EDITOR’S MESSAGE

At present ESA’s Executive Committee and the Local Organising Committee are hard at work consolidating the final arrangements for ESA’s upcoming biannual conference, which will take place between August 28th and 31st, 2013. For those not accustomed with the day-to-day responsibilities associated with organising a large-scale conference such as this, the amount of work taken on by the local organisers is staggering. The team at the Department of Culture, Politics and Society, University of Turin, chaired by Assistant Professor Tiziana Nazio, has spent almost two years planning this congress. They have secured amongst other things, excellent facilities in which plenary and semi-plenary lectures will be held, countless rooms for workshop settings and meetings, comprehensive catering services, and sponsorships from a variety of organisations including the City of Turin.

In addition to these formal activities, they have also planned an extensive social programme that includes an opening ceremony and welcome cocktail at Turin’s Teatro Regio (Royal Theatre), an superb Piedmontese dinner followed by a party in the magnificent scenery of the Castle of Valentino, five exclusive “sociological walks”, and seven unique excursions to ensure that you enjoy your free time as much as the conference itself!

Alongside the hard work of the team in Turin, your Executive Committee and secretariat have been hard at work also preparing for the conference and ensuring that the day-to-day undertakings associated with running a large-scale professional association. Indeed, with few employees ESA relies heavily upon the time volunteered by the members of our Executive Committee. As we prepare to elect the succeeding Committee members whilst in Turin, I am sure that they would appreciate a thank you for the hard work that they’ve done, which often goes unnoticed.

Turning to the current issue, we dedicate much of our content the upcoming conference. As a result, this issue includes: a welcome message from the conference organizing committee and a history of Italy’s contribution to our sociological discipline by Marco Santoro; Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Bologna, Italy; and the candidates for our upcoming Executive Committee elections are presented. Alongside these thematic contributions, Professor Pekka Sulkunen’s President’s Message discusses forthcoming congress in Turin and matters concerning the professionalization of our association; Professor Ricca Edmondson gives her Viewpoint on the Sociology of Wisdom; and two reports from mid-term ESA’s conferences are presented. The first of these presents Research Network 12’s (Environment and Society) mid-term conference, titled the 1st International Conference of the Energy & Society Network, which was held at the Institute of Social Sciences, University of Lisbon, Portugal between March 22nd and 24th, 2012; whilst the second presents Research Network 15’s (Global, transnational and cosmopolitan sociology) mid-term conference, titled Toward a supra-national sociology at the beginning of the 21st century, which was held at the University of the Basque Country, in Bilbao, Spain between March 21st and 22nd, 2013.

Finally, I would like to remind all readers that this is your newsletter! If you have any information to share or wish to contribute an article of interest to our sociological community, we welcome your contributions. The editorial team and I look forward to hearing from you in the coming months,

See you in Turin!

Peter Holley
Helsinki, June 2013.

FEATURE ARTICLE

Ricca Edmondson on the sociology of wisdom.

See page 15.

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Coming of Age

This time there is no question about what sociologists mean when they talk about crisis. The European integration project has never since its inception been as close to a crash as it is now. Nor do we need much justification for the view that what now is needed is critique, a social science that offers views on how modern societies work, stick together and change. This is what our 11th conference in Turin (28.-30.08.2013) will do.

For the first time, we also actively supply our views to the wider public, by organising a pre-conference Media Forum with invited journalists to discuss the conference theme with some of our keynote speakers. This major fair of sociology, with more than 3000 papers, up to 2,500 expected participants, and numerous plenary and semi-plenary sessions, will not only demonstrate the intellectual capacity of our scientific community to address the survival issues of our contemporary societies but also offer solutions, new perspectives and radical views beyond the often opaque political rhetoric that confuses interests more than mobilises them into meaningful action for change.

The European Sociological Association is 22 years old – an adult. It has grown from a handful of enthusiasts into one of the largest sociological platforms and scientific networks in the world. Coming of age is a crisis, too. Our practices of governance, organisational structure, public relations, role in science policy and function as an intellectual showroom must adapt to a new scale of activities and societal impact. A conference budget of close to one million euros alone requires a significant professionalization of the governance of the Association. Until last year we have only had one part-time employee, now full-time, but still only one. Everything else is done on the basis of voluntary work on “donated time”, as Carlo Ruzza called it. And wonderful donations they have been! The current Executive Committee has worked perhaps even harder than any previous ones, as the General Assembly will see they report to it.

Professionalisation at this phase means that we have completely revised our Statutes, compiled all sorts of guidelines, instructions and decisions by the Executive Committee into Bylaws and started a new way of recording and planning the Association’s activities. All this aims at maximising the input of individual members and national member associations, Research Networks and their coordinators and board members, into how the Association contributes to social debate, and facilitates intellectual exchange and contacts in the field.

Our coming of age is symbolised by a new ESA journal, the European Journal of Political and Cultural Sociology, published by Routledge. The need for a journal in this particular area of research has become obvious with the substantial increase of our members and their research activity.

The Turin conference will comprise not only the scientific sessions; but also at this point in time, unusually important meetings of the General Assembly and the Councils of National Associations and Research Networks. The General Assembly will – we hope – approve the Statutes and the Bylaws, and give directions for the new Executive Committee. The Councils will elect one member each to the Executive Committee, and are expected to make proposals for the next conference to be held in Prague at the end of August 2015. This will increase significantly the bottom-up working principles of the Association.

Professionalisation means that the work of the Executive Committee must be organised in an efficient and reliable way. It has for several years been divided between Sub-Committees on Finances, the Conference Programme, the Publications Committee, External Relations, Communications and Public Relations, ESA Policy, Research Networks, Post-graduate Activity and National Associations. All of these require a substantial amount of work from their members and especially their chairs. It is important that all candidates are aware of this and will think in advance in which Sub-Committee they prepared to serve.

The elections will start on July 1st online, and continue on site from the start of the conference on August 28th until noon on August 30th. It is very important that members show their interest in the future life of this young adult by voting, by participating in the business meetings of the Research Networks (RNs) and Research Streams (RSs), and of course in the General Assembly.

At this point I already wish to present my warm thanks to the Executive Committee members, coordinators and board members of the RNs and RSs, and above all to the chair of the Conference Programme Sub-Committee, Frank Welz, as well as to the Local Organizing committee and its chair Tiziana Nazio!

I wish everyone an unforgettable conference experience!

Professor Pekka Sulkunen, ESA President
June, 2013.
Crisis, Critique and Change

Renewed flood alert in eastern Germany. Turkish police retrieves Taksim square. Unemployment rates rising in Greece, Italy and Spain. Secret NSA surveillance puts Obama under pressure. IMF admits major missteps in Greece’s bailout. Growing doubts on breast cancer screening. Demonstration against gay marriage during Roland Garros tournament.
- Europe, June 2013, a quick glimpse of Italy’s national media.

We are facing an environmental, economic and societal crisis, beginning with the political upheavals at the Southern borders of the Mediterranean and then spreading across Spain, Greece and now Turkey. Continental institutions, representative democracy, political parties, unions and social movements all face a turbulent present and an uncertain future. Families, individuals, women, youngsters, minorities, the elderly, the un- and under-employed, all share a significant part of this vision. In other terms, crisis, critique and change are all around us.

