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RC35

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NEWSLETTER
of the Research
Committee on
Conceptual and
Terminological
Analysis

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Dear members of RC35,

I hope you are all doing well, despite all contexts.

This new issue of the Newsletter brings some important information:

First, a set of Guidelines that ISA has sent to each RC, for combating email scams, which appear to have been on the rise lately.

Second, the first set of Contributions to Conceptual Analysis, which is the novel Section for our RC Newsletter, where we hope to encounter, in a summarized way, our colleagues' latest research from around the world.

Third, the composition of the new board, starting this very year, and in place for the next four years, including some newer members.

Finally, I take this opportunity to remind you all of our new Social Media accounts, where you can send any info you would like to share regarding our common interests.

Here are the links:

- <https://www.facebook.com/100094996534162>
- <https://twitter.com/ISARC35>
- <https://instagram.com/rc35.isa/>

Wishing all this information will be of use, I send you all the best wishes, until next time,

Eugenia Fraga, Newsletter Editor.

ISA GUIDELINES FOR COMBATING EMAIL SCAMS

ISA Guidelines for Combating Email Scams

In recent months (especially after new Board Members' contact information on the ISA website was updated), there has been an alarming rise in scam emails targeting the members of RC/WG/TGs. As the digital world expands and our online influence grows, protecting ourselves entirely from these fraudulent activities becomes increasingly challenging.

Despite the risks associated with scam emails, it is important to note that we cannot hide your email addresses from the ISA website, as we aim to maintain accessibility and ease of communication. Concealing email addresses would hinder our members' ability to connect with one another and limit opportunities for collaboration within our community.

However, by implementing effective strategies and raising awareness, we can control the risks associated with these scams. **Here are some recommendations:**

1. Strengthen RC/WG/TG's Email Security:

To protect against scam emails, it is crucial to reinforce your official email account's security measures. We recommend implementing the following practices:

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- a. Use strong and unique passwords for your RC/WG/TG's email accounts.
- b. Enable two-factor authentication for added protection.
- c. Regularly update your email software and security settings.
- d. Backup your email data to prevent data loss in case of breaches.

2. Communicate with Members:

It is essential to maintain open lines of communication with your members and keep them informed about the potential scams. Make use of your website and social media platforms to:

- a. Regularly remind members that official communications from your RC/WG/TG will never request encrypted personal banking information.
- b. Share examples of scam emails and educate members on how to identify them.
- c. Encourage members to report any suspicious emails or messages received. They may report them directly to the Platform and/or notify your Online Communication Manager as well.

3. Reinforce Awareness through Newsletters:

Consistently raising awareness about scammers will help your members stay informed and vigilant. In your newsletters, consider including:

- a. Updates on any new scam emails or tactics being used by fraudsters.

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b. Tips and best practices for email security and scam prevention.

c. Reminders of the official communication channels and methods used by the ISA's RC/WG/TG.

It is impossible to eliminate scam emails entirely. However, following these recommendations will significantly reduce the risk of your members falling victim to such scams. By strengthening email security, maintaining transparent communication, and raising awareness, Research Committees, Working Groups and Thematic Groups will be better prepared to combat these fraudulent activities.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

As we have said all along this last semester, you are all invited to send a summary of your latest research and conceptual findings, to be published in this new section of the Newsletter, titled Contributions to Conceptual Analysis.

Note 1: Only one conceptual contribution can be sent per person per Newsletter issue; if you want to share more than one of your latest contributions, you can submit the other/s in the upcoming issues.

Note 2: Contributions will be received twice in the year: during the whole month of July (to be published in August) and during the whole month of November (to be published in December). Please send your contribution via e-mail (euge.fraga@hotmail.com).

Format: We are not asking for typical journal papers; we are looking for short summaries with basic and key conceptual outlines, so that everyone can quickly learn what their colleagues are working on. More specifically, we are expecting contributions ranging from half a page to a whole page (Microsoft Word, Times New Roman 12, 1,5 interspace). If the research you are sharing has already been further developed in another publication, you can/should mention this at the end of the page (and this shall be the only reference list).

Looking forward to learning about your latest findings!

