

# The AGORA

Newsletter of the Decision-Making, Social Networks, and Society Section of the American Sociological Association and the Research Committee 45 on Rational Choice of the International Sociological Association

Winter 2023/Spring 2024

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<https://sites.google.com/view/decisionmakingsocialnetworks/home>



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## From the Chair's Desk (ASA)

Emily Erikson



Dear Colleagues,

2024 should be an exciting year for our section. After a long period of consideration and discussion the membership voted to rename the section from Rationality and Society to Decision-Making, Social Networks, and Society.

While a majority have embraced this change, not everyone has been enthusiastic. Nevertheless, I believe this was an important step for our section. for the following reason. Rational-choice theory was not created with the particular intention of imposing a specific model of individualistic reasoning upon all of sociological inquiry. Instead, the goal was more in line with freeing up social theory from having to construct and employ an overly complex model of the mind – i.e. the disciplinary realm of psychology.

The great benefit of trade-off was the ability to instead focus inquiry on the complex and fascinating patterns that link individual behavior to larger social outcomes. Somewhere along the line, these intentions began to be largely misinterpreted by much of the rest of the field of sociology, and rational choice began to be used a codeword -- by some -- for reductionist approaches to social explanation that insisted on an impoverished model of individuals. I believe that reductionism was far from the intention of the section

and theoretical approach from which it stemmed and that our renaming will help to remedy this misperception problem, build bridges to the rest of sociology, and expand membership.

One may reasonably ask whether we should care so much about expanding section membership that we are willing to change the section name. I have been involved in the leadership of several sections at this point, and I usually do not believe that membership numbers are an important issue. Why should sections engage in a membership arms race with each other over a largely fixed sum of professional sociologists? Usually, the stakes are unremarkable.

In the case of Decision-Making, Social Networks, and Society I think the stakes might be higher than usual. The difficult complexities that link individual action to larger social outcome is arguably at the heart of sociological inquiry, and the discipline needs strong theoretical approaches to make sense of this fuzzy area. How can we keep that theory alive and growing without an infrastructure to keep this area of social theory alive and vibrant. The section provides an infrastructure but needs member to thrive. And our numbers have been dipping low.

And these complexities are at the heart of many, extremely pressing problems. The world is experiencing a large number of social coordination problems, including but not limited to climate change, forced migration, and extremes of political polarization and violence. Many of the solutions previously used to address these problems have proved ineffective or at times harmful. Now more than ever we need a disciplined, theoretically-driven, and empirically grounded approach to improving social coordination so that we might at least begin to resolve the many unintended negative consequences brought about by otherwise well-intentioned policy interventions.

In this respect, my feeling is that the work of our section holds special promise. For this reason, among others, I hope that the theoretical perspective and rigorous research that finds its home in our sessions and papers would reach further than our currently limited size. We have much to offer to current and future generations of sociologists, so let us work together to make the section the vibrant and growing site that it deserves to be.

Sincerely,

Emily Erikson

Joseph C. Fox Academic Director, Fox International Exchange Fellowship

Professor of Sociology and School of Management (by courtesy)

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### Award Announcement from the Decision-Making, Social Networks, and Society Section



#### Decision-Making, Social Networks, and Society Section's James S. Coleman Outstanding **Article** Award

*Deadline for Submission: March 31, 2024*

Nominations, including self-nominations, are encouraged for theoretical, empirical or experimental works on or including work on decision-making, social networks, and those in the tradition of analytical and computational sociology. To be eligible for the award, the article must be published *within the last two years*. Faculty and graduate students are eligible for the award. An article may be submitted to the Outstanding Article Award or the Graduate Student paper award, but not both. Co-authors share the award equally. Nominators should be members in good standing of the American Sociological Association.

Nominations, including a pdf of the article, should be submitted to Minjae Kim at [minjaekim@rice.edu](mailto:minjaekim@rice.edu), Julia Melin at [julia.l.melin@tuck.dartmouth.edu](mailto:julia.l.melin@tuck.dartmouth.edu), and Fedor Dokshin at [fedor.dokshin@utoronto.ca](mailto:fedor.dokshin@utoronto.ca) by **March 31, 2024**.

Committee Chair: Minjae Kim, Members: Julia Melin, Fedor Dokshin

#### Decision-Making, Social Networks, and Society Section's James S. Coleman Outstanding **Book** Award

*Deadline for Submission: March 31, 2024*

Nominations, including self-nominations, are

encouraged for theoretical, empirical or experimental works on or including work on decision-making, social networks, and those in the tradition of analytical and computational sociology. To be eligible for the award, the book must have been published *within the last five years*. Faculty and graduate students are eligible for the award. Co-authors share the award equally. Nominators should be members in good standing of the American Sociological Association.

