



Conceptual and
Terminological Analysis

NEWSLETTER
of the Research
Committee on
Conceptual and
Terminological
Analysis

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

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

This new issue of the Newsletter brings some important information.

First, the composition of the Board, with minor changes.

Second, the list of our RC's Social Media links, where we can publish all the academic news of our members. Please send us any info you consider of interest.

Third, the 4th 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.

Finally, I would like to congratulate everyone -RC35 members, paper presenters, discussants, and public, for a very successful 5th ISA Forum of Sociology, held this past July in Rabat, Morocco.

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

Eugenia Fraga,
Newsletter Editor.



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List of RC35's Social Media Accounts,

where you can send any info you would like to share regarding our common interests.



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CONTRIBUTIONS TO CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

Masses

*by Pablo de Marinis (ed.)
University of Buenos Aires and CONICET*

The concept of masses has always been key throughout the history of the social sciences and in the most diverse cultural spheres. It is a slippery word, with elusive connotations, which alludes to a social entity that is also slippery and elusive, and which is usually considered a "problem" with which "something" must be done. After an introductory chapter that briefly outlines the history of the concept of masses in sociology and delineates some of its main analytical dimensions, ten contributions follow, all produced within the research activities of a team (the "Study Group on Problems and Concepts of Sociological Theory" / GEPyCTS) based at a public university institution (the Gino Germani Research Institute / IIGG, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Buenos Aires / UBA). The Research+Development Agency (Agencia I+D+i) was one of the funding agencies for the research process that led to this book, giving continuity to a collective effort that has existed for almost two decades now.

The various chapters are primarily theoretical and sociological in nature, but they are placed within their necessary articulation with other social and human sciences (political theory, philosophy, social psychology, among others). They capture Argentinean and Latin American debates as an embodiment of the "South," which is defended as a legitimate place of enunciation for social theories. However, far from any narrow-mindedness, these are connected to theoretical and epochal crossroads that are also the subject of discussion in (and from) other latitudes (the "North"). Several of these works offer reconstructions and reworkings of theoretical approaches that took place approximately between the 1950s and 1980s, while also making numerous flashbacks to other historical moments in the past, as well as posing questions from our contemporary perspective. All of this enables us to view those scenarios through eyes different from those of the

protagonists of the originary debates. Some texts propose critical rereadings of well-known authors, while others offer exercises in discovering other, much lesser-read and lesser-known approaches. In short, beyond the central theme and problem of the masses shared by all the book's chapters, the most absolute diversity reigns, all with the expectation of contributing to a debate on the concept of masses from the "South," a debate which remains unresolved.

Chapters of the book include three that are authored by different members of RC35: Pablo de Marinis's, on the link between masses and revolution; Alejandro Bialakowsky's, on the link between masses and movements; and Eugenia Fraga's, on the link between masses and critique.

Reference: de Marinis, P. (2025). *Masas. Estudios sociológicos sobre conceptos escurridizos*. Agencia IDI e Instituto de Investigaciones Gino Germani, Buenos Aires.

Download link: Available for full free download at
<https://iigg.sociales.uba.ar/2025/06/24/36674/>

CONTRIBUTIONS TO CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

Summary of my Most Recent Publications

by Simon Susen

City St George's, University of London

Topic: Humanity and uncontrollability

Summary: Focusing on the work of Hartmut Rosa, this book provides an in-depth account of the extent to which we, as humans, are obliged to face up to the uncontrollability [*Unverfügbarkeit*] of the world.

Reference: Simon Susen (2024) *Humanity and Uncontrollability: Reflections on Hartmut Rosa's Critical Theory*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 324 pp.

Download: <https://link.springer.com/book/9783031489136>

Topic: On the task of the translator

Summary: This paper argues that the critical engagement with the task of the translator illustrates that 'trans-ineffability' (that is, the fact that not everything can be expressed 'in' language just as not everything can be rendered intelligible 'across' languages) is a challenging, but ultimately enriching and empowering, part of the human condition.

Reference: Simon Susen (2024) 'Twenty-Five Theses on the Task of the Translator: With, against, and beyond Walter Benjamin', *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia*, 80(1–2), pp. 197–270.

