1. Call for papers—Full details at the end of this newsletter

ISA RC 55 Mid-Term Conference
Place: Universidad Pablo de Olavide, Sevilla, Spain

Dates: 26-29 June 2024

Topic: “Measuring Socioeconomic Inequalities in a Comparative Perspective”

Abstract submissions: January 15 to February 29, 2024

Coordinator: Christian Suter (Université de Neuchâtel)
E-mail: christian.suter@unine.ch
Coordinator Team:
- Joonmo Son (National University of Singapore)
- Sandra Fachelli (Universidad Pablo de Olavide)
- Enrico di Bella (Università di Genova)
- Jenny Chesters (University of Melbourne)

NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Jenny Chesters Associate Professor Faculty of Education, The University of Melbourne
E-mail: jenny.chesters@unimelb.edu.au
Address: Level 2, 100 Leicester St, The University of Melbourne, Victoria 3010, Australia
2. **New Publication:**

Enrico di Bella, Sandra Fachelli, Pedro López Roldán and Christian Suter are pleased to inform everyone that the book “Measuring Gender Equality” that they have edited for the “Social Indicators Research Series” by Springer is now freely available. In this open access book, the editors explicitly address the issue of measuring gender equality. The book introduces readers to basic concepts of gender equality, equity and equal opportunities, then discusses measuring these phenomena, the methods of constructing indicators, and reviews the main indicators that have been proposed at the international level to measure gender equality. It then sets the theoretical discussions against the findings from a Jean Monnet project financed by the European Union to highlight the importance of a regional analysis of gender equality in four main study areas: Italy, Spain, France and Germany. The results make it clear that it is necessary to move from the purely national perspective hitherto used in gender equality analyses to a regional one because differences can be highly pronounced even within the same country. This is a self-contained volume requiring limited statistical expertise for the reader and is aimed at social researchers and policymakers who wish to address gender equality from a quantitative perspective.

The book and its chapters can be downloaded for free at this link: [https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-031-41486-2](https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-031-41486-2)

3. **New Editor-in-chief of Social Indicators Research: David Bartram**

David Bartram has just started his term as Editor-in-chief of Social Indicators Research (following an 8-year period as co-editor of Journal of Happiness Studies). Over the next few months, he will be working with the editorial team to revise and update certain components of the journal. Items for discussion include:

- Ways to provide more detail to authors regarding our expectations for manuscripts: if you understand what we are looking for, you will have better chances of gaining acceptance for your manuscript.
- Increased research transparency: adoption of a requirement (or perhaps a strong expectation) that authors post their analysis code, making it available anonymously to reviewers (and then publicly to readers, following acceptance).
- Refreshing the editorial board.
- Exploring whether the journal’s ‘aims and scope’ need revision/development.

If you have suggestions regarding the journal, I would be pleased to receive a brief email offering your thoughts. I can’t promise to adopt everything, but I would hope to draw benefit from well-considered suggestions.

**Contact:** d.bartram@le.ac.uk
4. New PhD network

Upon his candidacy for this new term on the RC55 board, Enrico di Bella proposed establishing an RC55 PhD Network aimed at enhancing and encouraging the study of RC55 research themes. This network could lead to several positive impacts for RC55:

- It can become a fundamental tool for staying in contact and discussing topics of interest beyond the confines of ISA-specific conferences, creating a series of free events for RC55 members at regular intervals (every one/two months);
- It can be a way to involve young researchers in RC55, thereby increasing the number of members (being an affiliated member of RC55 does not require ISA membership and it has a limited fee of 15 USD for a 4-years period);
- It can be utilized for ISA conferences for “junior” sessions dedicated to PhD and post-doc students;
- It can be used to organize in presence/online summer or winter schools on social indicators;
- It can serve as the foundation for student and faculty exchanges between various universities and as a network for developing international research projects.

In the early months of 2024, Enrico di Bella will contact RC55 members with the goal of mapping the PhD programs involving RC55 members and the topics on which they can contribute to the organization of conferences and seminars, or on which they would be interested in exploring new subjects.