Nominations and books should be sent to Patrick Bergemann, [pbergema@uci.edu](mailto:pbergema@uci.edu), and Arvind Karunakaran by **March 31, 2024**.

Please send electronic versions to Arvind Karunakaran at [arvindka@stanford.edu](mailto:arvindka@stanford.edu). Please send hard copies to Patrick Bergemann at the following address.

Patrick Bergemann,  
Paul Merage School of Business,  
University of California, Irvine  
4291 Pereira Drive  
SB2 Suite 328  
Irvine, CA 92697

Additional questions about hard or electronic versions may be addressed to the committee.

Committee Chair: Patrick Bergemann, Member: Arvind Karunakaran

**Decision-Making, Social Networks, and Society  
Award for Best Paper by a *Graduate Student***

*Deadline for Submissions: March 31, 2024*

Nominations, including self-nominations, are encouraged for theoretical, empirical, or experimental works on or including work on decision-making, social networks, and those in the tradition of analytical and computational sociology. Eligible authors are students currently enrolled in a graduate program who will not have received their PhD by the time they submit the paper (March 31, 2024). Multi-authored papers are eligible if none of the authors has a PhD. An article may be submitted to the Outstanding Article Award or the Graduate Student paper award, but not both.

Please include (1) a brief statement by the nominator of the reason the article deserves this award that includes

the name of the author, their degree status, and their institutional affiliation; and (2) an electronic copy of the paper or article.

Nominations should be submitted by email to Masayuki Kanai, [mkanai@senshu-u.jp](mailto:mkanai@senshu-u.jp), and Chen-Shuo Hong, [chenshuohong@umass.edu](mailto:chenshuohong@umass.edu), by **March 31, 2024**.

Committee Chair: Masayuki Kanai, Member: Chen-Shuo Hong

The general objective of Research Committee 45 on Rational Choice is to advance the development of Rational Choice Theory. This includes its application to various explanatory problems across social science disciplines, its empirical test, its theoretical development and comparison with alternative approaches. The RC tries to achieve this general objective by promoting the international exchange of scientific information across disciplinary borders.

### From the President's Desk

Gianluca Manzo



Dear colleagues,

First of all, I would like to thank you for electing me as the new president of the ISA research committee on Rational Choice (RC45). I would also like to welcome our new Secretary/Treasurer, Yoshimichi Sato, as well as our new board members, Xiaoguang Fan, Guillermina Jasso, Lucas Sage, Naoki Sudo, Rafael Wittek, and Tobias Wolbring. This is a great team that will help me to navigate what seems to be a challenging transition for our section.

Serving the section as a president actually is at the same time a singular honor and a great responsibility for me.

Our section was established in 1990, and first met at ISA world congress in Madrid (Spain) the same year –with thematic sections on “Institutions and norms” (chair: Michael Hechter), “Social interdependencies” (chair: Werner Raub); “Social networks: Emergence and effects” (chair: Hendrick Flap); “Rational choice in interdisciplinary organization studies” (chair: Siegwart Lindenberg); “Utilization of resources of rational actors”

(chair: Reihhard Wippler); “Political processes” (chair: Karl-Dieter Opp); “Fields of empirical applications of rational choice theory” (chair: Anthony Oberschall); “Potentials and limitations of rational choice theory” (chair: Douglas D. Heckathorn) (see [ISA Bulletin 52, Spring 1990](#), pp. 37-8).

Since then, distinguished scholars from different countries and across different generations generously led the section, as presidents (namely, in a chronological order, Michael Hechter and Karl-Dieter Opp, Thomas Voss, Rafael Wittek, Yoshimichi Sato, Hanno Scholtz, Antonio M. Chiesi, and Jun Kobayashi), as secretaries (among whom, Werner Raub and Siegwart Lindenberg) or still as board members (including, among others, again in a chronological order, Peter Abell, Mary Brinton, Andreas Diekmann, Diane Payne, Elizabeth Roberto, Guillermina Jasso or Rense Corten).

Thus, anyone becoming a president inherits from a long and rich history of events, people, and multiple acts of cooperation; s/he can only feel honored to continue to serve the section in that position. At the same time, contributing to maintain alive the section raises a sizeable challenge to any new president. And here the feeling of responsibility enters the picture.

