

**DIFFERENCES
INEQUALITIES
AND SOCIOLOGICAL
IMAGINATION**

ESA 2015

**12TH CONFERENCE
OF THE EUROPEAN
SOCIOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION 2015**

ABSTRACT BOOK

Prague, 25-28 August 2015
ESA 12th Conference
Differences, Inequalities and Sociological Imagination
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European Sociological Association (ESA)
Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences (IS CAS)

Table of contents

Table of contents	4
The Theme	8
The President's Welcome	9
Plenary Sessions	10
Opening Ceremony	10
Closing Plenary Session.....	12
Semi-Plenary Sessions	14
SPS01 - Family Formation and Practices of Life Quality: Inequalities and New Opportunities Europe.....	14
SPS02 - Public Policies and Solidarity in Women's Lives: Differences and Inequalities.	15
SPS03 - New Racisms, Differences and Agency in Europe: Perspectives on Islamophobia.....	17
SPS04 - A Generation Divided? Realities of and Responses to Inequality and Injustices Among Contemporary Young People	18
SPS05 - Sociological Imagination and New Technologies	19
SPS06 - Extending Western Views of the Social World: Eastern Europe, Social Science and Unequal Knowledge Production.....	20
SPS07 - Dark Networks.....	22
SPS08 - The Legacies of Stuart Hall and Richard Hoggart for the Future of Marxist Studies of and Culture	24
SPS09 - Modeling Uncertainties, Producing Differences	25
Mid-day Sessions	27
MD01 - ESA Lecture (1) / ESA CANDIDATES FOR PRESIDENCY PRESENTATION OF THE PROGRAMMES	27
MD02 - Specials & Workshops (1) / THE COSMOPOLITAN IMAGINATION AND SOCIAL JUSTICE	28
MD03 - Specials & Workshops (2) / WHAT DO SOCIOLOGISTS KNOW ABOUT ENERGY? EVERYDAY PRACTICES AND RENEWABLE ENERGY	28
MD04 - Specials & Workshops (3) / THE STRUCTURE OF CIVIL SOCIETY	29
MD05 - Contributes From National Associations (1) / NATIONAL SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATIONS EUROPE: A SURVEY.....	31
MD06 - Specials & Workshops (4) / A VIEW FROM OUTSIDE (EVALUATION).....	32
MD07 - Specials & Workshops (5) / IN MEMORY OF ULRICH BECK.....	32

MD08 - AUTHOR MEETS CRITIQUES I	33
MD09 - ESA Lecture (2)/ THE STATUS OF SOCIOLOGY TODAY	34
MD10 - Specials & Workshops (6) / SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION IN DARK TIMES	35
MD11 - Specials & Workshops (7) / THE REPRODUCTION OF INEQUALITY: NEW WAYS OF EXPLORING THE ROLE OF STRUCTURE AND AGENCY.....	36
MD12 - Specials & Workshops (8) / TRANSNATIONAL BIOGRAPHIES AND TRANSNATIONAL CULTURES	37
MD13 - Specials & Workshops (9) / CULTIVATING DIFFERENCES AND THE SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION.....	38
MD14 - Contributes From National Associations (2) / MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS.....	40
MD15 - Specials & Workshops (10) / A VIEW FROM OUTSIDE (FUNDING)	41
MD16 - AUTHOR MEETS CRITIQUES II	41
MD17 - ESA Lecture (3)/ THE STATUS OF SOCIOLOGY TODAY"	42
MD18 - Specials & Workshops (11) / NEW FEMINIST MOVEMENTS, MAKING THE DIFFERENCE?	43
MD19 - Specials & Workshops (12) / ART AS CULTURE, CULTURE AS ART	44
MD20 - Specials & Workshops (13) / CRITICAL POLITICAL ECONOMY OF COMMUNICATION AND CULTURE IN CAPITALISM TODAY.....	45
MD21 - Specials & Workshops (14) / WORKSHOP: "HOW TO WRITE A JOURNAL ARTICLE".....	46
MD22 - AUTHOR MEETS CRITIQUES III	48
MD23 - Contributes From National Associations (3) / THE MEETING OF CIVILIZATIONS: TOWARDS A EURO-ARAB SOCIOLOGY	48
Research Networks 01-37	50
RN01 - Ageing in Europe.....	50
RN02 - Sociology of the Arts	112
RN03 - Biographical Perspectives on European Societies.....	183
RN04 - Sociology of Children and Childhood.....	203
RN05 - Sociology of Consumption.....	249
RN06 - Critical Political Economy	317
RN07 - Sociology of Culture	337
RN08 - Disaster, Conflict and Social Crisis.....	374
RN09 - Economic Sociology.....	398
RN10 - Sociology of Education.....	440