Let us face the truth: Sociology, as an intellectual, professional, academic and political pillar of twentieth century democracy is facing an ongoing, reflexive turn. Are we still useful? Are we capable of anticipating social transformations by means of rigorous scrutiny? Do we have the right tools for breathing the wind of change? Are the terms we continuously use the right ones to describe and intervene in our societies?

As sociologists from across Europe and beyond head to Turin for the next ESA’s conference, all of these issues cross our minds and our bodies. Let us then share an optimistic perspective, because in less than two months we will have a unique chance to face Crisis, Critique and Change as productive devices for the European societies of the future.

Turin, in this respect, is both unique and typical. As a city that has dealt with crisis, critique and change since the nineteen seventies, like most of the European industrial cities did, Turin will provide a unique opportunity to connect people, experiences, biographies and sensibilities from August 28th to 31st, 2013. We look forward to four days of discussions and suggestions, in which pragmatism and utopianism will share the common ground of scientific respect and mutual recognition. And when the day is over, we will have a drink together!

Have a glance to our website and join us for the social dinner and party. We look forward to your arrival!

Welcome to Turin!

On behalf of the Local Organizing Committee:
Assistant Professor Giovanni Semi
Department of Culture, Politics and Society, University of Turin

Follow us:
Twitter: @EsaTorino2013 / #ESA13
Facebook: www.facebook.com/pages/ESA-Torino-2013/453072924782495
Dear ESA Member,

We would like to inform you that elections of the next Executive Board began on July 5th, 2013. In the following we present the candidates that are nominated for ESA’s Presidency and Executive Committee.

This year we introduce an electronic voting system for the first time. You can access the online ballot [here](#). Upon visiting this website you will be instructed to enter your email address, following which you will be sent a link to the online ballot. We hope that this new system will make it easier for you to cast your vote.

If elected, each candidate will devote her/his time and efforts to the work of the European Sociological Association.

During this year the Nominations Committee engaged in wide-ranging consultations and it asked ESA members, Research Networks, and the National Sociological Associations across Europe to proposals candidates for these elections. Based on these discussions a list of 4 candidates (2 women and 2 men) for President and 25 candidates (14 women and 12 men) for the Executive Committee has been made, taking into account country representation and field of research.

All members of ESA in good standing (those who have paid their membership fees by the time of the 11th ESA Conference in Turin, August 28th-31st, 2013) are eligible to vote for ESA’s President and for the members of the Executive Committee for the next term (2013-2015).

You may vote before and during the Conference for one (1) candidate for the President and a maximum of ten (10) candidates for the Executive Committee. If you vote for more than one candidate for the President or for more than ten candidates for the Executive Committee, your ballot will be invalid.

You may also express your candidate preference by writing in the name (or names) of other ESA members to the end of the lists of candidates. Each ESA member can vote only once.

Voting is now underway and it will end on Friday, August 30th, 2013, at 12 o’clock (noon).

Elena Danilova
Chair of the ESA Nominations Committee

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**Candidates for the Presidency**

**Sokratis Koniordos** **GREECE**

Sokratis Koniordos is Associate Professor at the Department of Sociology, University of Crete, Greece. He is currently Director of its Graduate Studies Programme. His main research areas include economic sociology and sociology of work. He has published 15 volumes and several research articles. His key publications include: *Towards a Sociology of Artisans: Continuities and Discontinuities in Comparative Perspective* (Ashgate 2001); *Networks, Trust and Social Capital: Theoretical and empirical investigations from Europe* (Ashgate 2005); *Conflict, Citizenship and Civil Society*, with Baert, P., Procacci, G. and Ruzza, C. (eds) (Routledge 2010); *The Handbook of European Sociology*, with Kyrtsis, A.A. (eds), (Routledge forthcoming-2013). Koniordos, who is vice-chair of the Hellenic Sociological Society, has served as a member of the ESA’s Executive Committee (two terms), is a member of the “Economic Sociology Research Network” (RN 09), and chairs the European Societies editorial board.
Carmen Leccardi  **ITALY**

Carmen Leccardi is professor of Cultural Sociology and Director of the PhD program in Applied Sociology and Social Research Methods at the University of Milan-Bicocca. She is Vice-Rector in the area of equal opportunities and Director of the ABCD Interdepartmental Center for Women's Studies. Her extensive research work focuses on the fields of gender, youth, cultural change and time experience. She has served as co-editor of the journal *Time & Society* (1999-2009), and is now consulting editor for the same publication. She was European vice-president of the ISA RC ‘Sociology of Youth’ (2006-2010). She is the author of several books and articles.

Anne Ryen  **NORWAY**

Anne Ryen is Vice-Dean and Associate Professor of sociology at the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences, University of Agder, Norway. She is past Vice-Chair and Chair of ESA RN20 Qualitative Methods (presiding over 16 sessions and some 100 paper presentations at ESA's 9th Conference in Lisbon, 2009). Anne Ryen is the leader of her regional Sociological Association, and she was a member of the Scientific Committee in RC33 Logic and Methodology, which hosted 600 participants at the ISA’s 7th International Conference in Naples, 2008. She has been leader of several national and international research programmes with research interests in welfare, fringe benefits in private business, gender, cross-cultural research, and qualitative method, and is well experienced from board memberships at universities, private research organisations and businesses. In her 1st ESA Executive Committee period she has been member of the Committee for Communications and Public Relations, the Committee for External Relations and the Committee for ESA Policy.

Pekka Sulkunen  **FINLAND**

Pekka Sulkunen is Professor of Sociology at the University of Helsinki, Finland. He has published several books on social theory, cultural studies, addictions and preventive social policy, including *The Saturated Society: Regulating Risk and Lifestyle in Consumer Culture* (Sage 2009). He is currently appointed as Senior Fellow at the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies and is a member of the Finnish Society of Letters and Sciences. As the incumbent, Pekka Sulkunen has led the European Sociological Association as its President between 2011 and 2013. More information can be found on his [online profile](#).
Candidates for the Executive Committee

Maria Carmela Agodi (2nd Term) ITALY

Maria Carmela Agodi is a full professor of sociology, teaching courses in methodology and sociology of science, at the University Federico II in Naples. Her research, essays, and books focus on institutional change, rationality, reflexivity, welfare and the “knowledge society.” She is currently serving on the Executive Board of the Italian Sociological Association (AIS) and in the board of ESA RN33-Women’s and Gender Studies.

Pertti Alasuutari (2nd Term) FINLAND

Pertti Alasuutari, PhD, is Academy of Finland Professor at the School of Social Sciences and Humanities, University of Tampere. He is editor of the European Journal of Cultural Studies, and has published widely in the areas of social theory, cultural and media studies, global and transnational sociology, and social research methodology. His books include *Researching Culture: Qualitative Method and Cultural Studies* (Sage, 1995), *An Invitation to Social Research* (Sage 1998) *Rethinking the Media Audience* (Sage 1999), and *Social Theory and Human Reality* (Sage 2004). He is a member of ESA’s Executive Committee 2011-2013, and has served as President of the International Association for Cultural Studies (2002-2004) and President of the Westermarck Society 2008-2012.

