



Biennial Report 2019 -2021

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)

- Stefan Wahlen, University of Giessen (coordinator)
- Arne Dulsrud, Oslo Metropolitan University – Consumption Research Norway (co-coordinator)
- Emma Casey, Northumbria University, United Kingdom, emma.h.casey@northumbria.ac.uk

b) Old members continuing 2019-2021

- Marlyne Sahakian, University of Geneva, SwitzerlandMarlyne.Sahakian@unige.ch (new co-coordinator)
- Piergiorgio Degli Esposti, University of Bologna, Italy, pg.degliespsti@unibo.it (new co-coordinator)
- [Mikko Laamanen](#), France, EM Lyon Business School, laamanen@em-lyon.com (new co-coordinator)
- Adrian Leguina Ruzzi, Loughborough University, United Kingdom, A.Leguina@lboro.ac.uk
- [Janna Michael](#), the Netherlands, Erasmus University Rotterdam, michael@eshcc.eur.nl
- [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

c) Incoming board members 2021

- [Mary Greene](#), The Netherlands, Wageningen University
- [Tullia Jack](#), Sweden, Lund University
- Gabriella Wulff, Sweden, Gothenburg University

3. Activities:

a. Mid-term meeting

The mid-term meeting was scheduled to take place at Oslo Metropolitan University. However, due to the pandemic situation, it was held as a virtual event 26-29 August 2020. Overall, the conference was a great success in terms of content, participant numbers and organisational quality. See also the report written by the (co-)coordinators Stefan Wahlen, Marlyne Sahakian, and Arne Dulsrud, published in the *European Sociologist*: <https://www.europeansociologist.org/issue-46-pandemic-impossibilities-vol-2/rn-reports-rn05-sociology-consumption>

Under the title, “Citizenship and Consumption – All-powerful, all-powerless?”, the topic was detailed as follows:

May you live in interesting times! The understanding of citizenship and consumption acknowledges that cultural, economic, political and social spheres and consumption cultures are closely intertwined. There is, however, a dimension of uncertainty and ambivalence toward the ability of the consumer-citizen / citizen-consumer to influence these spheres. In social life, the distinctions between consumption and citizenship coalesce, as individuals tend to switch between various contextual roles, rules and practices. The intersection of consumption and citizenship is getting ever more important when reflecting on the ability to enact social change in societies.

Theorizing consumption is currently demarcated by debates about rising inequalities and social exclusion, physical and cultural boundaries and political borders, as well as climate change and environmental crisis. Additionally, social media contributes to never ending updates of political deadlock, threats of anxieties and unresolved political and economic crises. Regions of Europe are facing stark exclusion and quasi-tyrannical rule. Neoliberal economic policies hold out the invisible hand, while on the other (less invisible) hand safeguards the wealth of the few with protectionist policies. The inability to participate in the society alienates and frustrates causing both withdrawal and protest. Along with these struggles, climate is changing and raising the temperatures not only in nature, but also on the political stage. Ever more waste leads to devastation coined as the Anthropocene.

All this introduces dilemmas and conflicts for consumers that reaches far beyond the antagonism in the transactional relationship between consumers as customers and sellers of goods and services. Consumption not only challenges identities related being a consumer or citizen, but also being a merchant, a farmer or a labourer (and potentially all at once). Consumption is related to social justice, welfare, class, empowerment, democracy, inclusion, exclusion and governance. The research network for Sociology of Consumption of the European Sociological Association invited novel perspectives on the powerfulness and powerlessness of citizenship and consumption. We accepted submissions that addressed sociological theorizing in and around societal and political struggles in the current, interesting times.

b. ESA Conference 2021, Barcelona / Virtual

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 three newsletters. One in the beginning of 2020, two in 2021 (one at the start of the year another one prior to the overall ESA conference in Barcelona / virtually).

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

For the Midterm Conference 2020, we organised a virtual beach party and particularly invited early career researchers and PhD candidates to join. There was also no fee for the midterm meeting, so as to encourage young scholars to attend. We plan to host PhD and early career schools prior to our next midterm.

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

The number of members has been rather stable over the years, including members outside of Europe. We have distributed our calls for papers widely, and we have been open to accept papers from different disciplines and new countries.

The research network has been approached by Bristol University Press to establish a new journal. The co-coordinators Marlyne Sahakian and Stefan Wahlen have teamed up with Daniel Welch (University of Manchester) to prepare the launch. The title of the journal will be “Consumption and Society” and is scheduled to launch in 2022, at the next RN5 midterm meeting. C&S will help to expand the visibility of the network, also to countries with overall weaker ESA membership.

[h. Collaboration within ESA with other RNs](#)

During the virtual 2021 conference we had several joint sessions together with the RN09 of Economic Sociology, RN12 (Environment and Society) as well as RN24 (Science and Technology).