RN11 - Sociology of Emotions.....	515
RN12 - Environment and Society.....	547
RN13 - Sociology of Families and Intimate Lives.....	623
RN14 - Gender Relations in the Labour Market and the Welfare State.....	706
RN15 - Global, Transnational and Cosmopolitan Sociology.....	739
RN16 - Sociology of Health and Illness.....	769
RN17 - Work, Employment and Industrial Relations.....	849
RN18 - Sociology of Communications and Media Research.....	903
RN19 - Sociology of Professions.....	944
RN20 - Qualitative Methods.....	975
RN21 - Quantitative Methods.....	1013
RN22 - Sociology of Risk and Uncertainty.....	1044
RN23 - Sexuality.....	1069
RN24 - Science and Technology.....	1101
RN25 - Social Movements.....	1137
RN26 - Sociology of Social Policy.....	1171
RN27- Regional Network on Southern European Societies.....	1195
RN28- Society and Sports.....	1201
RN29 - Social Theory.....	1231
RN30 - Youth and Generation.....	1275
RN31 - Ethnic Relations, Racism and Antisemitism.....	1341
RN32 - Political Sociology.....	1376
RN33 - Women's and Gender Studies.....	1419
RN34 - Sociology of Religion.....	1481
RN35 - Sociology of Migration.....	1521
RN36 - Sociology of Transformations: East and West.....	1573
RN37 - Urban Sociology.....	1604
Research Streams 01 - 07.....	1635
RS01 - Arts Management.....	1635
RS02 - Design in Use.....	1644
RS03 - Europeanization from Below?.....	1648
RS04 - Sociology of Celebration.....	1659
RS05 - Sociology of Knowledge.....	1665

RS06 - Sociology of Morality	1680
RS07 - Maritime Sociology	1691
Other Sessions.....	1700

The Theme

A profound challenge that the social sciences, and sociology in particular, are now called upon to confront has to do with the depth and extraordinary acceleration of global processes of social and cultural change ...

... Today's byword 'globalisation' only partially captures the full significance of these processes. Sociological knowledge therefore encounters a limitation: it is easier to see what is disappearing than what is coming into being. Yet this limitation can be overturned and become a resource: a stimulus to intensify our theoretical and empirical exploration of the world around us by relating everyday life to history, connecting individual experiences to major issues of democracy and justice, and viewing the exercise of agency in the light of processes of domination. Sociological imagination is the tool that our discipline has honed over the decades to accomplish this.

But what are the major issues that the global sociological community now has the responsibility to tackle? First and foremost, they arise from the exponential increase in social inequalities, a process that the international economic crisis has exacerbated beyond measure. This situation threatens the very existence of democracy and calls for the construction of forms of social analysis which are strongly connected to the arena of public policy. Concurrently, these forms of analysis must also be capable of offering communities and individuals knowledge and insight that can help to stem the tide of fatalism and apathy.

Yet an analysis of how inequalities are produced and reinforced would be incomplete without reflection on differences. Recognising and acknowledging the multiple expressions of difference – such as gender, social class, age, ethnic background, religion, and sexual orientation... – are vital when it comes to gaining insight into the 'multiple positioning' that characterises contemporary individuals. And this entails rethinking the meaning of integration today.



The President's Welcome

Differences, inequalities and sociological imagination: These three keywords of the ESA conference that is about to open in Prague connect us directly not only to the profound changes distinguishing this phase of history, but also link us with the answers to these processes that the discipline we practice is able to identify. Our era is one of unprecedented private wealth – wealth that has actually doubled in just over a decade – and the concentration thereof into very few hands. Moreover, it is also an era of human migrations of biblical proportions affecting the entire globe, increasingly linked to an intermingling of political instability, violence and material poverty. Together, these dynamics create new inequalities and new differences, which jointly put into doubt the very possibility

of human coexistence on this planet. Of these specific differences, we can detect an increasingly ambivalent potential. They could have extraordinary transformative power, capable of challenging the past. At the same time however, they run the risk of violent implosion. The well-established global presence of terrorism reinforces this awareness.

