

**XVII ISA WORLD CONGRESS
OF SOCIOLOGY**

SOCIOLOGY ON THE MOVE
LA SOCIOLOGIE EN MOUVEMENT
LA SOCIOLOGÍA EN MARCHA
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[Research Committee Homepage](#) →

Research Committee on Sociological Theory RC16

Programme Coordinators

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Call for Papers

RC16 proposes the following sessions and calls for papers. Three more sessions will be posted soon as information becomes available. Those interested in presenting a paper in a session should contact directly the session organizer listed below before **October 31, 2009**.

Any individual may participate on up to two sessions. Once your presentation is approved by the session chair, you must then submit an abstract of your paper on-line (instructions will be made available in due course). Abstracts are only accepted by the system from those who are already registered for the Congress. The deadline for submission of approved abstracts is May 1, 2010.

Proposed Sessions

Session 1: Power and performance
Organizer: Jeffrey C. Alexander, Yale University, USA, jeffrey.alexander@yale.edu

Power is successful to the degree that audiences are convinced by its performance, and this means bringing the various and differentiated 'elements of performance' firmly into play. To create effective and fused performance, however, is a difficult task, and failed performances, or only partially effective ones, are much more likely. Performative failure does not mean that coercion is impossible, but it drastically reduces the possibility for exercising power in a

sustained and continuous way. This session welcomes both more theoretical and more empirical investigations of these dilemmas in political and cultural sociology.

Session 2: Provincializing sociological theory

Organizer: Gianpaolo Baiocchi. Brown University, USA, Gianpaolo_Baiocchi@brown.edu

We invite papers that critically consider the intellectual division of labor between Global North and Global South, one that currently juxtaposes supposedly universal and parochial knowledges. ‘Provincializing’ social theory might mean re-telling the history of social theory from particular locations, national traditions, or excluded voices. Together, it is hoped that these critical tasks might lead to theoretical stretching, interesting engagement with colleagues elsewhere, and perhaps even unexpected insights into cultural processes in the changing Global North.

Session 3: Political communication

Organizer: Mable Berezin, Cornell University, USA, mmb39@cornell.edu

How do political entities from the state to parties, to media organizations communicate political knowledge? What is political knowledge? What is the public sphere? Does it vary across time periods and cultures? What are the media that disseminate political knowledge. The session takes up the issue of propaganda versus ordinary knowledge, the role of the public sphere, and the marketization of politics. It would also welcome papers on the development of political communication and public relations as a profession.

Session 4: Political philosophy and sociological theory

Organizer: Craig Browne. University of Sydney, Australia, craig.browne@arts.usyd.edu.au

This session seeks to reconsider social theory’s relationship to political philosophy and it aims to address those questions that emerge from these recent developments; for instance, does political philosophy’s contemporary consolidation tell us anything about the state of sociological theory? What are the implications of the prominence of concepts associated with classical political philosophy, like civil society, cosmopolitanism and sovereignty, in contemporary social theory? How should the somewhat normative social theories of political philosophers, like Taylor, Axel Honneth and Nancy Fraser, be evaluated?

Session 5: Objects and aesthetic agency Organizer: Eduardo dela Fuente, Monash University, Australia, Eduardo.delaFuente@arts.monash.edu.au

Objects move around, cause things to happen and form all kinds of alliances with persons and other objects. We also know that things possess their own ‘aura’, magic and enchantment. This session poses the question: to what extent is the social life of things governed by ‘aesthetics’ in the broadest sense of the term? To what extent is the experience associated with different kinds of objects a question of aesthetic factors, such as ‘touch’, ‘look’, ‘feel’ and the senses more generally.

Session 6: Theorizing global media and cultural flows Organizer: Ronald N. Jacobs, Albany University, USA, rjacobs@albany.edu

In the place of the cultural imperialism model, today’s understandings of global media are more likely to emphasize the multi-directional nature of cultural exchange. Yet, important questions remain unanswered. How does the current organization of media systems constrain or enable the development of these global processes? What is the role of the nation and of national media within these supra-national spaces? With the decline of the public service broadcasting model, and the continuing rise of multinational media conglomerates, how are we to understand the relationships between corporate and cosmopolitan interests? The session will look at these and related issues.

Session 7: Urban space and global cities Organizer: Agnes Ku, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Hong Kong, soagnes@ust.hk

The session welcomes submissions that address issues related to the changing urban forms in the context of globalization, including but not confining to the following: (1) How cities seek to position, project or refashion their cultures in the global space through a project of urban entrepreneurialism; (2) How socio-economic, political and cultural processes take place whereby the “global city” project is shaped and contested in particular local contexts; (3) How civil society creates spaces for cultural participation from below in the process of cultural globalization and urban development.