5. Introducing our Board members

Enrico di Bella: Professor of Social Statistics at the University of Genoa in Italy and is serving his second term as a member of the RC55 board. His research interests primarily concern the methodological aspects of constructing social indicators and their application in various contexts. His most recent applied research lines focus on measuring gender equality, with particular attention to developing indicators at the subnational (regional) level, and the effects of demographic change on health policies in Western countries. Recently, he has delved into the study of pathological gambling, its social costs, and forms of gambling-like games.

Jenny Chesters: Associate Professor Faculty of Education, at the University of Melbourne, Australia. She is a CI on the Life Patterns Research Project – a longitudinal mixed methods study tracking 3 cohorts of school leavers over time. Her research interests focus on transitions between education and employment throughout the life course, inequality in educational attainment and variations in levels of wellbeing associated with demographic characteristics. Her recent publications include the Research Handbook on Transitions into Adulthood (Edward Elgar 2024). Gender attitudes and occupational aspirations in Germany: Are young men prepared for the jobs of the future? (Work, Employment and Society 2023). Cross-national comparison of age and period effects on levels of subjective well-being in
Australia and Switzerland during volatile economic times (2001-2016 (with Simona-Moussa & Suter in Social Indicators Research 2020).

**Masayuki Kanai Senshu University, Japan**

Greetings from Tokyo! I am thrilled to serve our community again in my second term as a board member. For those who may not be familiar with me, I am passionate about researching the mechanisms of subjective well-being, focusing on cultural and institutional diversity. Over the past decade, I have collaborated with colleagues from eight different Asian societies, including Indonesia, Japan, Mongolia, the Philippines, Taiwan, Thailand, South Korea, and Vietnam. Our latest project, the Social Well-Being Survey in Asia (SoWSA) and Social Well-Being Interview in Asia (SoWIA), has provided invaluable insights into the social determinants of well-being in these societies, highlighting both similarities and differences. Along the way, I have also come to appreciate the diversity of norms and practices in quantitative and qualitative research across the region. I am excited to bring these experiences to the RC55 community and help bridge perspectives from various regions.

**Oliver Nahkur** (PhD in Sociology) is a Research Fellow of Research of Social Wellbeing in University of Tartu, Institute of Social Studies, Estonia. He is a member of the International Society for Child Indicators (ISCI) and International Survey of Children’s Well-Being (ISCWeB) Estonian team; secretary-treasurer of International Sociological Association, Research Committee nr 55 - Social indicators; board member of International Sociological Association, Task Group nr 11 – Violence and Society. He actively contributes to the development of child well-being data in Estonia.

Most recently, Oliver has been co-editing a book about child vulnerability and working on the development of a new child indicator – International Child Subjective Vulnerability-Resilience Index (ICSVRI) that aims to be an international cross-country comparable child subjective vulnerability measure.

Previously, Oliver has constructed several indicators measuring different social phenomenon, e.g. global cross-country comparable Societal Index of Interpersonal Destructiveness (SIID; https://hdl.handle.net/10062/65358) and subnational level Immigration-related conflict risk index (MICRI; https://doi.org/10.31577/cas.2021.04.592). Both can be used also for conflict and violence prevention purposes. Together with prof Rein Taagepera, Oliver confirmed prof Steven Pinker’s recent violence decline thesis by using SIID, also specified the speed of its’ decline (https://doi.org/10.1163/15691330-12341494) and lead and lag times of individual countries compared to world average (https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-020-02540-3).

In one of his latest research publications he studied the change in children's subjective relational social cohesion with family and friends during the COVID-19 pandemic in 18 countries across the globe (https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2022.974543).


Ruut Veenhoven: Emeritus professor of social conditions for human happiness, Erasmus University Rotterdam in the Netherlands.
Homepage: https://personal.eur.nl/veenhoven

What brought me into Social Indicators Research

I studied sociology in the 1960s and at that time, the limits of economic growth came into view, which resulted in a call for greater ‘well-being’ instead of more ‘wealth’. This change in political priority created a demand for indicators of wider well-being in nations and that demand was met by the Social Indicator movement which emerged at that time and lives on today in RC55.