CONTRIBUTIONS TO CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

Craig Browne - University of Sydney

The Intertwining of Social Theory and the Political Imaginary: Reconceptualizing Critique and Contestation

My book *Social Theory and the Political Imaginary: Practice, Critique and History* foreshadows a social theory perspective that recognises the constitutive significance of the political imaginary in modernity. Political imaginaries comprise the symbolic representation of society and the constitution of the political. Social theory is shown to always depend on the creativity of the imagination; the incipient political imaginaries of social theories condition their construction and manifest their basic presuppositions. In other words, social theories are shaped by their dual political imaginary. First, social theories reference and always depend upon the instituted political imaginary that symbolize, reveal, and give representational form to society, including its divisions, assemblages, values, organizing and legitimating principles. Second, every social theory contains an implicit or explicit political imaginary, which may coincide or diverge from the instituted political imaginary. The intertwining of social theory's dual political imaginary and the tensions between its constituents are, I argue, highly consequential, and an appreciation of this duality promises greater reflexivity and more effective critique. A good deal of the divisions and debates between social theory perspectives actually concern the respective political imaginary that inflect basic categories, concepts and terminology like action, structure, system, change, subjectivity, roles and order.

Social theory's current dilemmas are then explored through a series of interlinked assessments of some of its recent substantial strands, specifically, Luc Boltanski's pragmatism and the wider 'practical turn', the perspectives of multiple modernities and global modernity, the outlook of social and political imaginaries, and critical social theory. The political imaginary's reconfigurations are evident in the conflicts of global modernity. With the co-authors of three later chapters: Phillip Mar and Simon Susen, social theory interpretations are advanced of landmark instances of twenty-first century social contestation: the Hong Kong protests conditioned by threats to civil freedoms and a lack of self-determination, the radical democratic practices of anti-austerity movements contesting capitalist globalisation's injustices, and the inverted cosmopolitanism of the 2005 French Riots challenging the oppression and inequalities experienced by immigrant communities and marginalised youth. These three analyses of global modernity's constitutive tensions between domination and emancipation, control and protest, exemplify how reflection on the political imaginary contributes significantly to rethinking critical social theory. A rethinking that hopes to illuminate potential trajectories of historical development, clarify how these tendencies yield or can be reoriented toward emancipation and democracy by way of critique, and disclose practices of social reproduction and contestation that institute social and individual autonomy.

Browne, Craig (2024), *Social Theory and the Political Imaginary: Practice, Critique and History*, London: Routledge.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

Aaron Z. Pitluck - Illinois State University

Theorizing financial innovation

What social forces shape the trajectory of novel, moralized forms of finance such as social finance, green finance, or Islamic banking and finance? More broadly, how do agents mobilize arguments and organize each other to create any form of financial innovation? This article addresses both questions by contributing an ethnography of a novel financial innovation pseudonymously named Sukuk Illumination, an internationally traded moral alternative to a corporate bond. This article's findings both elaborate and subsume existing functionalist and critical explanations of financial innovation. The central argument is that we can better understand what causes financial innovation and the trajectory that new innovations take when we conceptualize each financial instrument as a polysemic cultural object materialized in legal contracts and institutionalized work practices and created by parties with asymmetric power to define the new object. Financial innovation necessarily involves multiple parties in a financial service commodity chain with multivalent motivations co-producing and hotly debating interpretations of the prospective financial instrument while simultaneously creating, refashioning, and differentiating existing relationships with one another. To use a metaphor, a financial instrument is a Cat's Cradle of string tying diverse parties together into a constellation of relationships. When one party attempts a financial innovation—such as the auction in Sukuk Illumination—that is, they metaphorically pull one string out—this has an immediate and dynamic effect on all the other parties in the constellation of string as they seek to reinterpret the financial instrument and their relationships to one another. Therefore, one can't understand Sukuk Illumination and other cases of financial innovation by looking at problem solving or exploitation between a bank and a client. Rather, the catalyst for financial innovation, and the ultimate form that it takes, is a Cat's Cradle of relationships involved in changing an old financial instrument into a new financial instrument, not to mention in creating new relationships between numerous parties in the finance chain, notably including the relationship between investors and issuers. The ethnography demonstrates both the potential and constraints for creating new moralized financial instruments and for transforming financial systems.

