-president of the International Science Council joined the presidents of CLACSO, ALAS and ISA in the semi-plenary panel dedicated to the roles of international organizations. The president of the Arab Council for Social Sciences joined us in the Forum closing session.

Our Latin American partners, CLACSO, ALAS and the SBS played an essential role in diffusing the calls for papers and the information about the Forum during the whole preparation process.
3. Panels
The ISA Forum is mainly a conference run by RC/WG/TG. They organized over 800 panels. Their programme organizers and session organizers should be credited for most of the success of this Forum. Here is a short balance of the limited number of plenary or semi-plenary sessions.

Opening and closing plenaries
The opening and closing plenaries focused on the Forum theme and on sociology in the pandemic. It gathered leading scholars from Brazil, India, Portugal, France, the United States and Lebanon. Two women from Argentina and Mozambique withdrew at the last moment for personal and health reasons.

As the Forum became virtual, the opening ceremony lost some of its meaning and was merged with opening plenary. In this panel, the ISA president and the Forum president presented the Forum theme, welcomed the president of the Brazilian Sociological Society and paid tribute to a Brazilian sociologist murdered in 2018. The head of the LOC was invited to the closing plenary.

Both plenaries were well attended and livestreamed. Over 500 viewers joined the opening plenaries. Its video on Facebook reached 6500 views in a couple of days. This session contributed to shedding light on the Forum on social media.

Semi-plenaries and common sessions
Three semi-plenary sessions were organised by the LOC and the Brazilian Sociological Society. Originally, these sessions aimed at shedding light on contributions by Brazilian sociologists. The LOC and the BSS decided to combine talks by Brazilian and international scholars. All the feedback indicated these sessions were particularly insightful. The audience was low, as they were little advertised by their organizers.

The Latin American Council for Social Sciences (CLACSO) and Association of Sociology (ALAS) organised two other semi-plenaries. Both took place in Spanish and gathered a good audience around contributions on the Forum themes seen from Latin American perspectives.

The RCC organized a semi-plenary on the theme of the Forum, with speakers from the Philippines, Ecuador and the USA. Two other semi-plenary sessions were dedicated to the ISA tribute to its former president Immanuel Wallerstein and an encounter among presidents of international social sciences associations.

Common sessions
11 common sessions were selected among the proposals received from RC/TG/WG. Each proposal had to be supported by at least 3 RC/WG/TG or RCs and committees from the SBS, ALAS or CLACSO. Some common sessions gathered a wide audience. Some 80 participants joined the tribute to Erik Olin Wright, over 200 the tribute to Marielle Franco. Other common sessions did not succeed in diffusing their sessions and maintaining a working dynamic among the RCs over a very long process. (The deadline to receive the common sessions proposals was fixed on March 15th 2019, almost two years before these sessions happened.)
Tributes
This IV ISA Forum was an opportunity for our community to pay tribute to three of our most distinguished colleagues in three special panels. *Immanuel Wallerstein* was not only a major global social scientist and a global citizen committed to social justice. He presided over the ISA between 1992 and 1996, leaving a considerable legacy. *Erik Olin Wright* will notably be remembered for shedding light on “real utopias” that embody the hope of fairer and more human times. *Marielle Franco*, a Brazilian sociologist who was murdered on March 14th 2018, has become a global symbol of struggle against racist, colonial, hetero-patriarchal domination and police violence and for social justice, human rights and democracy. Her life as a black woman from the favelas shows that intersectionality is not only a theoretical concept.

These sessions were significant for ISA as a community, very insightful in terms of content and successful in gathering a good audience, both on the Zoom platform and in the Facebook livestream. I hope that the ISA will open spaces for similar sessions in future events.

Professional development sessions and “Senior sociologists addressing Junior sociologists”
The Forum will also be the opportunity to attend “professional development sessions” and learn how to write journal articles and meet editorial standards with our Vice-President for Publication Eloisa Martin and the editors of the ISA journals in sessions that will be available on Zoom and livestreamed on the ISA Facebook page.

ISA Vice-President Filomin Gutierrez, with Elina Oinas, Chih-Jou Jay Chen (ISA-EC team dedicated to promoting early career sociologists) have prepared videos of inspiring senior scholars in a dialogue with young researchers and Hermilio Santos and the Porto Alegre Local Organizing Committee a series of videos on the Challenges of Brazil. All these videos are available on the ISA Forum website.

RC/WG/TG initiatives
*Other successful proposals were implemented by the RCs*
- Some RCs conducted an online pre-conference, notably a very dense one by WG08 (Sociology of emotions).
- Training sessions were organized by some RCs, including an insightful panel on “Managing Everyday Life as a Research-Focused Academic” (RC11) and some workshop to publish in international journals in their field (RC11 & RC05).
- Even online, the social dimension of a Forum remained essential to many RCs, and particularly to RC34 (Youth) that held a daily virtual pub at the end of each day.

The preparation process of this Forum was complex. It was not easy to set it up for the RC/WG/TG programme coordinators who did a fantastic work. It should however be mentioned that in some RC/WG/TG, there was a lack of diversity and insufficient turnover among the discussants, chairs and programme coordinators and that Programme Coordinators organised and chaired more sessions than usually.

*To be improved*
- There was confusion between the opening session and the first plenary – these should be clearly separated in the next virtual meeting.
- The relation with the LOC should be clarified for future virtual Forums.
Every RC/WG/TG should make sure it sends its list of colleagues entitled to a Forum registration grant, notably to ease the access to ISA events to colleagues from the Global South or colleagues with less resources.