Download: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27328800>

Topic: An interpretive theory of culture

Summary: Clifford Geertz's *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973) is widely regarded as one of the most important contributions to the humanities and social sciences in general and anthropology in particular. This paper aims to demonstrate that the key conceptual components of Geertz's enterprise can be located in his case for an interpretive theory of culture, epitomized in the methodological commitment to providing a 'thick description'.

Reference: Simon Susen (2024) 'The Interpretation of Cultures: Geertz Is Still in

Town', *Sociologica – International Journal for Sociological Debate*, 18(1), pp. 25–63.

Download: <https://sociologica.unibo.it/article/view/18664/17932>

Topic: Thinking and writing sociologically

Summary: In this conversation, Simon Susen and Marc Ortman discuss key challenges arising from 'thinking and writing sociologically', especially in a context in which 'big theory' appears to be on its way out.

Reference: Simon Susen and Marc Ortman (2024) 'Das Ende der großen Theorien: Simon Susen im Gespräch mit Marc Ortman'. *Soziopolis: Gesellschaft beobachten*.

Download: <https://www.sociopolis.de/das-ende-der-grossen-theorien.html>

Topic: Practical negations of capitalist legitimacy

Summary: This chapter examines the extent to which 21st-century anti-austerity protests may, or may not, be regarded as practical negations of capitalist legitimacy.

Reference: Craig Browne and Simon Susen (2024 [2014]) 'Austerity and Its Antitheses: Practical Negations of Capitalist Legitimacy', in Craig Browne, *Social Theory and the Political Imaginary: Practice, Critique, and History*, London: Routledge, pp. 166–177.

Download:

<https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781003358862-8/austerity-antitheses-craig-browne-simon-susen>

CONTRIBUTIONS TO CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

Sociology in Mexico

*by Gina Zabłudovsky
National Autonomous University of Mexico*

This open access book presents a condensed history of sociology in Mexico from its origins, through to the middle of the 19th century and up to the present day.

The book analyses the interaction between sociology and the main economic, political and social changes in the country, including the 1910 Mexican Revolution, the main social movements, the role of the intellectual exiles from Spain and Latin America, and the participation of women, who have often remained invisible in the history of sociology.

The book explores how sociological discourse played a fundamental role in the separation of secular and public education and the search for a 'national project' from 1868 onwards, despite the lack of an institute of social research until 1930; how sociology became an autonomous social science, led by a few intellectuals and public figures, as it became institutionalized in universities, and the effect this had on the development of the discipline; the influence of Marxism during the 1970s; and the progression from a process of specialization after the fall of the Berlin Wall to a new trend of working in collective projects with an increasing interdisciplinary perspective in the first decades of the 21st century.

The book, then, provides an intellectual and institutional history of sociology in Mexico, that balances the influence of European thought and Western sociology with the search for a national and Latin American sociology. It provides a synthesis of sociology in Mexico, focusing on historical events in economic, political and cultural life, and does so by linking urban sociology, women's and gender studies, economic sociology, and rural sociology, to social changes.

Reference: Zabłudovsky, Gina (2024), *Sociology in Mexico. An Intellectual and Institutional History*, Springer.

Full free download: <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-031-42089-4>

CONTRIBUTIONS TO CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

Reconceptualising African Universities

by Patrício V. Langa

Eduardo Mondlane University, Mozambique & University of Bonn, Germany

and David Kaldewey

*University of Bonn & Rhine Ruhr Center for Science Communication
Research, Germany*

How can we conceptualize the fabric of African universities from a sociological perspective? In the introductory chapter of our volume “Negotiating the Fabric of the African University”, we contribute to a conceptual history of the University in Africa by analysing grand narratives and competing models. We critically excavate the historiographical paradigms that have shaped scholarly and political understandings of African universities. By problematising the dominant narratives that have hitherto framed the discourse on the history of universities, we seek to reconfigure the epistemological terrain, foregrounding the agency and resilience of African scholars and institutions within the complex matrix of colonialism, globalisation, and other external influences.

Such a nuanced and contextualised approach allows us to reinscribe the conceptual history of African universities within a more inclusive and diverse narrative framework, one that acknowledges the multifaceted experiences and contributions of African higher education institutions. In particular, our chapter raises the following questions:

- 1) How do traditional historiographical and sociological approaches to university history occlude the experiences and agency of African institutions?
- 2) What are the epistemological implications of reconceptualizing the history of African universities for our global understanding of knowledge production and dissemination?
- 3) How can a conceptual history of African universities inform contemporary debates about higher education,

development, and the role of the university in society?

