

Biennial Report 2017-2019

ESA Research Network 05: Sociology of Consumption

1. Name and Number of RN:

Sociology of Consumption, RN05

2. Names and email addresses of:

a) Outgoing Coordinators and board members (past term)

- Terhi-Anna Wilska, University of Jyväskylä, terhi-anna.wilska@jyu.fi (coordinator)
- Luke Yates, University of Manchester, UK luke.s.yates@manchester.ac.uk
- Marie Plessz, INRA; ALISS, France Marie.Plessz@inra.fr

b) Old members continuing 2019-2021

- Stefan Wahlen, University of Giessen (Germany), stefan.wahlen@uni-giessen.de (new coordinator)
- Arne Dulsrud, SIFO, Norway, Akershus University College of Applied Sciences (Co-Coordinator) Arne.Dulsrud@oslomet.no
- Marlyne Sahakian, University of Geneva, SwitzerlandMarlyne.Sahakian@unige.ch (new co-coordinator)
- Emma Casey, Northumbria University, United Kingdom, emma.h.casey@northumbria.ac.uk
- Piergiorgio Degli Esposti, University of Bologna, Italy, pg.degliesposti@unibo.it
- Adrian Leguina Ruzzi, Loughborough University, United Kingdom, A.Leguina@lboro.ac.uk

c) Incoming board members 2021

- [Janna Michael](#), the Netherlands, Erasmus University Rotterdam, michael@eshcc.eur.nl
- [Mikko Laamanen](#), United Kingdom, Royal Holloway, University of London, Mikko.Laamanen@rhul.ac.uk
- [Senja Laakso](#), Finland, Consumer Society Research Centre, University of Helsinki, senja.laakso@helsinki.fi
- [Ondrej Spacek](#), Czech Republic, Charles University Prague, ondrej.spacek@fhs.cuni.cz
- [Silje Skuland](#), Oslo Metropolitan University, Consumption Research Norway (SIFO), siljs@oslomet.no

3. Activities:

a. Mid-term conference

The mid-term conference took place on 29.8 – 1.9. 2018 at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark.

The title of the conference was „*Consumption and consumerism: Conceptual and empirical sociological challenges*”. It was organised by the University of Copenhagen team led by Bente Halkier and the RN05 board. Overall, the conference was a great success in terms of content, participant numbers (about 120) and organisational quality.

On the topic:

Consumption is omnipresent in society to such a degree that it is increasingly difficult to imagine social relations, communities and institutions that are not saturated by consumer relations. Consumption is entangled in the most ordinary and intimate social contexts, activities and relations, yet, simultaneously, consumption is more often than not enacted as part of globally stretching chains of markets and media-representations.

‘Consumerism’ has often been used to categorise and sociologically critique this dominant societal arrangement, which combines mass-production and mass-consumption with the implied ideological discourse of the freedom of individual consumer choice. However, the term consumerism is also being used to conceptualise alternative forms of consumption, which attempt to use consumption processes to transform production practices, provisioning, appropriation and waste – such as political, ethical, sustainable and circular forms of consumerism.

Contemporary sociological accounts of consumption cover both analyses of the more ordinary, routine, mundane aspects of consumption, as well as the more explicitly reflected upon, normative, societal aspects of it. Yet, these two bodies of consumption analysis tend to remain separate in terms of focus and perspective. Bringing the two types of consumption analysis together to a larger degree in conceptual, methodological and empirical dialogues holds potential for conceptual sophistication, empirical inspiration and societal contribution.

Thus, this mid-term conference encourages participants to reflect upon the relations, overlaps, ambivalences and paradoxes between mundane and deliberate forms of consumption. How do patterns of consumption become socially and materially reproduced and changed? Which social dynamics are involved in the normalisation and normative legitimation of different kinds of consumption activities? In which ways are consumer and citizen positions related, and with which consequences? What are the implications for power relations in society from institutionalised consumption arrangements? How to account for questions of scale, and what are the methodological implications?

b. ESA Conference 2019, Manchester

We received 112 abstracts of which 108 were accepted and presented in 28 sessions. We had two joint sessions with RN9 (Economic Sociology) as well as each one with RN12 (Environment and Society) and RN24 (Science and Technology).

c. Newsletter

We sent out four newsletters. One in the end of 2017, two in 2018 (one prior to our midterm meeting and another one around Christmas). In 2019 we also sent one newsletter prior to the meeting in Manchester.

We sent the newsletter both via the ESA website and our own mailing list open to those interested in the network yet not members of ESA. The newsletters should be archived on the ESA website.

d. Website and Facebook

We have a closed Facebook group, as well as an open Facebook site and a Twitter account. We have our own mailing list, but we also use ESA website mailing system to inform members.

Facebook page: @esaRN5_soccons

Twitter account: https://twitter.com/esaRN5_soccons

e. Actions to be taken to improve participation of PhD students and early career researchers

We had a reduced fee in Midterm Conference 2018 for PhD candidates, early career researchers as well as for those participants who are not employed. In 2018, we conducted a workshop for PhD candidates and early career researchers prior to the actual midterm conference, which was well received by the community. Participant could get acquainted to each other as well as to board members organising the workshop.

f. Actions to be taken to expand membership, especially from countries with overall weaker ESA membership

Our number has grown steadily, and we also have members outside Europe. In practice, many more participate in our conferences. We have distributed our calls for papers widely and we have been open to accept papers from different disciplines and new countries.

h. Collaboration within ESA with other RNs

During the Manchester 2019 conference we had several joint sessions together with the RN09 of Economic Sociology as well as RN12 (Environment and Society) as well as RN24 (Science and Technology).