

13th Conference
of the European
Sociological Association

(Un)Making Europe:
Capitalism, Solidarities,
Subjectivities



ABSTRACT BOOK

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European
Sociological
Association



HELLENIC
SOCIOLOGICAL
SOCIETY

Athens | 29 August – 01 September 2017

ESA 13th Conference | (Un)Making Europe: Capitalism, Solidarities, Subjectivities |
<http://esa13thconference.eu/>

Organisers | European Sociological Association | <http://www.europeansociology.org/>
Hellenic Sociological Society | <http://www.hellenicsociology.gr/el/content/1>

Graphic Design | Dimitris Fragoulakis | e-mail: dfragoul@yahoo.gr

ISSN 2522-2562

Abstract book (European Sociological Association)

Publisher | European Sociological Association (ESA), Paris, France

URL: <https://www.europeansociology.org/publications/esa-conference-abstract-books>

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"The Structures of the Life World by Schütz/Luckmann (especially "The Social Arrangement of the Life-World of Everyday-Existence").

Everyday Reality of a Virtual World: Common Sense Knowledge in World of Warcraft

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"Under what circumstances do we think things real?" (James, 1950). Berger and Luckmann's 1966 book 'The Social Construction of Reality' dealt with this question and provided a systematized framework that takes common sense knowledge as the basis of everyday reality. In line with this particular conceptualization, this study aims to capture how everyday reality is constructed by exploring the processes that go into constitution of common sense knowledge in the virtual world of a Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game (MMORPG), the World of Warcraft (WoW) (Blizzard, 2004). WoW players spend on average 20-25 hours per week in the virtual world (Statista, 2013); however, these spaces are rarely taken as objects for analysis in studies of everyday life. This may be due to the common assumption that everyday reality takes place in the 'real' world. This work, by challenging this assumption, argues that everyday realities are produced in virtual worlds as well; and looks at the habits and routines of the participants of the most played MMORPG worldwide (Activision Blizzard, 2016). In order to discern the mechanisms of everyday life, the researcher has conducted participant observation for 13 months in European servers of the game; and collected game-specific information from the official website, wikis and forums. The ethnographic data was then analyzed through three notions that organize the everyday reality (Berger and Luckmann, 1966): 'here and now' zone, intersubjectivity, and taken-for-grantedness. By showing the processes that go into construction of common sense knowledge, it is concluded that virtual worlds produce their own particular notions and experiences of everyday life, and that they make significant objects of analysis for sociological inquiry.

RS12 | Session 04a Key Topics in the Sociology of Knowledge I: Historical Perspectives on Sociology

Ludwik Fleck – European and World Pioneer in the Sociology of Scientific Knowledge

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During my presentation I would like to take the opportunity to present the main ideas associated with the works of Ludwik Fleck thanks to which we can acknowledge him as a European and world pioneer in the Sociology of Knowledge.

Ludwik Fleck (1896-1961) - a physician and

microbiologist; carried out research into venereal diseases. Aside from conducting empirical studies he also gave a lot of meta-theoretical consideration to the development of medical science, as a result of which he inspired an intriguing discussion in the field of science studies and sociology of knowledge in general, and moreover a discussion concerning the conditions of scientific knowledge in particular.

The core of Fleck's deliberations that are connected with the sociology of knowledge concentrate around three guiding themes: diachronic terms of knowledge, synchronous conditions of knowledge and paradigm. Understanding the process requires taking into consideration the historical perspective. It decides about elements such as: a) terminology, b) ideas, c) ways of looking at problems, d) the methods and means of research, e) solutions, explanations, generalisations, classifications, theories, etc.

Synchronous conditions of cognition are contained in the statement that scientific knowledge is not an act of individual consciousness, but the result of social action. Every attempt at intellectually tackling the problem is connected with reaching out to what is social and done in an aura of social tension.

Another crucial feature of Fleck's scientific legacy is the paradigm. It is characterised as a specific thought style that - says the scientist - by means of "harmony of illusions" keeps solid, impenetrable structures.

During this presentation, these three key elements will be discussed in detail.

Sociology of Knowledge in the Lvov-Warsaw School (Szkoła Lwowsko-Warszawska)

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The main aim of this paper is to analyze the findings of Lvov-Warsaw School relevant to the issues of the sociology of knowledge. I will try to show that even though this school is philosophical one, however, many issues are important for the sociology of knowledge. Collective achievement of the Lvov-Warsaw Schools representatives was the conviction metaphysical on how science should be cultivated. Formulated thesis in these investigations not found greater use in twentieth-century sociological research, but they are important from the point of view of contemporary of science and technology studies within the framework of the so-called non-classical sociology of knowledge. However, empirical studies undertaken on the work of the scientific too easily lead to relativism and subjectivism (collectivism). Relativism is associated with a too simplistic understanding of truth and rejection of the classical concept of truth for a pragmatic and deflationary conception of truth. Subjectivism (collectivism) is due to the treatment of products of knowledge and a lack of distinguishing between content of knowledge and object of knowledge, as well as, the lack of distinguishing between unstable mental products and durable psychophysical products. I will try to show the relationships between ways of interpreting these

concepts in the Lvov-Warsaw School, and as a result of these analyzes are presented differences in contemporary sociology of knowledge between constructivism and critical realism.