In this difficult environment, we have an ever-increasing need for sociological knowledge, chiefly as an antidote to violence and the new winds of war that now threaten Europe itself. It should be emphasized that we also need to use this knowledge as a tool to overcome the temptation to reject those who are seeking asylum, the many displaced persons who put their lives at risk in order to survive in the long term. Sociology is capable of producing both the analytical tools that are able to grasp the scope and dynamics of these events, and – thanks to its close link to critical thinking – able to open the route for the construction of alternative scenarios. Our research and our knowledge can therefore help build new possibilities for human co-habitation on our planet, and adapt to the issues facing this century.

The Executive Committee and I, as President, are particularly proud of the contribution that the conference will bequeath through deep reflection on these phenomena, thanks to the employment of our sociological imagination. The conference's rich program, built first of all thanks to the contribution of the Research Networks, is able to respond effectively to the need for analysis and comparison. The Prague conference, the twelfth in ESA's history, promises to be one of the busiest ever organized by our association since its inception, with over three thousand participants expected. These positive results are the outcome of close collaboration between the Local Organizing Committee and its Chair, Tomáš Kostecký, and the Conference Programme Committee and its Chair, Tiziana Nazio, supported by the entire Executive Committee. Warm thanks for this excellent work.

I would like to note one last observation. This conference unites us in a very special city. Not only is Prague one of the most beautiful cities in Europe, with its artful Gothic and Baroque architecture; but it is also the city of the Prague Spring, Jan Palach, Václav Havel and Charter 77. It is a courageous city that has never surrendered to totalitarianism. Prague's message is one of hope, linked hand in glove to the power of ideas. There could be no better location from which to launch our labours.

Carmen Leccardi | *President of the European Sociological Association*

oriented lenders, speculate with their future incomes against expectations for rising property prices. As a result, both mortgage volumes and home prices have risen to unprecedented levels. Economists generally expect the “market” to “fix” any imbalances through so-called “corrections” where “unnatural” housing prices are brought down to reasonable proportions. This may be unproblematic as long as such corrections are done at a point in time when the system is still “sound”. The paper argues that this is no longer the case for Norway as the level of borrowing is too high among substantial proportions of households.

RN09S08a - Markets, Innovation and Technological Change I

Innovation at the information and communication technology sector: identifying firms' profiles under the crisis in Portugal

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Portugal had steady increases of innovation performance and innovation activities in companies up to 2010, the year when the sovereign debt crisis burst in Europe and one year before Portugal's bailout by the Troika. Since then, there is an inversion of this increasing trend that is concomitant to negative economic performance by firms.

Understanding innovation as a future-oriented social change process that, building upon scientific and technological (S&T) knowledge, is framed by organizational, social, economic and political contexts, we questioned how innovation development was dependent on these contexts during the crisis in Portugal. For this purpose, we quantitatively characterized innovation activities and its contexts in 309 firms of the Information and Communication Technologies sector between 2010 and 2012. Following, we performed a cluster analysis and identified two innovation profiles. These present intra- and extra-organizational dimensions with indicators on financial resources and number of clients contributing the most to discriminate firms' profiles and not indicators assessing scientific or technological activities. Additionally, our data shows that in favourable contexts, historically- and contextually-embedded confidence emerges and surpasses future-associated uncertainty, thus enabling innovation development. In more unfavourable scenarios, the absence of confidence inhibits innovation contributing to trap firms in deleterious vicious cycles.

This study shows that the additive impacts of the intra- and extra-organizational contexts have to be jointly tackled to foster innovation development. In addition, perceptions on confidence in the companies' future are dependent on companies' innovation profiles and thus can give us, in a snapshot, an indication of companies' physiognomies.

What explains the differences in the level of financial capability of consumers? Evidence from Russia.

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The main purpose of the study is to assess the level of financial capability of Russians using the methodological approach developed by Russian Financial Literacy and Education Trust Fund. Data - all-Russian survey conducted in September 2014 (N = 1,600 people).