Airi-Alina Allaste ESTONIA

Professor Airi-Alina Allaste is the director of the Institute for International and Social Studies at Tallinn University. Her research interests focus on lifestyles, young people, subcultures and new social movements. Currently she is Estonian coordinator of the European Commission FP7 funded project Memory, Youth, Political Legacy and Civic Engagement and coordinator of Estonian funded project Changes in the attitudes and lifestyles of Estonian population in 1985-2013: horizontal stratification. She has published numerous peer-reviewed articles and edited 3 books including *‘Back in the West’ Changing Lifestyles in Transforming Societies* (Peter Lang 2013). She has been responsible for organising several conferences including NYRIS 12: Nordic Youth Research Symposium (Tallinn, Estonia 2013). Professor Allaste is also Vice-President of the Estonian Sociological Association.
Ellen Annandale (2nd Term) UK

Ellen Annandale is Professor of Sociology at the University of York, UK. Her research focuses on the sociology of health and of gender. She is currently Vice-chair of RN16 Sociology of Health and Illness and organised its programme for the 10th ESA Congress. Professor Annandale has been a member of the ESA Executive Committee for one term, serving on the Postgraduate Committee (including teaching at the 2012 Summer School) and Publications Committees (co-editor of the book series). These commitments reflect her interest in supporting the further integration of postgraduate students into ESA's activities and the promotion of members' work through the development of its publishing activities.

Luís Baptista (2nd Term) PORTUGAL

Luís Baptista is Professor of Sociology at the New University of Lisbon (Universidade Nova de Lisboa) and Vice-Dean of Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities (FCSH-UNL). His teaching and research activities focus mainly on urban sociology, metropolitan areas and leisure territories. He has directed research projects and published in other areas also; namely on the internationalization of Portuguese language. He is Director of the research unit CESNOVA (Center for Sociological Research at UNL). He has served as both President (2006-2010) and Vice-President (2002-2006) of the Portuguese Sociological Association. He was member of the LOC - local organizing committee - of ESA's 9th Conference in Lisbon (September 2nd-5th, 2009). He is board member of the Research Network on Southern European Societies (RN27) and member of ESA's Executive Committee (2011-13).

Vincenzo Cicchelli (2nd Term) FRANCE

Vincenzo Cicchelli is Associate professor at Paris Descartes, Research Fellow at Gemass (Paris 4/CNRS). He is chair of the RN15, Global, transnational and cosmopolitan sociology and series editor of “Youth in a Globalizing World” (Brill Publishers: Leiden & Boston, MA). He is currently conducting research on cosmopolitan socialization processes among adolescents and young people and the making of a European identity among young people. These areas are studied with an emphasis on international comparisons, narratives and life stories. His recent books include: L’autonomie des jeunes (La documentation Française 2013), L’esprit cosmopolite. Voyages de formation des jeunes en Europe (Presses de Sciences Po 2012), and De la mondialisation au cosmopolitisme with Gerôme Truc (La documentation Française 2011).

Ricca Edmondson (2nd Term) IRELAND

Ricca Edmondson is professor of political science and sociology at the National University of Ireland in Galway, and an editor of the new ESA journal, the European Journal of Cultural and Political Sociology. She was educated in philosophy and social studies at the Universities of Lancaster and Oxford. She then worked for a decade in Berlin as a translator and carrying out post-doctoral research at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development, before moving to the university in Galway. Her work has centred on cultural and political aspects of sociology, with special reference to forging interdisciplinary and transnational contacts. She co-convened ESA's Research Network on Ageing (RN1) for a decade, and is particularly interested in developing the study of wisdom as a source of understanding both the role of older people in society and social innovation in general (see Ricca’s Viewpoint Article on pages 15-16 of this issue).
Robert Fine  (2nd Term)  UK

Robert Fine has an abiding interest in Marx’s political thought, the Enlightenment, Hegel, Critical Theory and Hannah Arendt. He has also published on labour and nationalist movements in Southern Africa and on labour and the law in UK. In recent years he has been working on cosmopolitanism, human rights, European antisemitism and natural law. At Warwick he helped set up the Social Theory Centre and chaired the Department of Sociology. In ESA he helped to establish the Network on Racism and Antisemitism. He is enjoying his new status as Emeritus Professor of Sociology. More information can be found on his online profile.

Elena Iarskaia-Smirnova  RUSSIA

Elena Iarskaia-Smirnova teaches sociology at Higher School of Economics in Moscow and co-edits the peer-reviewed Journal of Social Policy Studies (in Russian). She has received her PhD from Goteborg University, Sweden, and her Russian Doctoral degree in sociology in Saratov, Russia. She is research advisor for an independent Center for Social Policy and Gender Studies and publishes on social inequality, professions, welfare state, disability, gender and family policies, and the public sphere. She is board member of ISA's RC52 (Professional Groups), co-leader of the Research Committee on the Sociology of Professions and leader of a Research Committee focusing on the Sociology of Social Policy in the Russian Society of Sociologists.

Tally Katz-Gerro  (2nd Term)  ISRAEL

Tally Katz-Gerro is a Senior Lecturer in Sociology at the University of Haifa, Israel. She earned a PhD from the University of California, Berkeley, and specializes in the sociology of consumption, culture, and inequality, along with environmental sociology. Her research focus is comparative and she is currently running three ongoing projects focusing on cultural consumption, cultural policy, and ecosystem services. She has served as chair of the Research Network on Consumption (RN5), and at her university, she has been head of the MA program, head of the social involvement program, and a member of the inter-senate committee of the Israeli universities, amongst other positions. She was recently elected as Vice-President of the Israeli Sociological Society. More information can be found on her online profile.

Krzysztof T. Konecki  POLAND

Professor Krzysztof T. Konecki works at Lodz University in Poland. He has published extensively on qualitative methods and grounded theory methodology. His research interests are in the sociology of organization and management, human-non-human animal interactions, and contemporary forms of spirituality: yoga and meditation practices. He has served as a chair of ESA's Qualitative Methods Research Network (RN20). He is now an editor-in-chief of the Qualitative Sociology Review. Moreover, he is currently a member of the Board of Polish Sociological Association and a member of the Board of the Sociological Committee of the Polish Academy of Science.
Sokratis Koniordos  
Greece

Sokratis Koniordos is Associate Professor at the Department of Sociology, University of Crete, Greece. He is currently Director of its Graduate Studies Programme. His main research areas include economic sociology and sociology of work. He has published 15 volumes and several research articles. His key publications include: *Towards a Sociology of Artisans: Continuities and Discontinuities in Comparative Perspective* (Ashgate 2001); *Networks, Trust and Social Capital: Theoretical and empirical investigations from Europe* (Ashgate 2005); *Conflict, Citizenship and Civil Society*, with Baert, P., Procacci, G. and Ruzza, C. (eds) (Routledge 2010); *The Handbook of European Sociology*, with Kyrtsis, A.A. (eds), (Routledge forthcoming-2013). Koniordos, who is vice-chair of the Hellenic Sociological Society, has served as a member of the ESA's Executive Committee (two terms), is a member of the “Economic Sociology Research Network” (RN 09), and chairs the European Societies editorial board.