Session 8: Non-Western challenges to Western social theory Organizer: Sang-Jin Han, Seoul National University, hansjin@snu.ac.kr

In recent years a new kind of literature has emerged, one looking for a self-conscious and reflexive examination of the relationship between Western and non-Western experiences and cultures. This aims at constructing an alternative kind of social theory, one which confronts the limits of dominant Western social theories. It explores themes such as relativizing neo-liberal preoccupations; rethinking the balance between individual and community; understanding diverse participatory traditions and their importance for the quality of democracy; detecting non-Western traces and forms of civil society and the public sphere; challenging the Western world-view with its tendency towards binarism and looking instead towards themes such as dynamic balance and harmony. Contributions in this area are welcome.

Session 9: Theorizing sexuality without advocacy
Organizer: Giuseppe Sciortino, Trento University, Italy, Giuseppe.Sciortino@unitn.it

A large part of current research in the sociology of sexuality is justified by political or ideological assumptions rather than arguments rooted in analytic problems. Most of the arguments are shaped by advocacy concerns for sexual minorities rather than by attempts to understand sexuality in a more generalized way a key dimension of social life. It is possible to develop a social theory of sexuality able to understand adequately sexual behaviors and sexual meanings? Although there are many promising developments – from the theory of sexual scripts to the analysis of sexual fields, from evolutionary to cultural approaches to sexuality – the lack of an adequate sustained theoretical debate is a main stumbling block for the development of the field. All ideas for a way forward are welcome.

Session 10: Sociological theory and the environment
Organizer: Philip Smith, Yale University, USA, philip.smith@yale.edu

The session calls for papers addressing such questions as: How adequately have sociological theory and research come to terms with the astounding growth of environmentalism? To what extent – if at all - can the resources of classical sociological theory be of any use? What can empirical studies tell us about the validity of existing and widely endorsed theoretical perspectives? Has a perceived or real environmental crisis accelerated globalisation, and if so in which ways? Put another way: Please submit papers making use of the concepts of risk, nature, environmentalism, global warming, pollution, nature and culture in some combination.

Session 11: Intersubjectivity and trust
Organizer: Edmond Wright, Cambridge University, UK, elw33@hermes.cam.ac.uk

The session looks at the role of commonsense assumptions in allowing social life in general, and communication in particular, to go ahead. We might consider for example the assumption on the part of both speaker and hearer in a communication that there is a common referent about which information is to pass from one to the other. Such an assumption obviously includes a measure of trust, not merely because there is always the possibility of being deceived, but because the partners in dialogue cannot be sure that their concepts of ‘the referent’ match sufficiently to satisfy their individual expectations. Papers looking at trust, faith, perception, intersubjectivity, communication and the reciprocity of perspectives are welcomed.

Session 12: Cosmopolitanism and recognition
Organizer: Gilles Verpraet, EHESS, France, verp@ehess.fr

The main purpose of the session is to clarify the contributions of the theories of cosmopolitanism to social theory. The session intends to question the social foundations of such theories, and in particular their ability to understand the global institutional matrix, and the distribution of cosmopolitan attitudes. The quest for a ‘critical cosmopolitanism’ is of particular interest.

Session 13: Mediating public and private
Organizer: Paul Jones, University of New South Wales, Australia, p.jones@unsw.edu.au

This session concerns the increasing porosity of boundaries between intimacy, privacy and publicness and could also include the role of mediation in this process. In the Habermasian public sphere schema 'publicly oriented privateness' was a key cultural transition in the establishment of the bourgeois public sphere. Critics of Habermas have relentlessly pressed home that he idealises both public and private spheres. The session considers such themes and asks if there is anything constructive or novel that can be said on this topic.

Session 14 Business Meeting

Session 15 Inequality and difference
Organizer: Elisa P. Reis, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, epreis@alternex.com.br

Reassessing classical theory, evaluating recent contributions, proposing new ways to deal with equality and difference are urgent sociological tasks. While such issues have always been central to sociological analysis, in recent decades new forms of inequality and new claims for the right to difference have posed novel challenges for theorizing ongoing social processes. Can existing theories account properly for knowledge inequality? How to reconcile equality ideals and claims for collective rights based upon difference? These are examples of questions to be faced from a theoretical perspective.

Session 16: Conceptualizing future in social theory
Joint session of RC07 Futures Research [host committee] and RC16 Sociological Theory

Session 17: The Visual turn in sociological theory
Organiser: Fuyuki Kurasawa, York University, Canada, kurasawa@yorku.ca

This session aims to extend the recent visual turn by inviting papers that consider the following dimensions: 1. the iconographic, focused on the symbolic organization of images in order to make sense of their meanings; 2. the performative, which studies how images perform certain social functions and generate certain meanings; 3. the institutional, which considers the networks and institutions through which images are created and circulate and the contexts for their reception. In other words, the session asks: what are the implications of taking visibility seriously for classical and contemporary sociological theory?



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