At its creation in 1990, the section counted 54 members (see Platt, L. [A Brief History of the ISA: 1948-1997](#), p. 62). ISA data do not allow a full reconstruction of the by-year section membership, but it is possible to establish that, over the 33 years of its existence, 94 colleagues (some of whom being part of the initial 54 adherents), unequally distributed over sequences of four-year waves, joined, and then left, the section. The result of these fluctuations is that, at the moment of writing, the count of the number of section members in good standing stops at 38!

The proximate consequence of this membership record was that my presidency started with a nice welcome message received in September from ISA Research Coordinating Committee (RCC) saying: “the RCC pointed out that RC45 is not fulfilling the requirements for the ISA Research Committees. RC45 must maintain the individual memberships to the minimum set forth by the ISA Statutes (*50 members*) to retain the Research Committee status; *otherwise*, it will be demoted to Thematic Group”. Thus, this is a special challenging time to become president of our research committee!

For the upcoming years, our goal is very clear: we have to increase our membership unless we accept to

disappear. After various negotiations with RCC, this is the timeline ISA offered us to deal with the low membership. ISA will review our membership by the end of September 2024; if a change is noted, but the 50 members are still not reached, then the RCC could give us a new opportunity, *before deciding on demotion*, by extending the deadline until the ISA Forum in 2025.

To cope with this state of affairs, this is the plan of actions that I submitted to ISA reviewing committee: 1. first, to stimulate, possibly through the administration of a survey, a reflection on potential explanations for our low membership among RC45's (current and past) members; 2. to launch a large discussion on a possible name change –similarly to what I fostered when acting as a chair of our sister ASA section “Rationality and Society” between 2021 and 2023, which was finally officially renamed “Decision-Making, Social Networks and Society” in August 2023; 3. to try to establish a better connection between our section and various other academic research networks, including the analytical sociology, social simulation, and social network analysis communities, as well as well scientific associations like the European Academy of Sociology (EAS) or the Japanese Association for Mathematical Sociology (JAMS) whose followers and/or members may be interested in joining and/or may help to trigger new subscriptions for our section.

Intuitively, it seems to me that there is room to see our section, and our ASA sister section “Decision-Making, Social Networks, and Society”, as the common home for scholars who see the answer to substantive questions concerning the emergence of macroscopic phenomena as related to the activity of building explanatory multi-leveled theoretical models that can be studied with a variety of data and methods, for some of which (like network-oriented, experimental and computational approaches) there is no dedicated section neither in the ASA nor in the ISA. Our section may also be the place where a reflection on how to reach shared quality standards for the discipline may be developed, another difficult topic that, though urgent given sociology's fragmentation (and lack of credibility in many social circles), does not have a clear home in other ASA or ISA sections. In particular, PhD students and junior colleagues may benefit from having an intellectual space where substantive research questions can be addressed within rigorous but unconventional theoretical and methodological perspectives compared

to common ways of practicing quantitative or qualitative sociology.

I invite any section member that value our section as a collective good to drop me an e-mail sharing views on how the intellectual project of our section may be reframed in order to attract more members, thus countering the threat of disappearing. Please let me emphasize that, if only 1 out of 2 current section members was able to trigger one additional adhesion, members will be back above 50, which would allow us to avoid to be demoted to a thematic group. Please remember that this is the goal that we have collectively to achieve by the next ISA forum of sociology scheduled for July 7-11, 2025, in Rabat (Morocco).

By thanking all of you in advance for your cooperation and help, I wish you the best for the end of 2023 and a great start to a productive and peaceful New Year.

Gianluca MANZO

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### **Engaging our Members – [Member Questionnaire](#) for all current and past RC45 members**

Dear RC45 members,

As noted in the Message from the President, the membership of RC45 has been declining in recent years. Furthermore, only 8% of our members are students. While I was a student representative of our sister section, ASA's “Rationality and Society” section (now “Decision-Making, Social Networks and Society”), for 2022/2023 we encountered a similar challenge. In addition to our section's low membership numbers, we also noted that our section had only 22% of student members, whereas, for instance, “Evolution, Biology, and Society” and “Economic Sociology” had 36% and 49% respectively. This is why we decided to send out a questionnaire to student members in order to learn more about their interests and needs.