Olga Kutsenko  
Ukraine

Olga Kutsenko is professor of sociology and head of the Department of Social Structures and Social Relations at Kyiv Taras Shevchenko National University. Since 2009 she has convened the Special Council for the Defence of Doctoral and Post-Doctoral Theses in Sociology at Kyiv university. She was graduated in political economy and sociology from Kharkiv University in 1983. In 2004 she formed the department of political sociology at Kharkiv National university. Her work is centred on social inequality, political participation and radicalization, system transformations study with special reference to comparative class and value-based analysis. Since 2007 she has been a Vice-President of the Sociological Association of Ukraine.

Marju Lauristin  
Estonia

Marju Lauristin is Professor of Social Communication at the Institute of Journalism and Communication, University of Tartu. Her main fields of research include post-communist transformations in the Baltic societies, cultural changes related to the new media, and integration of the Russian minority in Estonia. She is one of the leading sociologists in Estonia and the President of Estonian Sociological Association. She had been member of ESA's Executive Committee between 2007 and 2011, and is a member of editorial board of *European Societies*. Her recent published works include *Estonia's Transition to the EU: Twenty Years On* (Routledge 2010) edited together with Peeter Vihaemm.

Carmen Leccardi  
Italy

Carmen Leccardi is professor of Cultural Sociology and Director of the PhD program in Applied Sociology and Social Research Methods at the University of Milan-Bicocca. She is Vice-Rector in the area of equal opportunities and Director of the ABCD Interdepartmental Center for Women's Studies. Her extensive research work focuses on the fields of gender, youth, cultural change and time experience. She has served as co-editor of the journal *Time & Society* (1999-2009), and is now consulting editor for the same publication. She was European vice-president of the ISA RC ‘Sociology of Youth’ (2006-2010). She is the author of several books and articles.
Octav Marcovici  ROMANIA

Octav Marcovici is a senior researcher specializing in youth research, with specific focus on youths' transitions to adulthood, constellations of disadvantage and their impact on participation, and substantiation of youth policies. He has substantial experience of international networking, for almost 15 years having been member of the European Network of Experts in Youth Research (National correspondent for youth research and documentation of the Youth Directorate, Council of Europe - 1997/2003, then member of the Network of Experts in Youth Research under the Youth Partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Commission – 2003/2010) and, until last year, representative of the Romanian Sociological Association in ESA's Council of National Associations. Octav Marcovici has also substantial expertise and extensive experience in international research projects, most of which have been financed by the European Commission.

Tiziana Nazio  ITALY

Tiziana Nazio is currently leading the Local Organising Committee for 11th ESA Conference to be held in Turin this coming August: She completed her PhD in sociology at the University of Bielefeld, Germany, where she contributed to the GLOBALIFE and FENICs projects. She was than Marie Curie Fellow at the Centre d'Estudis Demogràfics and Juan de la Cierva Fellow at University Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona (Spain), before becoming Career Development Fellow at University of Oxford's Nuffield College, UK. Tiziana Nazio is now Lecturer in Sociology at the University of Turin and Affiliate Fellow at Collegio Carlo Alberto, Italy. Her research focuses on female employment and family formation in a comparative perspective.

Luigi Pellizzoni  (2nd Term)  ITALY

Luigi Pellizzoni is associate professor in Environmental Sociology at the University of Trieste, where he also teaches the Sociology of Participatory Processes. His main interests intersect two areas: risk, environment, technoscience, on the one hand, and social change, participation, conflict and the transformation of governance, on the other. His research experience includes several European projects (Framework Programmes IV, V, VI, VII, Interreg, etc.). His recent research has focused on local mobilizations, deliberative democracy, natural hazards and the impact of new and emerging technosciences on the society-nature relationship. He has published around 100 works. His latest book, which was co-edited with Marja Ylönen, is *Neoliberalism and Technoscience: Critical Assessments* (Ashgate 2012). In the outgoing Executive Committee he has been especially involved in the committees for Research Networks and for the Conference Programme.

George Pleios  GREECE

Professor George Pleios is Head of Communication and Media Studies Faculty and Director of the Laboratory for Social Research in Mass Media at the University of Athens. He is Vice-Chair of ESA’s Research Network on the Sociology of Communication and Media Research (RN18), and a member of Research Network on Social Theory (RN29) in which he served as the local organizer its 2012 mid-term conference in Athens. His work includes six books, fifteen chapters in edited books, forty articles in international reviews, nearly 50 presentations in international conferences on mass media and 30 research projects as Primary Investigator. His interests focus on the relation between mass media and society.
Suvi Ronkainen (2nd Term) FINLAND

Suvi Ronkainen (born 1962) is Professor of Research Methodology and director of the Centre of research education. She works in the University of Lapland. She is an experienced researcher who in the area of domestic violence, gender and sexuality issues. She has exceptionally broad experience on multidisciplinary teaching both on the basic and the post graduate level. Her current research interests focus on legal practices in relation to violent crimes and practices of surveying (quality and use of web-based techniques). Theoretically her work focuses on the questions of embodiment and agency; methodologically she combines critical realism with questions related to doing research on lived experience. She is well connected in Finland and other Nordic countries. She was a leader of the international research network (Violence, Agency Practices and Social Change, funded by NorFA 2000–2005) and she belongs to the COST-funded network WEBDATANET. Suvi Ronkainen is currently serving as a member of the ESA’s Executive Committee and is responsible for PhD activities. She has published over 50 research texts, mostly in Finnish.

Anne Ryen (2nd Term) NORWAY

Anne Ryen is Vice-Dean and Associate Professor of sociology at the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences, University of Agder, Norway. She is past Vice-Chair and Chair of ESA RN20 Qualitative Methods (presiding over 16 sessions and some 100 paper presentations at ESA’s 9th Conference in Lisbon, 2009). Anne Ryen is the leader of her regional Sociological Association, and she was a member of the Scientific Committee in RC33 Logic and Methodology, which hosted 600 participants at the ISA’s 7th International Conference in Naples, 2008. She has been leader of several national and international research programmes with research interests in welfare, fringe benefits in private business, gender, cross-cultural research, and qualitative method, and is well experienced from board memberships at universities, private research organisations and businesses. In her 1st ESA Executive Committee period she has been member of the Committee for Communications and Public Relations, the Committee for External Relations and the Committee for ESA Policy.