Aaron Z. Pitluck (2023), "The interpretive and relational work of financial innovation: a resemblance of assurance in Islamic finance," *Journal of Cultural Economy*, DOI: 10.1080/17530350.2023.2196990

CONTRIBUTIONS TO CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

Eugenia Fraga - Universidad de Buenos Aires

Critical affect and critical morals

Affect and morals are typically interpreted in a traditional manner. For example, traditional affect normally tends to be associated with a gendered and etarial division of labor and of power inside marriage and family relationships. In the same vein, traditional morals is usually thought of as referring to the respect towards hereditary and coactive group practices, generally understood in terms of land, blood, race, ethnicity, language or religion.

If we can see the problems contained in these concepts -ranging from patriarchy to imperialism-, should we do away with them altogether? I think not. A critical outlook of these social problems implies criticising the traditional interpretation and practice of affect and morals, but affect and morals are important dimensions of a critical standpoint on social life. Thus, we need to reconstruct both concepts from a critical -instead of a traditional- viewpoint. This is how we can arrive to two novel concepts: that of "critical affect" and that of "critical morals".

Critical affect and critical morals are key concepts if our goal is to stop, undermine or revert the present crisis of the modern capitalist system. Given its tendency to cyclical crises, as well as the generalized character of the present one -very much a civilizatory crisis including economical, political cultural and ecological dimensions, all on a global scale-, then new modalities of affect and of morality become necessary if we are seeking progressive solutions.

These comprise regional proposals such as that of the Good Life / Buen Vivir / Sumak Kawsay -taken from ancestral indigenous conceptions in Latin America- as well as philosophical discussions around critical values -such as justice, compassion and solidarity, which antagonize with the dominant ones of competition, individualism and technocracy-.

Critical affect and critical morals imply, then, alternative ways of thinking and living both ethics and aesthetics, and include elements such as fantasy and imagination, love and reciprocity, or utopia and transcendence. Furthermore, critical affect and critical morals can only be put into practice through a "progressive commitment".

Fraga, Eugenia (2020), *Afecto crítico y moral crítica. La crisis del sistema y su transformación progresista*, Buenos Aires..

CONTRIBUTIONS TO CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

Arthur Bueno - University of Passau & University of Frankfurt

The Practice of Emancipation: Reactualizing the Concept of Praxis

Some of the most influential trends in contemporary sociology have converged around the concept of practice. To be sure, their novelty does not lie in the focus on this theme itself. In the long-standing debates on agency and structure that marked mid-twentieth-century sociology, this concept played a central role and already involved a shift from the meaning that “praxis” had in Marxism. While still locating practices at the crossroads of social reproduction and social transformation, theorists like Giddens or Bourdieu saw them as entailing not a radical overthrowing of the capitalist system but an ongoing, everyday process of internalization and externalization of social structures.

However, the next generation of sociologists deemed that such approaches conceive of practice in much too narrow terms. Against them, authors like Latour and Boltanski highlighted the agency of non-humans and the reflexive capacities of humans, calling the notion of structure into question. By doing so, the new sociologies also advanced a new politics radically supposed to proceed from the bottom up. Yet with such a move, the category of practice seemed to be caught in a paradox. The more sociologists underscored the multiplication of agencies and the actors’ reflexive capacities, the more we appeared to confront a world that turns deaf ears to our demands, blocks our efforts to transform it, and places us in precarious conditions.

We seem to be led, inadvertently, back to social structures. Yet to merely restate the theoretical alternative between agency and structure would be a misstep. For their opposition does not pertain to the “things of logic” but to the “logic of things.” The ever-recurring hiatus between agency and structure is not a mere epistemological error but a product of the workings of social reality itself. This is precisely what allows us to agree with both sides. Paradoxically, it is by being continuously asked to make our own history that we become unable to do so. We become passive through our own activity. We are reflexive and dopes.