Our survey of Student Members of the ASA “Rationality and Society” section (now “Decision-Making, Social Networks and Society”) was filled in by 6 students (31.5% response rate). Though our sample size was small, the results were insightful. Student members mostly joined the section due to their interest in the field (100%) and their willingness to be informed

about recent publications in the field (66.7%). The majority of surveyed student members supported the initiation of a mentorship program (83.3%), organizing a reading group that focuses on new research in the field (66.7%), and establishing a writing group for students (66.7%). There was some interest in instituting a methodology reading group/coding boot camp and a Twitter presence.

These findings helped us understand the expectations that student members have from the section. Inspired by this, in coordination with our new RC45 president, Gianluca Manzo, we intend to conduct a similar questionnaire among *all current and past RC45 members*. This [questionnaire](#) includes a variety of questions. We would like to know why you joined, left or continued participating in RC45, what activities you would like to see in the future, your opinions and proposals regarding a possible committee name change, and your suggestions for increasing membership and engaging with existing members.

We would like to kindly ask you to complete a short questionnaire, available via the [following link](#). The questionnaire is brief and should take no more than 5-7 minutes of your time. Your participation will help us nurture our research interests within RC45 for the years ahead.

Ana Macanovic

In case of any questions, please feel free to contact me ([ana.macanovic@ru.nl](mailto:ana.macanovic@ru.nl)).

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## Expand Your Academic Network with ISA RC45

Joining the ISA RC45 community has numerous benefits, including access to journals and publications. What's more, with ISA membership, you won't have to worry about renewing your membership every year as it covers four calendar years. If you are a part of the ASA section on Decision-Making, Social Networks, and Society, we encourage you to join ISA RC45, our sister community.

### [Membership fees](#)

**Regular Member:** \$309 for 4 years (just **\$77/year**)

**Student:** \$149 for 4 years (only **\$37/year**)

**Life Member (70+): One-time fee of \$345** for lifetime access

### [Member benefits](#)

Online access to:

[SAGE Sociology Collection](#) (83 journals)

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**[Join](#) or [renew](#) your membership today!**

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## Call for Papers:

### Social Norms

### Emergence, Stability, Social Change

Conference at Centro Stefano Franscini, Monte Verita,  
Ascona, Switzerland, July 7 to 10, 2024 on

#### Social Norms

Emergence, Stability, Social Change

Organized by Andreas Diekmann, Univ. of Leipzig &  
ETH Zurich and Jörg Rössel, Univ. of Zurich

#### Call for Papers

Social norms are fundamental for the social cohesion of societies. They constrain human actions, but they are also of essential importance in enabling us to act at all, coordinate actions and solve cooperation problems. Theoretical and empirical studies of social norms are conducted across disciplines in sociology, psychology, behavioral economics, political science, philosophy, and other social and human sciences. While much of existing research is concerned with compliance with social norms, in the planned conference we will also focus particular attention on analyses of the emergence and change of social norms. While the main thrust of the conference is on the explanation of norm emergence and norm change, systematic studies of international/cultural differences in norms or historical change of norms are also welcome. In addition, we will focus on applications of the findings from research on how social norms change and operate. Today, there are numerous new findings in this field, which are particularly relevant in the context of the climate problem and energy transition but also for other currently debated issues like changing gender norms and the use of artificial intelligence, to name just a few. Since norms also constrain human action, they might be perceived as harmful by those who are subject to the

norms or by external observers. One example is the practice of "female genital mutilation" (FGM). The conference will bring together early career and senior researchers from various countries and disciplines to share new research findings. Presentations may focus on both basic research, such as the development of new theoretical perspectives and the testing of theories, and policy-relevant applications of norms research. Key topics are:

- (1) New perspectives, hypotheses, and empirical findings concerning the emergence of social norms.
- (2) Addressing the question on how to measure social norms. Contributions from different methodological perspectives are welcome.
- (3) Studies on international/cultural differences in norms of historical change of social norms.
- (4) The state of knowledge on conditions that contribute to the change of social norms or to cultural differences in social norms.
- (5) The contribution of social norms to ensure social cooperation.
- (6) Stability of social norms. The role of rewards and sanctions.
- (7) The emergence, change, and decay of signaling norms.
- (8) Inducing change when norms are "sticky" and detrimental.
- (9) Applications of norm research in the area of e.g. energy transition, development policies, health behavior, law making, gender relations, artificial intelligence and other fields.
- (10) Other norm-related topics.

