

# Newsletter



Issue 6  
January 2021

Happy new year 2021 and welcome to the sixth edition of the ESA RN5 newsletter. In this newsletter we would like to point out recent and upcoming events, share a fair amount of recent publications by our prolific network members, as well as news on projects related to the sociology of consumption.

## Upcoming ESA conference

ESA is acutely aware of the challenging situation due to the pandemic. The final format of the conference is not yet decided. The ESA 2021 Conference will take place either with the full physical co-presence of all attendees, or wholly online, or in some hybrid mode combining these two possibilities. Regardless, we encourage members to submit contributions as it will be possible to withdraw contributions.

## ESA 2021 - Sociological Knowledges for Alternative Futures

15th Conference of the European Sociological Association  
**31 Aug – 3 Sep 2021, Barcelona, Spain**

**General call: RN05 Sociology of Consumption** (deadline 15 February 2021)

The Sociology of Consumption network invites contributions to the programme that explore hybridities of consumption that are linked with and influence contemporary societal challenges such as the climate crisis or health related threats. Alternative futures are evolving out of day to day consumption and other leisure activities. Sociological knowledge about consumption is pivotal in understanding how our current day-to-day lives are shaped by inequality and problems accessing goods and services, which allow full participation in society. This relates to transformations in the provisioning of collective consumption, including housing, transportation, energy, care and education. Consumption is concerned with a very broad range of these contemporary crises, from the patterns of cultural difference, distinction and identity articulated in studies of participation; to the politics of alternative forms of provisioning goods and services such as cooperatives and the 'sharing economy'. In searching for alternative epistemic communities, this call especially invites new ways of organising the economy which requires the careful consideration of consumption and the needs of citizens, imagination in meeting these needs, and a sober re-evaluation of the ideological project of consumer choice.

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For more information, please visit:

[https://www.europeansociology.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/2020-12/ESA\\_2021\\_CFP\\_Barcelona.pdf](https://www.europeansociology.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/2020-12/ESA_2021_CFP_Barcelona.pdf) (PDF, 99 pages)

Submit your abstract via ConfTool: <https://www.conftool.pro/esa2021>

## **RN05 Joint Sessions**

Joint session with RN09 (Economic Sociology)

### **Circular economy: Sociological accounts of actors, practices, and market Organisation**

The notion of circular economy is presented as an alternative to current linear and resource intensive economic models. It proposes to extend the life of products through practices such as repair, re-use, up- and recycling and to diminish obsolescence through technical, legal or informational means. This joint session seeks to discuss sociological perspectives on the circular economy understanding it as an emerging vision of economic and social change and a response to the multiple crisis modern societies are confronted with.

We invite contributions which address but are not limited to questions such as: Which are the main actors and ideas of a circular economy? Which power-relations contribute or hinder circular production, market organisation and innovation? How is “waste” re-valuated and how do associated value-chains change? What are the practices, prerequisites, and political instruments to change current linear production and consumption patterns? Which may be the macroeconomic outcomes of circular models?

Joint session with RN09 (Economic Sociology)

### **Moral economies of consumption**

Consumption is often linked with contested societal issues such as climate crisis, environmental sustainability, or social justice. Normative concerns in consumption are embedded in moral structures and institutional dynamics that are associated with capitalist economies, policies, and societies at large. This joint session is interested in the interplay of consumption moralities mutually shaped by institutional frameworks and everyday activity.

We invite contributions which address, but are not limited to questions such as: How are consumption practices shaped by moral and political orientations? What alternatives exist to capitalist profit maximising moralities? What are key actors, e.g. consumers, activists, social movements, politicians? How do economic practices shape what is understood as good or evil? What kind of positions in mundane normativities and moral judgements advance alternative economic activity? What are key economic moralities of evaluating and legitimising? How do actors deal with contradictory moral concerns or hierarchies of moralities?

Joint session with RN12 (Environment & Society)

### **Sustainable consumption and citizenship**

Unpacking the role of consumption in relation to environmental and social justice issues is a critical area of study, which relates to how we apprehend ‘consumption’ and social change. As part of this endeavour, the notion of a consumer-citizen is a rather ambiguous one. On the one hand, consumption can be seen as a political act – through boycotts and buycotts for example (Micheletti 2003), but ‘green consumerism’ has also been likened to forms of consumer scapegoatism rather than transformative change (Akenji 2014). This suggests that more attention could be placed on the political implications of consumption, whether through shopping sustainably, reducing consumption in a sufficiency perspective, or re-appropriating the means of production. The empirical study of consumption and citizenship towards the normative goal of ‘sustainability’ also merits further inquiry, as it could open up fields of research beyond the individual and the home, to other spaces of consumption and forms of political action – including collective ways of living and engaging in social change initiatives. How consumers can imagine themselves as citizens in a future, more sustainable world is also a promising field of reflection. This joint session will invite contributions from sociologists making the links between consumption, environmental constraints, and different forms of political action, bringing together scholars from RN05: Consumption and RN12: Environment and Society