Our contribution offers a paradigmatic shift in the conceptual analysis of African universities, underscoring the need for more nuanced and contextualised approaches to understanding the complex experiences of African institutions. By challenging dominant narratives and foregrounding the agency of African scholars and institutions, the reconceptualization has the potential to reshape our understanding of the African university's role in shaping knowledge, culture, and society worldwide.

Reference: Langa, Patrício V. & Kaldewey, David (ed.) (2025): *Negotiating the Fabric of the African University, Volume 1 – Global Narratives and Local Models*. Leiden: Brill.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

The "Brokering Novel Concepts into Economic Sociology" Project

by Aaron Z. Pitluck
American Bar Foundation and Illinois State University

Over the past two years, two International Sociological Association Research Committees, Economy and Society (RC02) and Conceptual and Terminological Analysis (RC35) have collaborated on a common research project. We have explored well-established concepts from other fields or sub-fields that are currently missing, underappreciated, or misconceptualized in economic sociology. You may have even attended one of our three joint sessions on this topic at the XX ISA World Congress of Sociology in Melbourne in 2023. I am pleased to share with our community that this research has been published as *Current Sociology* monograph, Volume 72 Issue 2. The journal is freely available to ISA members and three of the articles are currently available worldwide as Open Access. Aaron Pitluck's initial impetus for the project was to experimentally explore how international scholars might apply the heuristic tool of brokering in a novel concept to generate new insights for analysing economic life. This has produced five articles and five concepts, each illustrated with original empirical research.

Dialogues with anthropology

Dana Kornberg brokers in 'transactional pathways' from economic anthropology to demonstrate that the genealogy of specific markets is inextricably intertwined with the genealogy of groups creating and reshaping social identities like class, race, gender, and caste. Her article deploys the concept in Delhi to explain the curious failure of a well-funded, formalized public-private partnership program controlled by upper-caste groups to displace lower-caste and Muslim informal waste collection and recycling workers. Another value of her research is to position Jane Guyer's concept within cultural and relational approaches to economic sociology. Similarly inspired by anthropology, Sally Schnapper was compelled to broker

in concepts from family and kinship anthropology to better understand her fieldwork of shopkeepers in rural France. From her ethnographic and historical reflections, she induced the concept of the 'trading house' to better understand family businesses. Both Kornberg's and Schnapper's contributions are noteworthy for engaging with anthropological theory to transcend ossified binary categories in sociological theorizing such as the distinction between formal and informal markets, and between households and businesses.

Dialogues with interdisciplinary fields

Several of the articles broker in concepts from interdisciplinary fields that economic sociology has neglected. For example, a 'fiduciary relationship' is a well-established concept in law, theology, and ethics, and is already well institutionalized in diverse academic fields, including economics—but rarely in economic sociology. Jordi Mundó's research seeks to correct this omission by demonstrating the utility of the concept in key sites of economic sociological inquiry, including analyses of property, public goods, and to help frame normative debates in environmental sustainability.

Two theories broadly used in economic sociology (and the discipline broadly) is Jens Becket's concept of 'fictional expectations' in the economy, as well as Ann Swidler's concept of a toolkit or repertoires approach in cultural sociology. In a provocative argument, Dustin Stoltz critiques the presuppositions of both theories by drawing on research in the cognitive sciences and then advances an 'embodied' approach to cognition. He deploys this concept to collect data about elite professional advisory firms to explore how they conduct (and sell) their imaginative labour. The article is filled with insights, regardless of whether your interest is in cognitive embeddedness, culture in the economy, the temporality and embodiedness of agency, or the power of transnational consulting firms to format economic life.

Jean De Munck and Tom Duterme remind us that economic sociologists extensively study the role of signs when studying consumption (e.g., the advertising industry's manipulation of signs), and many sociologists draw on the interdisciplinary Socio-economics of Convention literature to study how one type of sign—the convention—enables coordination in markets and production. But why focus only on conventions or the role of signs in consumption? De Munck and Duterme advocate for exploring the full spectrum of signs and their contextualized evolution (semiosis) by drawing on the work of Charles Sanders Peirce. To demonstrate the utility of Peircian sociology for economic sociologist, they draw on original research on stock market indices to explore their semiotic power in financial markets.