I witnessed that development and noticed that the notion of well-being was an umbrella for various things deemed desirable, such as more social security and less income inequality. In fact, the term ‘well-being’ came to denote everything on the political agenda except economic growth. This raised the question of how to prioritize among all these desires.

I found an answer in the moral tenet that governments should give precedence to what results in the greatest happiness of the greatest number of people of which I had learned in a course on social philosophy. This principle was proposed by Jeremy Bentham in 1789 is currently known as moral ‘utilitarianism’. While Bentham could only speculate about effect of policy choices on happiness, I supposed that contemporary methods of social research would allow an empirical check. So, when I had to write a paper, I opted for the subject of empirical happiness research.

I defined happiness as life-satisfaction and gathered the available research findings on that matter. I found some 20 empirical studies which together reported a hundred correlational findings. The main conclusion was that happiness can be measured and that evidence-based promotion of happiness is possible. To my surprise this student paper was published in a Dutch sociological journal and reprinted later in a book and a weekly. That made me realize that my personal interest was part of a wider quest for factual knowledge about happiness.

Over the years I have continued in that track and to date (December 2023) my World Database of Happiness (https://worlddatabaseofhappiness.eur.nl) contains standardized descriptions of some 50,000 research findings on happiness. On the basis of these data, I could settle several theoretical questions about happiness, such as whether happiness is relative and whether happiness is a fixed trait or not. I could also assess the effects on average happiness in nations of societal characteristics such as the degree of political democracy, state welfare effort and income inequality.

As a sociologist, I submitted the resulting papers to sociological journals in the first place but got rejections over and again. A sociological analysis of the reasons behind these rejections is given in my paper ‘Sociology’s blind eye for happiness’. Fortunately, my work was welcomed in the interdisciplinary journal Social Indicators Research that had been established in 1974. That led me into the ISA-working group on Social Indicators which
provided a very inspiring environment. Over the years, I attended all meetings of that working group and served the board in different functions among which as the president. I helped to upgrade the working group into the current Research Committee in 2008. I am still fascinated by the developments in the field, in particular its current revitalization in the ‘Beyond GDP’ movement and attendant proposals for indexes of ‘Broad Wellbeing’. My personal research focus is still on what objective well-being is most ‘well’ with respect to subjective happiness. My main role in the board will be to link present problems with past experiences. Given my age (81) health (cancer) this will be my last term on the board.

Picture: Ruut Veenhoven visited Jeremy Bentham. Bentham was a celebrity in his time. In his will, made shortly before he died in 1832, he requested that his body be preserved as an ‘auto-icon’, consisting of his preserved skeleton, dressed in suit of his own clothes, and surmounted by a wax head. As such, he is still present in the University College of London.

Joonmo Son is a researcher in social capital, volunteerism, health and aging, and religion. After an undergraduate degree in sociology, I worked as a TV reporter for seven years in South Korea—partly stimulated by the reading of Daniel Bell, who lamented that sociologists are generally unaware of how the social world operates. I then obtained a doctoral degree in sociology in the United States. I got my first job in academia in Singapore in 2008. Since then, my research projects have tried to answer the question: What do social relations do to us and the world?

I became interested in social ties and networks and their interplay with macro institutions when I worked as a second-year reporter at YTN, a twenty-four-hour news channel in South Korea, in 1996. It was September 18 when North Korean armed spies had come onshore from a submarine. This submarine had malfunctioned, so they were forced to land in a small northeastern fishing village about seventy kilometers from the border between North and South Korea. I was sent to the place with a camera crew.
As soon as the dozens of reporters from newspapers and broadcasting companies arrived at the village in the afternoon, a group of South Korean soldiers led them to a nearby mountain called Cheong-hak. Halfway up the mountain, the soldiers at the head stopped; on the hillside, a yellow photo line had been placed around a vacant area. At first, I could not tell what was inside the line because a thick forest darkened the area. I began to get a bad smell, and some of the reporters started vomiting. I realized that the corpses of eleven North Korean soldiers lay in a row on the ground covered with fallen leaves. They had all been shot in the head. Later, it was revealed that they were crew members of the submarine who were untrained for survival in emergencies. It thus appeared that their rules of engagement prescribed that the crew members should be terminated first if enemies pursued them.