Keynote lectures by:

Cristina Bicchieri, Philosophy, University of Pennsylvania, USA;  
Karl-Dieter Opp, Sociology, University of Leipzig, Germany;  
Linda Steg, Psychology, University of Groningen, NL;  
Sonja Vogt, Economics, University of Lausanne, Switzerland

Registration fee (including excursion to Isola Bella)  
150 CHF

Board and lodging (3 nights Monte Verita,  
breakfast/lunch/dinner) 645 CHF

Conference website: [https://www.sozphil.uni-leipzig.de/institut-fuer-soziologie/social-norms-](https://www.sozphil.uni-leipzig.de/institut-fuer-soziologie/social-norms-workshop)

[workshop](#)

**Submission of abstracts until February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024 to:**  
[social.norms@uni-leipzig.de](mailto:social.norms@uni-leipzig.de)

Supported by CSF, DFG grant to AD, Universities of Leipzig and Zurich, Academy of Sociology

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## Recent Publications of Interest

### Articles:

Jasso, Guillermina. 2023. "Fifty Years of Justice Research: Seven Signposts Past and Future." *Social Justice Research* 36(3):305-324.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11211-023-00419-5>. View-only sharelink <https://rdu.be/djH1E>

Kley, Stefanie, and Thordis Reimer. 2023. "Exploring the Gender Gap in Teleworking from Home: The Roles of Worker's Characteristics, Occupational Positions and Gender Equality in Europe." *Social Indicators Research* 168:185-206.

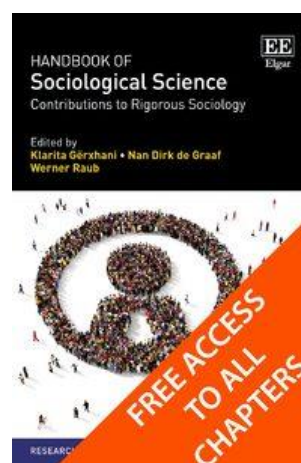
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-023-03133-6>

Otte, Gunnar, Tim Sawert, Josef Brüderl, Stefanie Kley, Clemens Kroneberg, and Ingo Rohlfing. 2023. "Gütekriterien in der Soziologie: Eine analytisch-empirische Perspektive." *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 52(1):26-49.

<https://doi.org/10.1515/zfsoz-2023-2006>;

in English: <https://osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/69wrq/>

### Books:



Gërzhani, Klarita, Nan Dirk de Graaf, and Werner Raub, eds. 2022. [\*Handbook of Sociological Science: Contributions to Rigorous Sociology\*](#). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

The 'Handbook of Sociological Science' offers a refreshing, integrated perspective on research programs and ongoing developments in sociological science. It highlights key shared theoretical and methodological features, thereby contributing to progress and cumulative growth of sociological knowledge.

The positive and friendly reception of the 2022 hardcover edition has induced preparing a new 2023 paperback edition. Also, the complete Handbook is now Open Access available, with an Open Access file comprising the Handbook in its entirety as well as separate Open Access files for each individual chapter. Further information and the Open Access files are available at the Edward Elgar webpages:

<https://www.elgaronline.com/edcollbook/book/9781789909432/9781789909432.xml>

and

<https://www.e-elgar.com/shop/gbp/handbook-of-sociological-science-9781035323814.html>

The affordably priced paperback edition and the Open Access facilities will further enhance visibility of the Handbook, including suitability for teaching and graduate training purposes.

Praise for the Handbook: “This is an ambitious, comprehensive, and much-needed Handbook that aims to bring back rigor to the current practice of sociology. The emphasis is on rigor, not old battles of theory versus empiricism or quantitative versus qualitative research. I recommend it to anyone who wishes to conduct or understand sociological research.” (Yu Xie, Princeton University)

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## Editors' note

As we reflect on 2023, it is clear that it was a significant year for our field. Notably, the ASA section has been renamed to “Decision-Making, Social Networks, and Society,” and the ISA RC45 on Rational Choice welcomed new leadership.

Our collective intellectual endeavor remains focused on dissecting social phenomena through detailed micro-level processes, utilizing theory-driven and empirical methodologies. However, it is important to acknowledge that the membership counts in RC45 are at a crucial juncture.

In light of this, Gianluca is extending an invitation to both current and former members. He encourages participation in a [membership questionnaire](#), aimed at gathering insights to guide the future directions of RC45 under the new leadership. Your input is valuable in this collective effort to enhance our impact in the field of sociology. (Masa & Lucas)



Lucas Sage  
lucas.sage2@gmail.com



Masayuki Kanai  
mkanai@senshu-u.jp