To this strange logic, Marx gave the name of “fetishism,” and Lukács, that of “reification.” Should we, then, return to their concepts of praxis? It is, in any case, crucial to retain one aspect: in this tradition, practice is fundamentally something to be realized. It does not consist simply in the continuous internalization and externalization of social structures, regardless of the outcome; nor does it point to the affirmation of agential capacities given in advance. Rather, such capacities are understood primarily as potentials whose actualization is hindered or blocked under present conditions. Here, practice is synonymous with struggle and collective transformation. The mediation between agency and structure is not something to be merely described, but to be politically accomplished.

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To adopt this conception does not mean abandoning altogether the features highlighted by recent sociologies of practice. Rather, it leads one to conceive of them differently. The problem does not lie in the notions of structure or agency themselves, but in the fact that they are treated as static entities: one of them is presented as always already given, the other as something negligible. In contrast, what praxis does is precisely to acknowledge, to articulate, and to transform this opposition.

As I have argued elsewhere, an important moment for emancipatory movements occurs with the recognition that, despite every appearance of individual activity, one is subjected to structural logics beyond one's control. Against the idea of pre-given agency, we accept being passive "cogs in a machine." But the process must not stop there. Instead of leading to a sense of defeat, the acknowledgment of our bodies' vulnerability to structural logics can bring to the fore precisely the material power of these bodies – without which, after all, those logics cannot exist. To paraphrase Marx: at the basis of (capital's) systemic domination lies the living (labor) power of human and non-human beings. Once acknowledged and self-organized, this power can be set against existing structures, empowering new ones. Agency comes back. However, it no longer appears as the act of an isolated actor, but as the expression of a collective living force grounded in a shared condition of vulnerability. We can only be active if we recognize our passivity. Practice becomes an end precisely because one acknowledges that it can end.

Bueno, Arthur (2022). The Standpoint of the Proletariat Today. In A. Bueno, M. Teixeira, D. Strecker (eds.). De-Centering Global Sociology: The Peripheral Turn in Social Theory and Research. New York: Routledge. 161-177.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

Alejandro Bialakowsky - Universidad de Buenos Aires

Contemporary reclassifications. Sociological theory, oppression and emancipation

To ask about classifications and reclassifications has become decisive not only in academia, but also in the plural conflicts of our contemporaneity, such those about classes, genders, ethno-racialities, bodies, economic relations and public policies. How can we position ourselves in the face of such importance, which crosses abstract discussions and our very everyday life?

Written by different researchers, the chapters of this book I edited reflect on how the ways in which the social and natural world is divided and hierarchized are produced, sustained, legitimized and transformed. Thus, the reflection is nourished by classical approaches and current debates without being limited to theories from the "North" and cases from the "South". It includes simultaneous productions and collaborations from different latitudes. It also addresses complex interweavings, with comings and goings, between sociological proposals and transformations and questionings deployed in heterogeneous social instances.

This "(re)classificatory turn" is strongly linked to emancipatory interrogations and practices that comprise and dislocate multiple current oppressive relations. This is crucial in the face of the reconfiguration and the relaunching, in recent years, of modes of domination between social groups and of exploitation of the natural. In short, this book opens dialogues and intervenes in the urgencies of our times, which require us to reclassify from and with theories.

Bialakowsky, Alejandro M. (comp.), 2023, *Reclasificaciones contemporáneas. Teoría socioológica, opresión y emancipación*, Buenos Aires, Dedalus.

<https://dedaluseditores.com.ar/editorial/reclasificaciones-contemporaneas/>

RC35 BOARD 2023-2027

After the RC35 Business Meeting elections, the new composition for the RC35 Board, which will span the period 2023-2027, is the following:

President

Arthur BUENO, University of Passau, Germany, arthur.bueno@uni-passau.de

Secretary & Treasurer

Alejandro BIALAKOWSKY, Universidad de Buenos Aires, Argentina, alejbialakowsk@gmail.com

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Board Members

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Gurminder K. BHAMBRA, University of Sussex, United Kingdom

Aaron PITLUCK, Illinois State University, USA

Media & Social Communication

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Glen Christian TACASA, University of the Philippines Los Banos, Philippines

President Emeritus

David STRECKER, Goethe University of Frankfurt, Germany, david.strecker@campus.tu-berlin.de