A mop-up operation in search of the armed spies went on for forty-nine days until early November, requiring over a million person-days in the region and leaving seventeen South Korean soldiers and civilians dead and over thirty wounded. In the days following the incident, thirteen of the remaining armed spies were killed in action. Only one remained missing and was assumed to have crossed the border successfully. Thus, they either died or fled.

However, there was an outlier. One spy, Kwang-soo Lee, managed to separate from his colleagues and surrendered on the first day. I recall his recorded message to his colleagues resounding throughout the mountainous areas in eastern Gangneung city through megaphones mounted on numerous military trucks: “Comrades, surrender. They will not kill you. I am treated well.” In late October, at a nationally televised press conference held in Seoul, I was able to ask him the question that haunted me: had the crew members at the Cheong-hak Mountain killed themselves, or had they been killed? He stared at me for a while, then slowly lowered his head.

As a reporter, I experienced impressive social, economic, and political incidents in those seven years. Nonetheless, the tragic scene of the dead North Koreans who were indoctrinated to be killed or commit suicide in certain situations was the most persistent one in my memory.

Given that it is likely that the crew members were killed by their comrades—or at least that the armed spies did not prevent them from shooting themselves—it appeared that institutional directives shattered the social relations between crew members and armed spies. From a sociological viewpoint, these men were oversocialized to give up their lives. Yet not all who landed in the wrong place yielded to the power of structural indoctrination. One of them departed from it and tried unsuccessfully to persuade his comrades to desert the unconditionally robotic behavioral doctrine.

These firsthand experiences have had lingering effects on me over time. For example, they helped me make balanced and nuanced comments on the summit in Singapore between the United States and North Korea in 2018 when Trump and Kim Jong-Un discussed nuclear disarmament that has yet to be realized.
[A televised image on YouTube regarding the summit between the United States and North Korea in 2018. JTBC is a South Korean broadcasting company.]

Even since my doctoral dissertation on social capital and institutional constraints, I have continued to study how social relations can do good or bad or (sometimes) nothing for individuals, organizations, or societies, adopting comparative research designs whenever possible.

For example, I published these three journal manuscripts in 2023.


The studies raise research questions such as whether interpersonal social engagement at the later stage of life helps protect cognitive function and prevent depressive symptoms and if the social ties formed at religious congregations effectively let the participants contribute their time to religious and secular causes. I look forward to seeing other manuscripts under review in print in 2024 or later.

Being elected president of the ISA Research Committee 55 (Social Indicators) in 2023 was an honor. Social indicators are a fundamental basis of sociological and social scientific research. I will exert my best effort to increase the impact of the research committee further in the coming years through the international networks the members have constructed. Pursuing more international research projects among the members based on regular conferences or independently from them will also help achieve the collective goal.
Dolgion Aldar, a sociologist from Mongolia. I first joined the International Sociological Association and its Research Committee #55 (RC55) in 2014. As a newcomer to the committee, the extent and impact of this Committee were not fully clear to me initially. However, this changed significantly when I attended the RC55 sessions for the first time during the Third ISA Forum of Sociology held in Vienna, Austria, in 2016. That experience strengthened my connection with the Committee.

In my role, I have observed and contributed to several pivotal initiatives that have shaped the strategic direction of the Independent Research Institute of Mongolia (IRIM), particularly in areas such as social well-being and democracy. Among these, the initiative that stands out and which I wish to highlight here is the ‘Social Well-Being Survey of Mongolia’ initiative.

**About the Social Well-being Survey of Mongolia**

The Independent Research Institute of Mongolia (IRIM) independently initiated the Social Cohesion and Subjective Well-being nationwide Survey in 2016. This initiative, synergizing with other ongoing national studies, stemmed from an intrinsic understanding of the need to delve into societal dynamics beyond just GDP and political measures.

The Survey combines quantitative and qualitative approaches, engaging a significant number of respondents across Mongolia through nationally representative and targeted group surveys. Its unique timing across various seasons allows for capturing seasonal affective variations.