Openings and Closings

The heuristic metaphor of 'brokering in' an idea from one field to another requires that we attend to—and potentially question—the existing borders between disciplines and sub-disciplines that we have absorbed from our national sociologies and our diverse graduate trainings. In the monograph's opening article, Aaron Pitluck traces the (increasingly poorly named) New Economic Sociology (NES) that arose in the mid-1980s by scholars primarily based in the United States and subsequently exported world-wide within the historical context of the rise of neoliberal capitalism and the demise of the USSR. On one hand, the NES was an improbably successful brokering between several isolated research communities that was united by a persuasive 'fall and rise' narrative that sociological research on the economy had declined since the era of classical sociology and that a sub-discipline of Economic Sociology was necessary to challenge the hegemony of economists. On the other hand, this nascent rhetorical framing excluded as irrelevant sociological work on the economy conducted from the 1920s to 1970s, including dependency theory in Latin America, neo-Marxism, and international political economy. The NES conception of economic sociology is therefore simultaneously the product of successful brokering as well as of durable resistance to brokering from nearby fields.

In the monograph's closing article, Alexander Ebner excavates one such significant historical exclusion—the work of Joseph Schumpeter, particularly his insights on technological and organizational innovation as the driving force of capitalist evolution. Ebner carefully disaggregates key ideas in the New Economic Sociology to demonstrate a shared undertheorization of novelty and disruption in contemporary capitalism. Ebner's article provides numerous promising ideas with which economic sociologists could broker in ideas from contemporary evolutionary economists to better theorize the internal dynamics of capitalism.

Reference: Aaron Z. Pitluck et al (2025), *Current Sociology* monograph, Volume 72, Issue 2.

Download link: Available for full free download at
<https://journals.sagepub.com/toc/csia/73/2>

CONTRIBUTIONS TO CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

The Internal Structure of Critical Theory

*by Eugenia Fraga
University of Buenos Aires and CONICET*

The goal of this book was to analyze and bring into dialogue the concepts of "theory" and "critique" of three thinkers who, each in their own way, shaped unique forms of "critical theory" for the social and human sciences throughout the 20th century: Max Horkheimer, Charles Wright Mills, and Herbert Marcuse. By taking up the contributions of the three authors, we aimed to combine them in a particular way, with a view to contributing to the foundation of a mode of critical theory for current socio-humanistic disciplines.

This combination was feasible since the three perspectives primarily agree on the importance given to the theoretical moment in academic and research work. As a defense of the theoretical instance in academic-intellectual work as an entity in its own right, the book seeks relevance within a context in which knowledge production seems increasingly forced to be governed by productivity parameters, which tend to be more in tune with empirical research.

Against this, we affirmed the need for a type of theoretical work that is both systematic and critical. That is: that is both far-reaching, broad-minded, cognitively rigorous, and conceptually elaborate—that is to say, systematic—, and that consciously positions itself vis-à-vis the world, that takes and expresses a position, that questions current social forms, and that is oriented toward their transformation in a progressive sense—that is to say, that is critical.

All this is deployed from a peripheral academic-intellectual field, which makes it even more controversial, and at the same time, in my opinion, even more urgent. The fact is that in today's academic field, two trends combine

and feed back into one another, which this book seeks to help combat: at the local level, the weak legitimacy of theoretical work in the social sciences; and at the global level, an international division of labor between regions that produce and regions that consume social theories.

In conclusion, the book systematizes:

- The criteria for classifying theories: according to their form and to their content; according to their level of commitment and of detachment.
- The different types of theories: common sense and media theories; scientific, empiricist, and positivist theories; ideological theories; metaphysical and dogmatic theories.
- The dimensions of critical theory: historical, empirical, and material elements; affective, aesthetic, and libidinal elements; ethical, political, and moral elements; theological, utopian, and transcendental elements.

Reference: Fraga, Eugenia (2020). *La estructura interna de la teoría crítica: Horkheimer, Wright Mills, Marcuse*, Cámara Argentina del Libro, Buenos Aires. ISBN 978-987-86-6779-9.

Download link: Available for full free download at <https://uba.academia.edu/EugeniaFraga>.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

From Societas to World Society

by Volker H. Schmidt
National University of Singapore

In May 2025, my new book, *From Societas to World Society. Genealogy of a Concept*, was published.

