

ESA 2019 – Form for Research Networks CFP Text
EUROPE AND BEYOND: BOUNDARIES, BARRIERS AND BELONGING
14th Conference of the European Sociological Association
20-23 August 2019, Manchester / UK

Research Network: RN02

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Beyond Barriers in the Arts in Society and the Sociology of the Arts

The general theme of the 14th ESA conference is 'Europe and Beyond: Boundaries, Barriers and Belonging'. This conference intends to offer a terrain for debates on the markers of distance and difference through boundaries and barriers within the wide sociological theoretical spectrum. In line with the general theme, the theoretical development in arts sociology is faced with challenges in current times; not only related to the often marginalized position of the arts in contemporary society, due to dramatic shifts in arts worlds, but also marginalization of the arts within the discipline of sociology. What are the implications on the arts worlds in recent social transformations in Europe, in particular due to the intensification of neo-liberal pressures? Such changes may question existing theoretical models in the arts and provide researchers with opportunities for new empirical data. Yet, what are the current barriers faced in theoretical development in sociology of the arts?

With these considerations in mind, we would like to invite papers related to the barriers in the arts in society and sociology. The ESA conference has always been open to other themes. This openness to all areas of the sociology of the arts is highly valued since the Research Network aims to bring together researchers and support mutual learning. For this reason, we invite experienced and young scholars from various disciplines sensitive to social inquiries into the arts to also submit papers with a different thematic focus:

RN02_01: Sociology of the Arts (General Session)

- **Specific session** titles (only titles, no additional abstracts or explanations)

RN02_02: Beyond Barriers in the Arts?

RN02_03: Developments in particular domains in arts, including architecture, urban planning, applied arts, arts within the domain of popular culture (e.g. film, television, and popular music) as well as traditional 'high' arts (e.g. music, visual arts, literature, theatre, etc.).

RN02_04: The process of production, distribution, promotion and commercialisation of works of art, including artistic practices, the impact of technology, new means of production, forms of collaboration, the formation of art theory, the development of arts markets, the process of valuation, etc.

RN02_05: The process of presentation and mediation of arts, including art criticism and publicity in all domains of the arts, museums, theatres, concerts, audience studies, attitudes towards the audience, educational programs, etc.

RN02_06: **Professional development**, including amateurs and semi-amateurs, vocational education, art schools, professional differentiation, artistic income, artistic reputation, etc.

RN02_07: **Arts organisations** (not only museums and theatres, but also festivals and artists' unions) – investigation of historical development, power relations, effects, managerial processes, program selection, processes within the organisations such as gate-keeping, leadership, etc.

RN02_08: **Arts policy** (especially the sociological aspects thereof), including legal issues, public and private funding, public discourse and debates (e.g. classification of art, arts and religious symbols, arts and sexuality, arts and racism), censorship, analysis of the impact of arts, sustainability, lobbying associations, cultural ministries or other government bodies.

RN02_09: **Social and cognitive effects of the arts**, including arts and identity formation, arts and bodies, aesthetic experience, arts and ethics, coding and decoding, gender related practices, ethnographic aspects, art for social transformation, arts in communities, and arts as a part of urban culture.

RN02_10: **Arts from a macro-sociological perspective**, including (de-)institutionalisation, economisation, globalisation vs. localism, digitalisation, arts and social cohesion, arts and ethics, arts and hegemony and arts and power.

RN02_11: **Theoretical development in arts sociology**, such as the production of culture approach, (post-) structuralism, field theory, system theory, praxeology as well as methodological issues. Roundtable discussion with Eduardo de la Fuente (see page 3).

RN02_12: **Arts and everyday life**, including relations between art worlds and day-to-day worlds, the experiential and the sensory, embodied and mediated elements of practice and places, the social and cultural significance of the senses, the aesthetics of everyday life, and sociological or interdisciplinary approaches to the everyday and to daily and organisational life.

RN02_13: **Arts Management** – of particular interest is the manner in which the conference theme intersects with arts management as a sociological object of inquiry, specifically the boundaries, barriers, and belongings that help to explain, or fail to explain the role of arts management and of arts managers (as distinct from the duties they perform) in society. This includes aspects of practice, theory, research, and training that address the thing called arts management from perspectives that either hold the boundaries, or look to extend them in innovative ways.

RN02_14: **Arts and Public Memory**, including the efficacy of art in intervening and affecting the public discourse, in particular the controversies of the public discourse. This includes the potential of art in contributing to the reconfiguration of the public knowledge and meanings of wars, terrorism, violation of human rights, and natural disasters.

RN02_15: **Art and Migration**, including the different ways migration is investigated by contemporary art productions linked to experiences of exile, diaspora, and transnationality. These often marginalized narratives, emerging from a context of artists who live in the interstices between cultures, give way to a fundamental rethinking of questions of borders and belonging.

Roundtable discussion with Eduardo de la Fuente who will present his work entitled 'On the Texture of Things and Places: New Solutions to Old Dilemmas in the Sociology of Art':

As Latour puts it in *Reassembling the Social*, 'Apart from religion, no other domain has been more bulldozed to death by critical sociology than the sociology of art'. His assessment of the field is that it is governed by the logic of the 'zero-sum game: everything lost by the work of art [i]s gained by the social, everything lost by the social [is] to be gained by the inner quality of the work'. As a solution, Latour proposes a *sociology of associations* or 'multiplied influences' ('the more agents the better', quips the father of ANT). Taking a broader definition of what we understand by the sociology of art (i.e., one that includes recent developments in fields such as the 'new economic sociology', place-management and even the field of 'critical infrastructure studies'), I will argue that the state of play in social science writing, researching and thinking about art is much healthier than Latour suggests and that it is precisely because there is some serious reconceptualization going on of, for example, how art/the arts relate to cities and places, or how cultural and economic value are intimately entangled. I follow the lead set by, amongst others, Lefebvre and Ingold, and label the emergent sensibility a *textural sociology* (as against a *textualone*). Textures manifest themselves through surfaces and interfaces; and tend to be more implicit than explicit (for e.g., the 'atmosphere' of a place). Textures tend to blur the line between micro/macro, top/bottom and near/faraway; and contribute to the constitution of such 'instrumental' or functional things as markets and the determination of 'value' (cf. Karpik's *Valuing the Unique: The Economics of Singularities*). I survey existing texts in the sociology of art/cultural sociology that I would contend exhibit a textural sensibility, including Benzecry's *The Opera Fanatic* (which combines a material culture analysis of the Teatro Colon in Buenos Aires with a study of the social agents the building 'moves' to action) and the recent collection, *The Cultural Wealth of Nations* (in which several researchers explore the complex ways in which place, landscape, 'traditions of making', and other aesthetic criteria are implicated in questions of political economy). Is there a 'common thread' linking the various approaches in the sociology of art I am labelling 'textural'? I will briefly touch on a neglected figure in the field of American pragmatist philosophy – namely, Stephen Pepper and his 'contextualist' philosophy – to suggest that for 'true texturalists' the world is always coming into being; and the intellectual imagination is stimulated by finding new threads or connective tissues between things. The texturalist-cum-contextualist, in essence, is someone who aspires to transcend the dualities of internal and external, interpretative and explanatory, creative and instrumental, theoretical and applied, material and ambient. Could it be that, in an era of 'technological disruptions' and where 'creativity and innovation' are seen as panacea for all the problems of the world, that the sociology of art might – despite, its previous elitist and dilettantish stigma - offer a new way to think about the ontological, practical and ethical-political issues today confronting the citizens and leadership of cities and regions, economies and organizations, of the 21st century?