Helena Serra PORTUGAL

Helena Serra is Professor of Sociology at the Institute of Economics and Business Administration at the University of Lisbon (ISEG/UL), and the President of the SOCIUS - Research Centre in Economic and Organizational Sociology. She has published on healthcare research and organizations and given several keynote presentations at international conferences. She is member of ESA’s Sociology of Professions Research Network (RN19) and a Board Member of the ISA’s Research Committee on the Sociology of Professional Groups (RC52). In addition to a book and several book chapters, her journal articles include “Medical Technocracies in Liver Transplantation”, which was published in Health in 2010.
Inga Tomić-Koludrović  CROATIA

Dr. Inga Tomić-Koludrović is a Full Professor of Sociological Theory at the University of Zadar, Croatia. Her research interests include sociological theory, lifestyle sociology, the sociology of youth, and the sociology of women, as well as the effects of globalization on culture and identity in the context of the modernization of Croatian society. Inga Tomić-Koludrović has authored or co-authored 6 books and co-edited a further volume, and published more than 50 articles in national and international journals. She has delivered more than 30 papers and invited speeches at international and national conferences, as well as at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Boston College, where she was a Fulbright program fellow in the academic year 2003/2004. Inga Tomić-Koludrović was also Erasmus Mundus fellow at the Karl-Franzens Universität Graz, Austria during 2012. She was head of Department of Sociology at the University of Zadar from 2005 to 2012, and is currently co-director of the International joint doctoral programme in the Sociology of Development, organized by the University of Zadar and University of Teramo, Italy. In addition to co-authoring the curriculum of this joint programme, she has also co-authored the curriculum of the International joint master’s degree in Cultural Sociology (organized by the universities of Graz, Zadar, Trento and Brno). Professor Tomić-Koludrović served as the president of the Croatian Sociological Association (CSA) for two terms between 2007-2009 and 2011, and she is currently its Vice-President (2011-2013). During her terms as president, she also represented the CSA in the International Sociological Association’s Council of National Associations.

Georg Vobruba  (2nd Term)  GERMANY

Georg Vobruba is professor of Sociology at the University of Leipzig, FRG. His main subjects of research are social policy, European integration and sociological theory of society.

Frank Welz  (2nd Term)  AUSTRIA

Frank Welz teaches sociology at Innsbruck University. He has received his PhD from Freiburg University and his Habilitation (2nd dissertation) from Innsbruck. He publishes on social theory, the sociology of law and the history of the social sciences. From 2007 to 2011 he coordinated the ESA RN 29 on social theory. He organized the network’s mid-term conference Social theory and the sociological discipline(s) at Innsbruck and coordinated further meetings in Lisbon, Prague and Geneva. He currently serves as chair of the programme committee of ESA’s 11th Conference (to be held in Turin this coming August) and as ESA’s Vice-President. From 2009 to 2011 he further served as Vice-President of the Austrian Sociological Association.
Ruth McDonald  UK

Ruth McDonald is Professor of Healthcare Innovation and Learning at the University of Nottingham, UK. She is a political science graduate and a former UK National Health Service hospital finance director. In 2007/8 she spent a year at the University of California, Berkeley, USA, as a Harkness Fellow in Health Care Policy and Practice, comparing pay for performance programmes in the UK and California. She has also held posts at the Universities of Manchester, Liverpool and Leeds in the UK. Her research is concerned with healthcare organisations and professionals and, where possible, she has explored this issue from inside the organisations concerned. Much of her research in recent years has concerned financial incentives for quality in the UK and beyond, bringing a sociological perspective to a topic dominated largely by economists. She is an editorial board member of the Journal of Professions and Organization and Chair of ESA’s Sociology of Professions Research Network (RN19).

James Wickham  IRELAND

James Wickham is Professor of Sociology at Trinity College Dublin, where he directs the Employment Research Centre and is Dean of the Faculty of Arts Humanities and Social Sciences. He has taught and published on work in European society. He currently researches the relationship between employment and different forms of mobility, ranging from migration to business air travel. He recently completed a study of Polish migrants in the Dublin labour market and his current research project ‘Learning from Poland’ compares Irish graduate emigration to that from Poland in the last decade. Separately he is working on the impact of the European financial crisis, especially personal debt, on people’s ability to travel for work and pleasure. He has written many academic journal articles and is the author of Gridlock: Dublin’s Transport Crisis and the Future of the City (New Island Books 2006). He is also co-author of the forthcoming book New Mobilities in Europe: Polish Migration to Ireland post-2004 (Manchester University Press forthcoming-2013).
Candidates for the Chair of the Council of National Associations

Roberto Cipriani  (2nd Term) ITALY

Roberto Cipriani is Professor of sociology at Roma Tre University. He has written extensively on popular religion, the sacred and secularization, and is known for his unconventional applications of the concept of “diffused religion” (religione diffusa) and then that of “religion of values” (religione dei valori). He is the author of more than fifty books and eight hundred articles and his work has been translated into English, French, Russian, Spanish, German, Chinese and Portuguese. He graduated from University of Rome “La Sapienza” in 1968. From 1990 to 1994 he was president of the ISA’s Research Committee for the Sociology of Religion (RC22). From 1995 to 1998 he was editor-in-chief of International Sociology. Since 1997 he has been a Professor of Sociology at University Roma Tre, where from 2001 onwards he has directed the Department of Education. From 2004 to 2007 he was President of the Italian Association of Sociology. In 2008 he became the Directeur d’Etudes at the Maison des Sciences de l’Homme in Paris.

Sue Scott  UK

Professor Sue Scott has recently retired as Pro Vice Chancellor of Glasgow Caledonian University. She is an Honorary Professor in Sociology and Women’s Studies at the University of York and Honorary Professorial Fellow at the University of Edinburgh. She was President of the British Sociological Association (BSA) between 2007 and 2009 and is a Fellow of the UK Academy of Social Sciences. Her research interests are in gender, sexuality and risk, and she has conducted research into young people’s sexual behaviour. A recent book, co-authored with Stevi Jackson, is Theorising Sexuality (McGraw Hill 2010). She is involved in the ESA’s Sociology of Consumption (RN5) and Sexuality (RN23) Research Networks. She is a member of the International Advisory Group for the University of Helsinki.
The Sociology of Wisdom.

Zygmunt Bauman once remarked that sociology has taken a disparaging view of the influence of social processes and structures on human thought. Not least in response to Marx, Habermas or Foucault, sociologists have rightly become alert to cultural/political and cognitive distortions pervading social spheres. Yet a complementary interest explores multiple ways in which human beings have struggled, against the odds these distortions impose, to decide and reflect well: the ways in which they have imagined doing so wisely, the practices and images associated with wisdom, and the constraints encountered in trying to assert agency and humanity in this way. Exploring to what extent wise reflection has been associated with relational practices such as solidarity or compassion, or to what extent it has implied equality as opposed to hierarchy, have not been simply naïve concerns but have continually been contested. It appears to be a perennial feature of human societies that those with power believe themselves wiser than those without it; as the sardonic tales of Aesop imply, what counts as wise is often what subordinates are compelled to believe in order to survive. Yet the contrary idea was maintained over four thousand years ago in the Maxims of Ptah-hotep in Egypt:

Good discourse is more hidden than green stone, yet may be found among the maids at the grindstones (Maxim 1).

Ancient ideas of wisdom may present it as communal, as playful or even as mischievous, or as bestowed mysteriously from on high. But the question remains what social settings allow for such differences and what they make of them.

Contemporary academic work on wisdom in positive psychology attempts to recon-
Yet the aspiration to wisdom has had the potential to reconcile individuals to age in a way not achieved by equating the life course with the career, over at 65.