Tracing currently preponderant interpretations, the book covers the entirety of "society's" known intellectual history: from its etymological roots in Greco-Roman antiquity to the modern notion of "world society."

Unique in its scope, it rigorously engages with key thinkers and ideas across time, putting them in the contexts of their origin.

Bringing together historical, legal, philosophical, theological, political, economic, and sociological scholarship, it examines the semantic evolution of a term that is on everyone's lips yet rarely explicated.

Its cavalier, often downright sloppy and contradictory usage in today's social sciences and humanities inadvertently continues a Eurocentric tradition that is both out of step with reality and normatively dubious.

The book closes with a proposal for how to fix this problem.

Reference: Volker H. Schmidt (2025), *From Societas to World Society. Genealogy of a Concept*. Brill.

Link to the publisher's website: <https://brill.com/display/title/72031>

CONTRIBUTIONS TO CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

Neoliberal Globalization and Its Inequalities in Question

*by Alejandro Bialakowsky (ed.)
University of Buenos Aires and CONICET*

Neoliberal globalization has been discussed from the most varied disciplinary and theoretical-political positions. Is it an ideology, a set of public policies, or a particular new form of capitalism, which has emerged after the crisis of state intervention in the national economy, both in the capitalist welfare states and in the socialist states – e.g. the USSR? Since the 1990s, neoliberal globalization has been called into question – with greater or lesser criticism – via new sociological categories. These concepts delve into the processes of the constitution of global relations, linked to the mundialization of modern capitalism, with its inequalities, classes, conflicts, discourses, legitimacies, dominations, and quests for emancipation.

To account for this interplay of understanding and questioning, in this chapter we approach comparatively the contributions on the subject made by Karl Polanyi, Michel Callon and Aníbal Quijano. Although deployed prior to 1990, Polanyi's postulations are key to the debates that have erupted since. His arguments focus on the relations between 'formal' and 'substantive' economics, the 'great capitalist transformation', and 'markets' as historical institutions. Moreover, we deepen on the analysis of Michel Callon, who explicitly dialogues with Polanyi. He delves into the 'laws of markets' to comprehend the configurations of their 'non-calculable externalities' and – not only human – 'calculating agents'. These configurations are constantly performed by the economic sciences themselves. Finally, sociologist Aníbal Quijano's studies on the 'coloniality of power' are indispensable. In these works, Quijano shows how the world capitalist division of labor and its social classes are intertwined with racial classifications.

For this reflection, we consider that the contrasts between productions from

the North –European– and the South –Latin American– require a “simultaneous approach”, given their “theoretical and epochal crossroads”.

This approach places these productions on the same level of analysis, without giving greater legitimacy or hierarchy to one or the other. We consider that they are neither merely original receptions from the South of innovations from the North, nor perspectives which are incommensurable to each other.

Also, we deploy this approach based on a common theoretical-analytical problem: social and sociological reclassifications. This problem accounts for the different ways of dividing and qualifying the social and natural world, in permanent transformation and mutual feedback, either from the most diverse social instances, either from sociological proposals themselves. The problem is traversed by multiple processes of reclassification, linked to hierarchies and relations of domination, as well as quests for emancipation from capitalist exploitation.

We work on this theoretical-analytical problem along three dimensions. First, the three perspectives give special relevance to a historicization of capitalist relations and their social groups, pointing out tensions between markets and everything outside them. Secondly, to address these tensions, the three authors propose theoretical reclassifications of sociological concepts and diagnoses, which not only describe social reality, but intervene in it, in a performative manner. Finally, this makes possible the authors' critiques of the liberal and neoliberal conception of capitalism, linked to neoliberal globalization and its inequalities, which are fundamental to understand our contemporaneity.

Reference: Bialakowsky, A., Sasín, M., Nougués, T., Álvarez Ruiz, F., Ichaso, E. y Bertelli, A. (2025). Neoliberal Globalization and Its Inequalities in Question: Reclassificatory Contributions in the Perspectives of Polanyi, Callon and Quijano. In Wimmer, C. & Rieder, T. (eds.), *Global Inequality. Rethinking Sociology in the 21st Century*, Brill, pp. 96–118. ISBN 9789004733626