The survey covers subjective well-being (life satisfaction, affect, eudaimonia), social trust, and cooperation. It adapts frameworks from entities like the OECD and Gallup Institute to fit the Mongolian context, offering culturally relevant insights. Results are disseminated through media, conferences, and academic publications, with the data being extensively used by other researchers for further studies.

**The integration of the Social Well-being survey with international sociologists**

My initial presentation of this work in Vienna at the RC55 session was met with positive reception, marking the beginning of enduring partnerships and institutional collaborations. Key developments included:

- Interaction with Professor Hiroo Harada from Senshu University in Japan, a prominent RC55 member, who introduced us to the existing International Consortium of Social Well-being Studies, comprising members from across Asia, many of whom were also part of RC55. He highlighted the similarities in our studies and the potential for collaboration.
• In 2017, a delegation led by Professor Harada, including Professor Masayuki Kanai, Professor Katsumi Shimane, and others, visited our facilities in Mongolia. This visit was a pivotal moment for sharing our work and vision with these esteemed scholars.

• From 2018, IRIM officially joined the International Consortium as a member. This membership marked a significant expansion in opportunities and networks for both our young and seasoned researchers.

• In addition to gaining membership in the International Consortium, our engagement with the RC55 Committee and the Consortium members brought forth valuable feedback and reviews. A notable instance was the guidance we received from Professor Ruut Veenhoven, a board member of RC55. His expertise was instrumental both during the conference and in subsequent written communications. He offered key insights on the crucial parameters and indicators to focus on. This advice significantly enhanced the direction and depth of our research.

Currently, ten members from IRIM are actively involved in the International Consortium of Social Well-being Studies. This progression underscores how attending the RC55 event not only expanded our network but also led to our participation in this international initiative, largely thanks to the leadership and initiative of the RC55 members.

**Ongoing Collaborative Research with the Consortium**

As of 2024, IRIM is engaged in two research projects in collaboration with the International Consortium:

Social Well-being of Mothers During Air Pollution Season in Mongolia, examining the resilience of mothers to air pollution-related issues, coping strategies, the role of social capital in combating air pollution. The second project is on Social Capital and Proactive Resilience to Natural Disasters in Mongolia, the Philippines, and Vietnam, looking at relationship between demographic & socioeconomic variables and social capital in natural disasters, the impact of social capital on community resilience, and mechanisms of reactive and proactive resilience to disasters.

The research findings are expected to provide a deeper understanding of how communities can effectively prepare for and respond to human-induced and natural disasters, informing policy and individual strategies.

Furthermore, IRIM's active participation in international conferences facilitated the sharing of research findings from Mongolia. Between 2018 and 2023, key members of IRIM and other Mongolian sociologists attended 10 conferences organized by the International Consortium for Social Well-Being Studies. Notable presentations made by IRIM representatives included:

• Current Status and Tasks for Harmonization Strategies and Plans of Photovoice Research in Mongolia (2023)
• Examining the Well-being of Single Parents in Mongolia (2019)
• Addressing poverty and inequality: Social well-being policies in Mongolia (2018)
• The Findings from Mongolia’s Subjective Well Being Survey 2017: Mining Sector Trust Level in Mongolian Gobi Region (2018)
• Initial findings from the Social Cohesion and Subjective Well-Being Survey in Mongolia (2018)

Future Directions and Strategic Development

Moving forward, IRIM aims to further enhance its collaborative research efforts. A key goal for the coming years is to consolidate and share IRIM’s extensive research findings. Making these insights accessible to a wider audience, including academics and policymakers, is crucial for ensuring that the survey results inform effective public policies and contribute to societal well-being.

For 2024, we aim to expand our collaboration with other RC55 members. This includes exploring how to evolve our study into a panel study, for which we seek guidance from seasoned RC55 members.

From 2024 to 2025, our objective is to conduct a nationwide survey across all four seasons, assessing the feasibility of developing a panel study. In this endeavor, we anticipate support from potential funding sources, collaborating with the International Consortium of Social Well-being Studies.

We are also eager to pursue opportunities for international publications by partnering with sociologists from around the world, aiming to amplify our findings within the Social Indicators community. Additionally, we remain committed to nurturing and developing the skills of young researchers from Mongolia, continuing to invest in the future of our sociological research community.