A panoply of theories and traditions illuminates contrasting social traditions of wise reasoning and behaving, whose development demands exploration. ‘Outsider’ wisdom or the wisdom of outcasts can be contrasted with expectations of ‘wise’ rulers, in kingdoms or households; wisdom may be portrayed, with different social effects, as solemn, surprising or critical. Women’s and men’s wisdom may be imagined differently, ‘female’ wisdom often assigned to half-hidden practices connected with birth, the maintenance of health, and death. In all these cases, different sets of everyday practice may be associated with wisdom, often related to different aspects of religion or learning. The wisdom ascribed to the guru, aloof from his followers, can be contrasted with radical wisdom and political change; consensual and critical forms of (supposed) wisdom have different relations to time – not least the status of past time, attitudes to future time, or the time wise decisions are expected to take. Modes of communicating wisdom are associated with intercultural and intergenerational expectations in different settings, constrained or enabled by organisational or political conventions. These facts have clear impacts on educating for wisdom – for instance in the case of medical personnel, where wisdom is demanded and at the same time often institutionally inhibited. In all these cases, diverse social approaches to wisdom imply different images of the human being and what should be demanded from ethical or pedagogic conventions. The sorts of society or subculture individuals belong to, or the organisations they work for, impact on the extents to which they can be wise and in what ways. It is crucial to explore how sociality functions in these cases, and what sorts of wisdom can be produced in joint action.

The globalised media produce constant calls for wisdom, not least with regard to economic crises or environmental problems. These calls clash with cultures in which wise practices are inhibited or repressed, when rationality or reasonableness is perceived as excessively cognitive and ‘metrics’ valorised as standards of judgement. To proffer an image of reasonableness based on cognitivistic reverence for measurement and calculative notions of logic is to leave the field open to accounts of wise reasoning misunderstood as the less reliable the more they are human.

Sociological reconstructions of alternative models of wisdom can thus offer significant critical resources for authoritative approaches to public crises. While manifold methodological approaches should be used in exploring alleged cases of wisdom, enabling us to disassemble the processes they involve, explicating such issues ultimately requires a qualitative ethnography of practices considered wise, and context-sensitive hermeneutic approaches to analysing them. There is, in other words, a clear and pressing sociological role for investigating the different conceptions of wisdom associated with different social circumstances, explicating their social components – and, not least, interrogating the reluctance to engage with the concept that characterizes contemporary societies.

Prof. Ricca Edmondson
The Galway Wisdom Project
National University of Ireland, Galway

Further reading:


Midterm Conference Report: RN 12
Energy & Society

The ESA Research Network 12 Midterm Conference was held at the Institute of Social Sciences, University of Lisbon, Portugal, between March 22nd and 24th, 2012. The conference brought together more than one hundred researchers from 23 countries.

The theme of the conference was “Energy & Society”. The social sciences have a significant contribution to make in addressing a wide range of important questions and issues regarding energy. Current challenges of energy poverty, climate change, increased global energy demand and depletion of hydrocarbon resources have placed energy issues at the centre of political debate, both nationally and worldwide. In this context, aggravated by the economic crisis, it is timely and urgent to address social aspects of energy consumption, production and system transitions. Yet, to date the social sciences have been slow to respond to these questions.

This conference brought together a diverse range of social science insights in order to contribute to the development of better understanding and thinking in this area. The papers presented at the conference focused on two major themes: social practices and cultural issues related to energy consumption, and technologies and policy issues.

In addition to twelve thematic panels of oral presentations and a poster session, the event featured a keynote speech by the internationally distinguished expert Harold Wilhite, from the University of East Anglia, UK, and an active member of the UK’s Sustainable Development Commission, delivered a final summary lecture.

The conference aimed at providing an opportunity for networking and to enhance international research and collaboration in this emerging field of study. With this purpose, the conference included the first general meeting of the international network Energy & Society. This session attracted the majority of participants. All conference participants were invited to become members of the network. Pia Laborgne continues to maintain communication through the network’s mailing list.

In order to enhance mutual acquaintance and networking, a list of short biographies of all speakers was included in the conference website. A section for posting announcements of conferences, calls for papers, job offers, et cetera, related to the theme “energy and society” has also been included on this website. For those unable to attend, some of the conference presentations and photos have also been posted online. Furthermore, a selection of full papers presented at the conference will be published in a special issue of the international journal Nature and Culture. The conference received funding from the European Sociological Association’s Research Network on Environment and Society, and also had the support of ADENE, the Portuguese Energy Agency.

By Ana Horta & Luisa Schmidt
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Midterm Conference Report: RN 15
Sociology sans frontières

The tension between the local and the global, between globalization and persistent national identifications, was the subject of two long days of intense discussions in the picturesque city of Bilbao in Basque Country, Spain. Scholars from across Europe engaged with sociology beyond borders at the inaugural mid-term conference of the European Sociological Association’s Research Network on Global, Transnational and Cosmopolitan Sociology in Bilbao from March 21st to 22nd. The conference, entitled “Toward a supra-national sociology at the beginning of the 21st century”, brought together members of the Board of the RN with doctoral candidates and other leading scholars. The setting was ideal, not only for the first conference of the newly organised Research Network but also to reflect a particularly European engagement with sociology of and beyond the nation-state. The concentrated discussions reflected a third wave of scholarship on globalization, engaged with historical narratives and contemporary realities peculiar to Europe but relevant everywhere. Speeches, presentations and discussions easily overran the sessions and flowed into crowded Basque tapas bars, surrounded by mountains and the meandering river banked by the Guggenheim Museum.

The conference was organised by the RN at the University of the Basque Country in collaboration with its Department of Sociology and Social Work, Faculty of Social and Communication Sciences, and School of Business Studies. The Research Network’s vice chair, Manuel Ahedo at the University of the Basque Country organised the event, and altogether some 15 people participated in the meeting.

The 2-day conference was divided into three sections, each showcasing a keynote speaker. The first session on Transnational Sociology was led by a keynote address on “A Sociology of Transnational Governance” by Sigrid Quack, Professor in the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies in Cologne, Germany, and Professor in the Faculty of Business Administration, Economics and Social Sciences at the University of Cologne. Building on a critique of methodological...
nationalism, which continues to be dominant approach in supranational sociology, Professor Quack’s address moved beyond research limited by functionalist analyses and by a container view of nation-states. Her talk highlighted the key role played by institutions and fields, excluding and including actors, linking the global and local, providing spaces for social interaction, and shaping identities.

Three presentations focusing on transnational sociology followed the discussion on Professor Quack’s keynote address. The papers and discussions covered a wide range of topics and evinced a range of methodologies, from media coverage of the Arab Spring to quantitative analyses of transnational European life-styles to class and education in transnational life in Spain. But the discussion also covered how globalization and even the cosmopolitan project of universalism affects transnational thinking and politics.

