



**Historical
Sociology**

NEWSLETTER

April 2025

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I **ISA Forum 2025**

Preparations for the 5th ISA Forum of Sociology in Rabat, Morocco (July 6-11, 2025) are progressing well. The Forum's theme, "Knowing Justice in the Anthropocene," offers a significant opportunity for scholars to engage in critical discussions on justice in our contemporary era, yet also from historical sociological perspectives.

The Research Committee on Historical Sociology (RC56) has organized 21 sessions. These sessions will be published once the all session organizers and we as program coordinators have made some minor final changes due to dropouts.

In due time, we will inform you about a planned RC56 Business meeting as well as some social/culinary activity.

We look forward to seeing you in Rabat.

Paddy & Fabio

II Awards and Achievements

Congratulations! **Giovanni Zampieri** was awarded the **BJS Early Career Prize** for his article “Saving One’s Face While Saving One’s Soul? The Refraction of Tactical Approaches to Penance as a Disciplinary Device in Counter-Reformation Italy,” *The British Journal of Sociology*, 75(5): 700–714.

Simon Susen delivered the opening keynote lecture – entitled ‘Remarks on the Ontology of Time: From the Future to the Past (and Back Again)’ – at the workshop ‘Espacio, Tiempo, Propiedad’, Instituto de Sociología, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Santiago, Chile (27th November 2024). In this lecture, Prof. Susen presented an outline of a critical theory of time.

With the new year, **Fabio Santos** took up his new position as Tenure-Track Assistant Professor in “Histories of Migration” at the Centre for Advanced Migration Studies (AMIS), SAXO Institute, University of Copenhagen. [Read an interview](#) about his academic trajectory, research plans, and teaching philosophy on the AMIS website.

III Figurational Early Career Research Network

By Lucy Císař Brown and Mariana Montagnini

We are delighted to announce the start of a new early career research network with a focus on figurational and historical sociology. The overarching aims of this network are to build links between early career researchers, share opportunities in our field, present research to our peers and discuss ideas related to figurational sociology. It is our hope that the next generation of figurations scholars can be better connected and have more opportunities to collaborate with our international colleagues.

Early career researcher is a self-identifying title and therefore we welcome anyone who feels they could benefit from involvement.

The current proposal is a series of monthly online meetings with rotating themes related to both the theoretical and practical issues of studying historical sociology. The meetings are intended to be an informal discussion space where we may present our research or discuss the work of others. The themes of particular months can be suggested by members and the chairing of meetings can rotate depending on interest. We will also produce a quarterly newsletter which will include our activities and any research outputs we would like to share with a wider audience.

Although the meetings are initially to be conducted in English we are keen to acknowledge the significant presence of figurational scholars in Central and South America and are therefore looking at ways to facilitate bilingual involvement (ideas are welcome!).

If you are interested in joining the research group please send an email with your name, affiliation (if any) and research interests to figurationsecrn@gmail.com.

IV Recent publications

Please have a look at the YouTube playlist of the recordings of the **Centre of Figurational Research** at the University of Warsaw's seminars:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLglrupTjJNFJukaO_xIWuSVjTGKY-7VXz

- **Al-Hardan, Anaheed & Go, Julian** (Eds.) (2025 forthcoming). [Anticolonialism and Social Thought](#). Cambridge University Press.
- **Boatcă, Manuela** (2025). [Die koloniale Institution der Staatsbürgerschaft und globale kapitalistische Dynamiken](#). In: Kenner, Steve et al. (eds.), Inclusive Citizenship. Interdisziplinäre Perspektiven auf Bürgerschaft und politische Bildung, Wiesbaden: VS Verlag, 17–43.
- **Boatcă, Manuela & Meghji, Ali** (2024). [A discussion on coloniality and global social theory](#). Sociology Compass, e13250.
- **Boatcă, Manuela, Go, Julian & Werron, Tobias** (Eds.) (2025). [Nach den Imperien? Soziologie und Postkolonialität](#). Mittelweg 36, 1/2025.
- **Brown, Císař, Lucy** (2024). [‘Detestable Slaves of the Devil’: Religion as the ‘third pillar’ of the Civilizing Process](#). Historical Sociology, 2, 11–27.
- **Castro, Esteban** (2024). [Democracy and Global Water Politics in Historical Perspective](#).
- **Gomes, Pedro David** (2024). [Tradition and Modernity in the History of Pop-Rock and Semba: Unravelling Urban Life and Cultural Boundaries in Colonial Luanda’s Music Scene](#). e-Journal of Portuguese History, 22(2), 206–233.
- **Isaac, Larry & Rose, Brittney** (2024). [Movement for Black Lives at Work? Racial Justice Spillover, Labor Organization, and New Labor Militancy](#). The Sociological Quarterly, 65(4), 558–583.
- **Isaac, Larry, Cornfield, Daniel & Dickerson, Dennis** (2024). [How Movements \(Sometimes\) Move: Base-Mission, Traveling Cadre, and Spatial Extension of the Nashville Civil Rights Movement](#). Research in Social Movements, Conflicts & Change, 48, 11–38.