Joint session with RN24 (Science and Technology)

### **Digitization, devices, and cultures of consumption**

Contemporary consumer cultures are increasingly being shaped by (and shaping) the digital. Online shopping websites, social media, mobile apps, smartphones, QR codes, data streams, algorithms user and programming interfaces, business models and terms of service form part of a complex ecology of devices, platforms, infrastructures and systems that shape consumer activities such as product searches, comparing, and examining goods, and evaluating services. Activists are using social media to spread information and mobilize in the fight for consumer rights, social justice, and ethical consumerism. There are growing critiques on the ability of digital technologies to enable the surveillance of consumers, to infringe on privacy through data collection, to discriminate between users based on opaque algorithms, and to manipulate customers through big data analytics and targeted advertising. Celebratory accounts are being produced on the ability of digital tools to alleviate information asymmetry and to reverse the power imbalance between companies and consumers. In response to the call for sociological knowledge on consumption, citizen agency, participation, inequalities, and economic models, this session focuses on the digital 'devicification' of consumer culture (Cochoy et al. 2020), and the "materiality" of consumption technologies. This session will invite contributions from scholars who examine the theoretical, methodological, and empirical implications of the developing ecology of devices, platforms, infrastructures, and systems on contemporary consumer cultures.

Submit your abstract via ConfTool 2021: <https://www.conftool.pro/esa2021/>

Need more information?

- The Call for Papers as well as the 1-page PDF telling you "10 Things You Need to Know About ConfTool" can be opened via the login interface of ConfTool 2021.
- Check the "CONFTOOL" section on the conference website (incl. General Information, Abstract Submission...).
- Read the "Frequently Asked Questions" on the conference website (especially "2. Abstract Submission").

**Don't forget that the deadline is 15 February 2019.**

## Recent Publications

### Articles and Book Chapters

Alonso-Domínguez, Á, Callejo, J. y Díaz-Méndez, C. (2020). How the type of working day affects work-life balance and mealtime balance. A study based on the Time Use Survey. *Time & Society*, 29(4), 1082-1103. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0961463X20947531>

Bertho, B., Sahakian, M., & Naef, P. (2020). The micro-politics of energy efficiency: An investigation of 'eco-social interventions' in western Switzerland. *Critical Social Policy*. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0261018320916712>

Carpio-Pinedo, J., & Gutiérrez, J. (2020). "Consumption and symbolic capital in the metropolitan space: Integrating 'old' retail data sources with social big data." *Cities*, 106, 102859. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2020.102859>

Díaz Méndez C. and Lozano C. (2020). "Food governance and healthy diet. An analysis of the conflicting relationships among the actors of the agri-food system". *Trends in Food Science & Technology*. 105, 449-153. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.tifs.2019.08.025>

Díaz-Méndez, C. García-Espejo, I. y Otero-Estévez, S. (2020). New and old forms of poverty in Spain: exploring food consumption during the crisis. *British Food Journal*, 122(9), 2807-2821. <http://doi.org/10.1108/BFJ-07-2019-0527>.

Díaz-Méndez, C., & Adams, J. (2020). The combined use of quantitative and qualitative longitudinal methods in the study of obesity. *Gaceta Sanitaria*. In Press

Egerer, M., Marionneau, V., & Virtanen, M. (2020). How Luhmann's systems theory can inform gambling studies. *Critical Gambling Studies*, 1(1), 12-22.

Godin, L., Laakso, S., & Sahakian, M. (2020). Doing laundry in consumption corridors: wellbeing and everyday life. *Sustainability: Science, Practice and Policy*, 16(1), 99-113. <http://doi.org/10.1080/15487733.2020.1785095>

Heikkilä, R., Leguina, A., & Purhonen, S. (2020). The stratification of media usage in Finland, 2007–2018: Signs of socio-political polarization? *New Media & Society*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444820971612>

Laamanen, M., Moser, C., Bor, S., & den Hond, F. (2020). A partial organization approach to the dynamics of social order in social movement organizing. *Current Sociology*, 68(4), 520-545. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0011392120907643>

Leguina, A. & Downey, J. (forthcoming). Getting Things Done: Inequalities, Internet Use and Everyday Life. *New Media & Society*.