The afternoon session on March 21st, on Global Sociology began with a keynote presentation on “Rethinking Social Distinction: Beyond National Models of Interpretation” by Pascal Daloz, Research Professor at the University of Strasbourg and chair of the International Sociological Association’s Research Committee on Comparative Sociology. Professor Daloz summarized his earlier work on social distinction and, moving beyond Bourdieu’s famous analysis, introduced his new research on the topic. Building on a strongly inductive approach, fed by images and analyses from first-hand observations across the world, he presented new and more widely applicable theoretical insights into conceiving of social distinction.

The address and discussion were followed again by a diverse spread of presentations around the analytic notion of globalization. Once again, all three papers illustrated a range of methodologies, from philosophical analysis to statistical index-building to textual analysis of high-profile political events. And, once more, the discussion easily spilled over from globalization to what transnational sociology could offer to these topics, as well the place for a renewed cosmopolitan goal for universal peace in what has been called an unfinished project of European modernity.

The second day’s session on Cosmopolitan Sociology was introduced with a keynote speech on “Cosmopolitanism, Universality and the Reconstruction of the ‘Other’: The Case of Antisemitism” by Robert Fine, Emeritus Professor of Sociology at the University of Warwick, UK, and member of the ESA Executive Committee. Discussing cosmopolitanism as an ever-present trend in European thought since early modern philosophers, and building on the centrality of rights to the notion, Professor Fine questioned absolute sovereignty as a mythic concept. Going further to question methodological cosmopolitanism he dwelled on the pathologies of cosmopolitan thought through constitutive Othering, with particular reference to the place of Jews as the Other of the universal in European history of thought, and illustrated how this played out in the performativity of victimhood replacing the agency of victims with universalist categorization.

After a long-running discussion on the topic, the session included papers on outlooks on cosmopolitan ideals in various settings. The ensuing debate emphasized the advantages and disadvantages of new perspectives and especially new methodological approaches to study cosmopolitanism, from ethnographies to surveys.

The conference also offered a chance for the new network to develop institutionally. The first day’s hectic session ran into the evening, and was followed immediately by a business meeting of the board members of the network. Board members planned the RN’s session in the upcoming ESA Congress in Turin this August, which has generated great interest and proposals. There was also discussion on the next mid-term conference, tentatively to be organized in Tampere Finland in autumn 2014, and on expanding and further strengthening the network. The new European Journal on Cultural and Political Sociology was introduced to all conference participants, who showed great interest in the first issues.

All participants reiterated the value and uniqueness of this first mid-term conference of the new Research Network, and participated actively in suggesting how to strengthen the new RN to achieve its potential of becoming an important focal point for such research. Greater publicity of the network within Europe was emphasized. The overwhelming sentiment was that this unprecedented network has managed to bring together what have often been considered three distinct areas of sociological analysis – globalization, transnationalism and cosmopolitanism. As the discussions illustrated, this combination generated a synergy and new insights unique to European sociology. Most participants also noted that this combination, and even such supranational sociology in general, remained an emerging area, and that the discussions had shown how new methodological approaches and theoretical frames were being evolved to address common topics. There was strong attention on the forthcoming panel of the RN in the ESA Congress in Turin, and in continuing to be in communication on sociology beyond borders.

Participants took from Bilbao not just the warm hospitality, memories of a beautiful city and delicious tapas - they reaffirmed their engagement with thinking of sociology sans frontières, understanding how the local and the global interplay and what that means for citizens, organizations and policies in Europe. The unique synergy between these three traditionally diverse themes, the mix of methodological approaches and theoretical insights, and the geographical and topical spread that were hallmarks in Bilbao, are also set to feature in the ten sessions organized by the RN in Turin this August.

by Dr Ali Qadir and Professor Pertti Alasuutari
School of Social Sciences and Humanities
University of Tampere
Italian Sociology / Sociology in Italy

Sociology has a long tradition in Italy, dating back to the second half of the 19th century. The first, short-lived, journal devoted to the new discipline was founded in 1894 (Rivista di Sociologia), and the second one was sold enough to survive for twenty-five years (Rivista Italiana di Sociologia, 1897-1921). At least one early author gained the status of international “classic”, i.e. Vilfredo Pareto. Even if he is usually remembered as a statistician and demographer, Corrado Gini – the Italian scholar world famous for his eponymous coefficient – also contributed to the new discipline, with both research and teaching. Moreover, he provided the fledgling discipline an institutional basis in the schools and faculties of Statistics that he founded in the fascist period, first in Padua and then in Rome.

However, Pareto and Gini would hardly be found in current Italian literature. After the fall of fascism, in fact, sociology started a new, second life in Italy with a strong American accent. Curiously enough, in 1949 it was a translation of Veblen’s classical study on the leisure class, which started a harsh debate about the virtues and dangers of sociology, a discipline whose positivistic genesis and outlook has been impetuous: a first official chair – also contributed to the new discipline, with both research and teaching. Moreover, he provided the fledgling discipline an institutional basis in the schools and faculties of Statistics that he founded in the fascist period, first in Padua and then in Rome.

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Educational institutions, as said, sociology gained its first full chair only after the fall of fascism, and firmly entered the Italian academic system in the 1960s, with the first public competitions (concorsi pubblici) for chairs in sociology and, in 1967, the founding of the first Faculty of Sociology, in Trento. Since then, the growth of personnel in sociology has been steady and impetuous, especially after the nineteen eighties.

Intellectually, it was the so-called “Capitoline triad” formed by Parsons, Merton and Lazarsfeld that provided the founding charter for sociology in post-WWII, in both its theoretical and empirical orientations. Only after this imprinting (and usually mediated by it) other intellectual traditions (e.g. from phenomenology, interactionism, conflict sociology) found room. Slowly but inexorably, the early Italian tradition – from Pareto to Gini passing through the German-born but Italian by choice Robert(o) Michels – was dismissed as a reference for doing research and it was shifted into the realm of the history of ideas. Probably surprisingly to foreign eyes, Gramsci’s work – including that published after his death and the fall of fascism – has never been accepted in Italy as sociologically pertinent. Indeed, being a sociologist in Italy meant keeping a distance from authors and works in which there were heavy political investments (and this was clearly the case of Gramsci, as an early leader, a martyr, and the main cultural icon for the Italian Communist Party, PCI).

Probably, the most influential feature of this period has been the structuring of the sociological field along two main axis: one axis opposes the old generation of positivistic sociology strongly oriented to quantitative research (and with a past of Fascist involvements and, more dangerously, racist beliefs) with a “new”, younger generation of American-influenced, sometime also US-educated, scholars; the other is the axis opposes a left-oriented, self-styled progressive sociology with the legacy of an indigenous tradition of Catholic social science, dating back to the 1890s and strongly involved with the new major political party, the Democrazia Cristiana. This second axis is still at work, making academic sociology a field of tensions and sometimes conflicts – partly grounded in political-cultural divisions, more usually expressing mere organizational struggles for the control of chairs and funding. When the Italian Sociological Association (AIS) was founded in 1982 – as the final outcome of a long story of associational attempts that started in 1912, had a turning point in 1950 after the fall of fascism, and concluded with the funding of an association for both sociologists and political scientists linked to the newly founded ISA – this split between a Catholic camp and a left-wing, “lay” camp, was the main structuring factor according to which almost everything in the life of the association had to be accommodated. Such a split, as said, still operates (with the complication of a further division inside the “lay camp” dating back to 1982, exactly at the time of founding of the association), in both the practices and what we could name the “political unconscious” of Italian sociology. As this major feature shows, the early demise of politically charged references (for example, Gramsci) doesn’t mean Italian sociology has been and is immune to political struggles. Indeed, one crucial feature of Italian sociology may be said to be its low degree of autonomy from the political field – that this heteronomy be grounded on ideological commitments, financial links, or only agenda-setting decisions. Politics and the participation in mass mediated political debate are indeed crucial concerns for the typical Italian sociologist, including the more intellectually praised. (This heteronomy makes the call for a public sociology, recently launched from the United States worldwide, a bit anomalous in Italy as in other European countries, where the problem is less the lack of public presence than of academic/research professionalism).