4. Forum Preparation process

This ISA Forum had to be organised three times. We had to set up three calendars to submit and select abstract proposals. It represented considerable work for the ISA secretariat and for the RC programme coordinators and session organisers.

1. A fairer allocation of panels for large and more active RC/WG/TGs

Measures were implemented at different stages of the preparation process to achieve a more equitable distribution of panels for larger and more active RC/WG/TGs. The first step was to allocate additional sessions to the larger Research Committee before the calls for abstracts were published. The second one to add two sessions to the RC/WG/TGs that had received the highest number of abstracts. The aim is to reduce the difference in the rate of sessions per member and per received abstracts. However, this rate remains unfavourable to the largest and most active RC/WG/TG. (i.e. smaller RCs receive proportionally more sessions per members than large RCs). It should act as an incentive to increase the existing RC/WG/TGs rather than multiplying the number of small RCs.

2. RC informal consultations and proposals for a virtual Forum

Consultations with RC leaders took place at different stages of the Forum preparation process. These consultations of RC leaders and of the RCC members resulted in many innovative proposals that were gathered in a 19-page report presented by the VP Research “Proposals for the first ISA online Forum” (diffused on 15 September 2020).

Some of these proposals had a clear impact on the Forum setting, showing that involving RC leaders allows improving ISA projects and is particularly efficient. Other proposals were presented to the ISA Executive Committee but not implemented in this Forum. Many of these proposals would deserve to be reconsidered for future ISA forums and congresses. Among these proposals were the suggestions to allow the lower the Forum registration fees and will enable the payment of ISA membership for two years instead of four years. RCs also asked for more flexibility to schedule RC/WG/TG sessions according to different time zones.

3. Preparing the first virtual Forum

- Re-opening the calls for abstracts in fall 2020 requested additional work by the RC/WG/TG programme coordinators and by the ISA secretariat. It revealed crucial to ensure a good number of participants in all participating RC/WG/TG.
- A considerable number of last-minutes issues appeared in the last couple of weeks. We managed to solve most of them, primarily thanks to efficient work by the ISA secretariat.

4. Lower registration fees

- The main complaint expressed by RC/WG/TG leaders was that the fees were far too high for an online Forum.
- The ISA accepted lower the registration fees by 50%. Besides, early registration fees applied until December 15th (Two months before the Forum).
A solidarity fund resulted in free registration for scholars from the global South. Each RC/WG/TG was able to select one or two recipients.

The ISA should consider lowering the fees for future events.

5. Innovative projects for an on-site Forum
During the Forum preparation process, time and energy have also been dedicated to innovative projects that were carefully organized but could not be implemented in a virtual Forum.

- Over 20 RCs prepared a pre-conference before the Forum, many of them with local researchers and actors and/or with spaces open for PhD students.
- The LOC provided was able to provide free rooms for each of these pre-conferences in the other two local “partner university”: the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS) and the UNISINO.
- The LOC set up a platform for solidarity housing: local researchers and students were invited to host an international participant.

To be improved:

- A more accessible Forum was a priority for many RCs. RC/WG/TG have complained repeatedly about the high registration fees.
- Most of the suggestions and proposals that emerged from the consultation of RC presidents were not considered or implemented. All the participating RC/WG/TG should have been consulted about the postponement and the virtual Forum. However, most had a very positive evaluation of the Forum at the end.
- Various RCs asked for more autonomy in organizing their online sessions, notably to adapt to different time zones or to extend the length of specific sessions.

5. A virtual Forum
This Forum was the first virtual conference organized by the ISA. It should thus be assessed with comprehension, considering it as a learning process. We should also bear in mind that this Forum was organized and planned as an “on-site Forum” that was then translated online. As such, it was different from an event that would have been planned as a virtual event from an early stage.

While we could not seize all the potential of a virtual event, the virtual Forum allowed maintaining the dynamic of the ISA and of participating RC/WG/TG, and listening to insightful research outcomes.

Feedbacks and evaluations have stressed the following points:

Virtual platform and technical difficulties

- They were very few technical problems and the online platform was very easy to use. This success has to be credited to the ISA secretariat and Confex company efficient work.
- A significant amount of last minutes requests and technical questions were raised by Forum participants and organizers in the last few days before the Forum. We are very thankful to Izabela, Juan and Lola (the ISA secretariat) for their work behind the scene and their flexibility to solve many issues in the last days and during the Forum.
Livestream and open access to the panel videos
- All the panel videos are available online, on the ISA Forum website
- Seven panels and the editor sessions were livestreamed.

The decision to livestream them was finalized too late for advertising these sessions online. However, some of these sessions reached out to broad audiences (Over 5000 views in 24 hours for the opening plenary!). I hope this success will pave the way for opening all the panels to a broader audience in a future virtual or hybrid event.

(The Research Council suggests that all the panels should be livestreamed but that we may be more cautious concerning the Q&A sessions.)

Visibility and projection of the Forum
As a virtual event, the Forum could have had much stronger visibility in social media. Livestreaming the panels was an excellent way to reaching out beyond the registered participants. The fact that it was planed as an on-site Forum limited its projection and diffusion to registered participants. For future virtual events, we should consider diffusing information on the Forum and the possibility of attending some of its sessions on social media in the months before the Forum. It will bring more visibility to the Forum, the ISA and sociology.