Rössel, J., Schenk, P., Weingartner, S. (in press). The aesthetic moment in markets. In A. Maurer (ed.), *Handbook of Economic Sociology in the 21st century - New theoretical approaches, empirical studies and developments*. Springer.

Sahakian, M., & Anantharaman, M. (2020). What space for public parks in sustainable consumption corridors? Conceptual reflections on need satisfaction through social practices. *Sustainability: Science, Practice and Policy*, 16(1), 128-142. <http://doi.org/10.1080/15487733.2020.1788697>

Sahakian, M., Godin, L., & Courtin, I. (2020). Promoting 'pro', 'low', and 'no' meat consumption in Switzerland: the role of emotions in practices. *Appetite*. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2020.104637>

Tröger, Nina. (2020): Die verbraucherpolitische Landschaft in Österreich – mit besonderem Blick auf Graswurzelbewegungen. In Hellmann et al. (Hrsg.): *Verbraucherpolitik von unten. Paradoxien, Perspektiven, Problematisierungen*. Springer VS.

Weingartner, S. (2020). Digital omnivores? How digital media reinforce social inequalities in cultural consumption. *New Media & Society*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444820957635>.

Weingartner, S., Schenk, P., Rössel, J. (in press). Aesthetic and ethical orientations in consumption and lifestyles. In M. Zafirovski (ed.), *A modern guide to Economic Sociology*. Edward Elgar.

## Special Issues

Welch, D., Halkier, B. and Keller, M. (eds.) (2020) *Cultural Sociology* Special Issue on "Renewing theories of practice and reappraising the cultural" Vol. 15(1)

David Evans's contribution to the Special Issue was first presented as the keynote address to the Consumption Research Network's 2018 conference at the University of Copenhagen, and other articles in the Special Issue have been presented at the network's conferences or draw on research projects showcased at the conferences. The idea for this Special Issue developed out of long-standing conversations within the Consumption Research Network around a number of lacunae inherited from second generation practice theories.

### Articles:

Welch, D., Halkier, B. and Keller, M. (2020). Introduction to the Special Issue: Renewing theories of practice and reappraising the cultural.

Evans, D. (2020). After practice? Material semiotic approaches to consumption and economy.

Wahn, I. (2020). The organization of practices for instituting economic processes: Alternative food networks in Beijing.

Warde, A., Paddock, J. and Whillans, J. (2020). Domestic hospitality: As a practice and an alternative economic arrangement.

Halkier, B. (2020). Social interaction as key to understanding the intertwining of routinised and culturally contested consumption.

Sahakian, M., Rau, H. and Wallenborn, G. (2020). Making "sustainable consumption" matter: The indoor microclimate as contested cultural artefact.

Welch, D., Mandich, G. and Keller, M. (2020). Futures in Practice: Regimes of Engagement and Teleoaffectivity.

## Edited Books

### **El malestar con la alimentación. Los problemas de consume alimentario en las sociedades contemporáneas**

Edited by: Díaz-Méndez C. and Garcia Espejo I.  
Ediciones TREA. Gijón.

#### Authors:

Spain: Cristobal Gómez Benito, Cecilia Díaz-Méndez, Alicia Langreo, Tomás Azcárate, Amparo Novo, Carmen Lozano-Cabedo, Jose Ramón Mauleon, Paloma Herrera, Emmanuel Lizcano, Xavier Medina Luque, María Dolores Martin-Lagos, Javier Callejo, Isabel Garcia-Espejo, Mabel Gracia, Jesús Contreras,

Portugal: Maria Rivera , Paola A. Hernández, Ana Fonseca

France: Oliviere Lepiller, Philippe Cardon, Simona De Iulio

## Job opportunities

### A job opening at emlyon business school

The Lifestyle Research Center at emlyon business school is recruiting for a research and teaching profile. The position is in marketing and consumer behaviour but with a focus on themes specific to sociology of consumption / consumer culture theories. We are particularly looking to recruit a more senior candidate but applications are invited on all levels. More info on the group here: <https://lifestyle.em-lyon.com>

<https://hr.em-lyon.com/en/job/faculte-en/735-assistant-associate-full-professor-in-marketing-en/>

## Research projects

### Widening access to arts and culture through video streaming

Richard Misek (University of Kent) and Adrian Leguina (Loughborough University)

Arts and Humanities Research Council - RCUK Covid 19 funding (January - December 2021)

Since the global spread of COVID-19, video streaming has emerged as perhaps the most popular and effective tool for maintaining access to arts and culture. From live streamed performances, through online film festivals, to guided tours of galleries, online video has helped physically-sited arts and culture institutions stay 'open', and provided locked-down audiences with desperately needed opportunities for cultural engagement and shared experience. The recent outpouring of creative alternatives to physically-sited performance and exhibition has also lifted former geographic and economic constraints on who can access arts and culture. The lessons being learnt through current crisis-driven innovations in digital delivery could – if gathered, consolidated, and channelled into sector-wide discussion and action – help ensure the survival of arts and culture organisations struggling to adapt their business models to a post-COVID landscape. They also present a unique opportunity for them to engage with new and more diverse audiences.