'Post Marx': the reception of Hannah Arendt in Italy and in Germany after 1989

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Hannah Arendt was a German-born Jewish political theorist, emigrated in the USA in 1940 because of the Jewish persecution in the Nazi Germany. Although in the fifties and sixties some of her works were strongly criticized and despite in the seventies and eighties her notoriety declined as a consequence of the hegemony of marxist theories, after 1989 she became an intellectual icon at international level. However, her consecration process in the transnational public space does not account for how her works and theories have been appropriated within specific national contexts.

The work moves then from the tension between the global circulation of Arendt's ideas and their uses in two countries, Germany and Italy, that shared similar historical experiences, pivotal in Arendt's political and philosophical reflection. Object of the comparison are the genesis and (social and symbolic) structures of the disciplinary fields where Arendt has been received, paying particular attention to their epistemological and institutional boundaries. The conceptual framework of the analysis is the Bourdieu's field theory and his studies on the consecration of (public) intellectuals. The analysis is based on quantitative (works on Arendt and quotations of Arendt in handbooks) and qualitative (semi-structured interviews with Arendt's expert) data, collected for the period from 1945 to 2015. Aim of the paper is to distinguish analytically between the 'public success' Arendt reached in the German and in Italian public spheres and her canonization in some disciplinary fields. I will finally argue that the different reception of Arendt depends chiefly on the prestige of her main mediators and on the different legitimization's criteria of public intellectuals which rule the different German and Italian fields of knowledge.

Is it possible to read history of sociology as history of receptions?

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There has been an increasing interest in new ways of grasping history of sociology since the 1960s, as seen in collections of Tiryakian, Lepenies, Dayé and Moebius. As a result of the general orientation from an abstract, pure scientific, isolating and intellectual approach toward a concrete, institutional, contextual, relational and sociological one, history of sociology seems more like sum of scientific networks rather than an aggregate of abstract theories or a simple "history of thoughts". Even if there are certain continuities in

the historiography of sociology, such as focusing on sociologists/classics, theories/schools of thought, and national traditions, it is obvious that these "old" focuses are no longer handled from old points of view. Parallel to this transition, memories, biographies, book reviews, dairies, memoirs of and correspondence between sociologists become new research objects. This also widens the scope of history of sociology, and new units of analysis come forward such as membership to schools and circles, institutional and generational identities, socio-cultural and political background. The attempt to read history of sociology as a history of receptions (Rezeptionsgeschichte) is a great example for this shift. According to this relational and sociological approach, a generic and universal reading regarding a specific sociologist, school of sociology or national tradition has to be replaced by a multitude of viewpoints stemming from diverse locations in time and space. Instances for this research program would be Max Weber's reception in France, Chicago School's reception in Germany or German sociology's reception in America in certain periods. Moving from previous attempts, this paper aims to question possibility of reading history of sociology based on diverging or converging receptions stemming from various contexts.

RS12 | Session 05a Key Topics in the Sociology of Knowledge II: Power and Discourse

Critical Meta-theory Analysis of Szelényi's Work on the Relationship between Knowledge and Power

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This paper discusses how critical meta-theory analysis relates to sociology of knowledge. Based on critical meta-theory analysis of Ivan Szelényi's work on the relationship between knowledge and power, I hope to provide the metatheoretical context that enables one to understand better his entire reflexive sociology of intellectuals. It will be demonstrated that one can do it systematically if a comprehensive frame of meta-theory analysis is adopted. While the general approach of it builds, among others, on Kuhn, Sorokin, Lakatos as well as Gouldner, it has been brought together by Ritzer (1988 & 1991) in his MU type of metatheorizing. More specifically, it will be shown how vital it is to analyze and understand: (i) the major underlying cognitive paradigms that underlie scholar's scholarship, (ii) key concepts and silent assumptions, (iii) the historical evolution of one's ideas, and (iv) how the sociocultural, political, disciplinary and methodological context influence the development of one's works. By reflecting how this multidimensional frame of metatheorizing was undertaken to study Szelényi's sociology of intellectuals from these four dimensions, methodological similarities and contrast to sociology of knowledge will be discussed.