By 2025 and 2026, our goal is to make our dataset accessible to the academic community and others, while also consolidating our previous data. Through these ongoing efforts, we aspire to use the survey results at the provincial level and among diverse groups, contributing to outcome indicators for key public policies, programs, and projects.

6. Reminder

Please consider sending your updates to the Newsletter Editor at any time for inclusion in the next newsletter. For example, when you have a new publication, promotion, call for papers etc.
From 26 to 29 June 2023, the XV Spanish Sociology Congress, with the theme: #SociologyForDigitalSociety, will be held in Seville, Spain. The Spanish Federation of Sociology will organize and coordinate the conference with the Universidad Pablo de Olavide.

Abstract submissions
January 15 to February 29, 2024

Call for Papers
ISA RC 55 Mid-Term Conference on the topic of “Measuring Socioeconomic Inequalities in a Comparative Perspective”

Coordinator: Christian Suter (Université de Neuchâtel)
E-mail: christian.suter@unine.ch

Coordinator Team:
- Joonmo Son (National University of Singapore)
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- Enrico di Bella (Università di Genova)
- Jenny Chester (University of Melbourne)

The announcement below shows the recommendations for authors interested in submitting their papers to this RC 55 Mid-Term Conference: Measuring Socioeconomic Inequalities in a Comparative Perspective

The RC55 Research Committee on Social Indicators of the International Sociological Association is pleased to invite authors to submit abstracts for oral or poster presentations addressing socioeconomic inequalities from a comparative perspective. Persistent or rising socioeconomic inequalities have become a major concern in many countries in recent years, both in the Global North and the Global South. Contemporary society is going through several consecutive and partly overlapping (financial, economic, ecological, sanitary, social, and political) crises that, together with the impact of current wars and rising geopolitical conflicts, contribute to increasing socioeconomic inequalities. These crises accentuate old inequalities and generate new ones. The digital society, for example, with the evolution of the platform economy, the possibility of teleworking, the rapid advance of Artificial Intelligence, and many other transformations impact all aspects of social life and provoke new challenges for the social sciences, including the need to reconceptualize, measure, and analyze these new (and old) inequalities. The focus of this call for papers is on conceptualizing, measuring, and analyzing socioeconomic inequalities as multidimensional phenomena, including the construction and analysis of multidimensional composite indicators. Issues that may be addressed include (but are not limited to):

- socioeconomic inequalities and well-being,
- social stratification,
- educational inequalities,
- labor market inequalities,
- gender inequalities,
- digital society inequalities,
- migration inequalities,
- health inequalities,
- climate change inequalities.

Proposals that employ a systematic comparative approach, i.e., the measurement or study of the same phenomenon in different countries or regions, are particularly welcome. Contributions may be of theoretical nature, applied studies, or methodological reflections.
General information:
- Please note the rules of participation, to which all persons wishing to present a communication must adhere.
- The sessions will be organized in a hybrid format, and online communications are welcome.
- The procedure will consist of a single phase in which a paper must be submitted, either as an extended abstract (800-1500 words) or as a poster (in English or Spanish). For “extended abstract” submission format, it will be mandatory to use the text template published on the website. For “Poster” format: follow the instructions published on the “rules”.
- The submission and management of papers will be made only through the application enabled by the Congress: Conftool

Key dates:

Paper submission:
- Submission of extended abstracts or posters: **January 15 to February 29, 2024.**
- Confirmation of acceptance of extended abstracts or posters: **April 10, 2024**

Registration
- From **March 1, 2024**
- Deadline for discounted registration: **April 25, 2024**
- Deadline for registration to appear in the program: **May 10, 2024**

Registration fees
- **Special price RC55 Member:** 125 euros (early registration) and 175 euros after 25th of April
- A limited number of registration grants will be provided by RC55 funds.
- **Non-RC55 members and no FES members:** 325 euros (early) and 375 euros after 25th of April
- **FES members:** please click [here](#).

Program
- **Publications of session program:** **May 22, 2024**
- **Publications of general program:** **June 6, 2024**

CONTRIBUT TO THE CONGRESS DISSEMINATION!
XV Congreso FES

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