This project – developed in collaboration with Arts Council England (ACE) and digital support agency The Space – will gather and compile a repository of 'best practice' case studies of streaming projects; analyse how socially distanced audiences engage with streamed content; and research how digital programming can widen access to arts and culture, and increase the diversity of its audiences.

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### **WEFEL: Wellbeing, Energy Futures and Everyday Life** (October 2020-September 2023)

Marlyne Sahakian (UNIGE), Vincent Moreau (EPFL) and Orlane Moynat (UNIGE)

Funded the Swiss Federal Office of Energy and in collaboration between the University of Geneva and the École polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne, WEFEL aims to understand how energy scenarios relate to human wellbeing and everyday life in Switzerland and to engage consumer-citizens in supporting sustainable energy futures. Building on Swiss and international sustainable energy pathways, three main questions are addressed:

1. How can energy pathways be translated into everyday life situations, accessible and relatable to diverse Swiss consumer-citizens?
2. How can positive and negative trade-offs be quantified and qualified, including rebound effects?

3. How do Swiss citizens imagine a transition to sustainable energy futures in relation to everyday lives and wellbeing?

The project results will offer tools for apprehending how reduced energy usage relates to 'sustainable wellbeing', including economic, social and environmental dimensions, but also human need satisfaction – a novel and participatory approach, of high policy relevance.

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### **Diversifying sustainable and organic food systems – FOOdiVERSE (2021-2023)**

Stefan Wahlen (University of Giessen), Arne Dulsrud, Gunnar Vitterso, Hanne Torjusen (SIFO, OsloMet), Francesca Forno (University of Trento), Ewa Kopczynska (Jagiellonian University), Adrian Evans, Ulrich Schmutz, Moya Kneafsey (Coventry University)

The FOOdiVERSE project is an ERA-Net Cofund project (H2020) under the umbrella of SUSFOOD2 and CORE Organic. The project aims to produce practice-oriented knowledge on how diversity in diets, novel food supply chains and food governance contributes to more organic and sustainable food systems. The project provides multi-level perspectives on transforming local food systems across Europe by promoting diversity of consumers, producers and key stakeholders. Methodologically and theoretically this project takes a relational approach on diversity, emphasising different characteristics of diversity in various contexts and across different scales. Diversity has diverse meanings, for example in urban Norway or in rural United Kingdom, but also to German consumers, Italian government officials or Polish food producers. We seek to identify the relations in characteristics of diversity that accelerate a transformation toward more sustainable food systems.

Food consumption significantly influences resource use and the environmental effects of food production and distribution. Currently a rather homogenous group of well-educated and affluent consumers is strongly interested in organic food. The mainstream food supply chains and their governance are characterised by a food regime that creates large quantities of standardised food. A more diverse food system could deliver more choices and could be more sustainable. What is lacking is a systematic and practice-oriented characterisation of diversity in the food system and its impact on resilience, enhancing socio-economic and environmental pillars of sustainability.

The project directly promotes organic food systems through involving consumers, producers, food-processors and those governing food systems with a living lab methodology. A user-centred and innovation approach in local contexts of Italy, Germany, Norway, Poland and the United Kingdom assists in comparing whilst instantaneously implementing the results in real-life scenarios. We engage different actors and include a diverse range of viewpoints on organic food systems.

## About ESA RN5

The research network addresses consumption in its social, cultural, symbolic, economic, political and material dimensions. It welcomes theoretical, methodological and empirical contributions to the study of consumption in a large range of areas: sustainability, political consumption, fashion, food and eating, tourism, culture, bodies, technology etc. In doing so, it intersects with other sociological fields, such as economic sociology, sociology of health, the family, gender, age and generations, the study of space and cities, or social stratification. Thereby the research network contributes to societal debates on contested and challenged aspects of consumption and assists in advancing associated policy measures and societal developments.

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*See you at our conference in Barcelona next summer!*

**On behalf of the RN5 Board Members:**

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<https://www.europeansociology.org/research-networks/rn05-sociology-consumption>