It would take a much longer paper to examine the recent intellectual/institutional history of sociology in Italy, or even to offer a truly sociological analysis of this intellectual field. Suffice to say that Italian sociology is currently firmly established in the Italian academic system with more than 1,000 tenured scholars distributed among the state-backed academic fields of General Sociology (including also Political Sociology and the Sociology of Law), Cultural Sociology, and Applied Sociology (which comprises Economic Sociology as well as Urban and Rural Sociology). They teach and research in 43 different universities (and in a larger number of departments, as in each university sociologists may be affiliated to different departments, as in each university sociology department). They teach and research in 43 different universities (and in a larger number of departments, as in each university sociology department). They teach and research in 43 different universities (and in a larger number of departments, as in each university sociology department). They teach and research in 43 different universities (and in a larger number of departments, as in each university sociology department). They teach and research in 43 different universities (and in a larger number of departments, as in each university sociology department). They teach and research in 43 different universities (and in a larger number of departments, as in each university sociology department). They teach and research in 43 different universities (and in a larger number of departments, as in each university sociology department). They teach and research in 43 different universities (and in a larger number of departments, as in each university sociology department). They teach and research in 43 different universities (and in a larger number of departments, as in each university sociology department). They teach and research in 43 different universities (and in a larger number of departments, as in each university sociology department). They teach and research in 43 different universities (and in a larger number of departments, as in each university sociology department).
ments). The field is thus dispersed in many small local groups, usually interlinked more through academic pressure groups than shared research concerns.

A recent survey found more than fifty journals published in Italy claiming to be sociologically relevant – being sociological in their disciplinary focus (e.g. Rassegna Italiana di Sociologia, founded in 1960; Quaderni di Sociologia, in 1951; Studi di Sociologia, in 1963; Sociologia del lavoro, in 1978; Sociologia urbana e rurale, in 1979; Sociologia e ricerca sociale, in 1980; Sociologica. Italian Journal of Sociology, in 2007) or one of its main references (e.g. Stato e mercato, with both sociologists and economists sitting in its board; Polis, a pluridisciplinary journal which includes sociologists, political scientists and demographers; or Studi Culturali, where sociologists share the board with semioticians, political theorists, anthropologists and literary critics).

A few of those self-claimed sociological journals are, however, only very loosely identifiable as pertaining to the discipline according to international (and even national) standards.

To have an idea of the topics Italian sociologists work on, the articulation of AIS in thematic sections provides some useful information. At present, there are sections (with an average of 60 members) for Economic Sociology, Social Policy, Social Theory, Cultural Sociology (the largest one, with 233 members), Religion, Education, Political Sociology, Law, Health and Medicine (the second largest one, with 120 members), Everyday Life, Methodology, and the recently founded section on Gender. A detailed analysis would require looking inside each section to identify central as well as relatively peripheral concerns. To circumscribe our attention to three of the most historically and intellectually important research fields, we can say that in Italian Economic Sociology there is a strong focus on development and welfare as well as immigration, but only a small and recent concern for consumption; in Cultural Sociology, mass communications/media is probably still the major concern, with only a limited interest in art participation and the production/consumption of culture, which are the main foci in this research area in countries like the USA, the UK and France; in Political Sociology there is a strong tradition of electoral studies, shared with Political Science, while recently the field has been hegemonized by research on mobilizations (as testified by the birth of a journal especially devoted to this area, Partecipazione e conflitto). Still, foreign observers may be stricken by the almost total neglect of early sources as Mosca, Pareto and Michels in current Italian political-sociological research.

As a consequence of recent social and economic changes, which eventually also had an impact on Italy, migration studies is now a growing research area, attracting a host of PhD students. This has more recently given an impulsion also to ethnic and racial studies, a research branch previously unknown in this country. Contrary to what one might expect, religion is a very specialized research area, mainly cultivated by Catholic sociologists (or with some Catholic affiliation/committee), with relatively weak theoretical pretensions and more administrative concerns. A major achievement has been the founding in 2005 of “STS Italia – Società Italiana di Studi su Scienza e Tecnologia”, an association collecting almost all the Italian scholars (usually young ones) working on science and technology, which also publishes the online journal Tecnoscienza.

Environmental Sociology has also a lively following, with an independent network (Rete Ambiente e Società) and a biennial national conference (its 9th edition being held this year).

Methodologically, after a strong hegemony of survey techniques and other statistics-based approaches (rarely adventuring beyond simple crosstabs), in recent years there has been an explosion of interest for qualitative cultural research, life stories, and ethnography (witnessed by the birth of the aforementioned journal Studi Culturali and the more recently Etnografia e Ricerca Qualitativa). Interestingly, there are strong links between topics and methods. For example, qualitative research still dominates Cultural Sociology, whilst Economic Sociology has a declared (even if not always practiced) a preference for quantitative analysis. The integration of theory and empirical research is still a vital issue, independently of specialties (in deed, we can say Italian sociologists have a strong inclination towards theoretical or more exactly literature-based research for financial motives also). A truly over-looked area is historical sociology – which appears paradoxical given the historical sensitiveness of the early pioneers of sociology in Italy, such as Gaetano Mosca or Michels and Pareto. This feature has to do with the split between sociology and history that is still strongly felt, the latter being in Italy a highly legitimated discipline with well-defended boundaries.

An important sociological feature of contemporary Italian sociology – a feature we have to emphasize if we are looking for a realistic picture of this area of intellectual life – is the troubled legitimization of the official association, which explains, and is at the same time explained by, the lack of membership amongst many of those who are reputed as the most influential and respected scholars. This means that most of what passes as “good” Italian sociology both in Italy and abroad – for example, works on social movements, class analysis, family structures, deviance and suicide, cultural production and consumption, arts and music, etc. – is often authored by scholars who have no necessary involvement in the official associative life of the discipline and who often work as individual scholars or as “invisible colleges”, usually with a strong international orientation including participation in other national and international associations. Recent changes in academic organization (including the formal introduction of research assessment mechanisms), law-backed recruitment procedures, and even the informal social organization of the discipline (especially amongst younger scholars) are impacting this state of affairs, apparently making room for new patterns of associational life, more consistent intellectual projects and new shared standards of practice and evaluation.

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