- **Isaac, Larry, Lipold, Paul & Rose, Brittney** (2024). [Private Strike, Public Sphere: Changing Private/Public Relations in U.S. Labor History](#). *Socialism & Democracy*, 36(1–2), 90–115.
- **Kato, Masatoshi** (2024). [The theoretical importance of exceptional cases: social protection and its transformations in Japan and Australia in comparative welfare state research](#). *Social Policy Review*, 36, 149–171.
- **Korhonen, Juho** (2025). [Why Historical Research Frameworks Matter for Sociological Methods and Decolonial Approaches? Empire and Nation Compared with Intra- and Inter-Imperiality](#). *Sociologia*, 62(1). (Open access from July)
- **Santos, Fabio** (2025). [The Necropolitics of Statelessness: Coloniality, Citizenship, and Disposable Lives](#). *Citizenship Studies* (March), 1–24.
- **Susen, Simon** (2024). [Humanity and Uncontrollability: Reflections on Hartmut Rosa's Critical Theory](#). Palgrave Macmillan, 324 pp.
 - Focusing on the work of Hartmut Rosa, this book provides an in-depth account of the extent to which we, as humans, are obliged to face up to the uncontrollability [Unverfügbarkeit] of the world.
- **Susen, Simon** (2024). ['Twenty-Five Theses on the Task of the Translator: With, against, and beyond Walter Benjamin'](#). *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia*, 80(1–2), 197–270.
 - This paper argues that the critical engagement with the task of the translator illustrates that 'trans-ineffability' (that is, the fact that not everything can be expressed 'in' language just as not everything can be rendered intelligible 'across' languages) is a challenging, but ultimately enriching and empowering, part of the human condition.
- **Susen, Simon** (2024). [The Interpretation of Cultures: Geertz Is Still in Town](#). *Sociologica – International Journal for Sociological Debate*, 18(1), 25–63.
 - Clifford Geertz's *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973) is widely regarded as one of the most important contributions to the humanities and social sciences in general and anthropology in particular. This paper aims to demonstrate that the key conceptual components of Geertz's enterprise can be located in his case for an interpretive theory of culture, epitomized in the methodological commitment to providing a 'thick description'.

• **Susen, Simon & Ortmann, Marc** (2024). [Das Ende der großen Theorien: Simon Susen im Gespräch mit Marc Ortmann](#). Soziopolis: Gesellschaft beobachten.

- In this conversation, Simon Susen and Marc Ortmann discuss key challenges arising from 'thinking and writing sociologically', especially in a context in which 'big theory' appears to be on its way out.

• **van Krieken, Robert** (2024). [The Age of Anger and Social Media: Elias, Technology, Civilizing/Decivilizing Processes and Ressentiment](#). Theory, Culture & Society, 41(7–8), 19–39.

V Conference Report

Connecting Past and Present: Insights from the Social Figurations Conference

Reflections on "Social Figurations: Long-term Processes, Present Concerns, and Future Directions," Prague, 4–7 December 2024

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Keywords: Historical Sociology, Figural Sociology, Long-term Processes, Norbert Elias, International Conference

The *Social Figurations: Long-term Processes, Present Concerns, and Future Directions* conference, held in Prague from 4–7 December 2024, marked a vibrant gathering of historical sociologists and scholars from diverse fields. This event, a collaborative effort by the Norbert Elias Foundation, Charles University's Faculty of Humanities, the University of York, the International Sociological Association's RC56, and the University of Warsaw's Centre of Figural Research, addressed a pressing question in today's sociological landscape: how can historical sociology shed light on and respond to social challenges across time?

This gathering built on a recent history of cooperation between Charles University's historical sociologists and the Norbert Elias Foundation. Previous involvement included a 2022 Amsterdam conference honouring Johan Goudsblom's work on long-term processes and the Warsaw event that same year, *The Fantasy-Reality Continuum: Science, Religion, Politics and Culture*. The Prague conference also extended a partnership with the University of York's Sociology Department, launched with the 2023 *Perspectives in Historical Sociology* symposium. With historical sociology research becoming increasingly a solitary pursuit, these events aimed to foster a global network of scholars engaged with processual and figural approaches.

Historical sociology stands out for its ability to weave together individual actions and societal structures through a long-term perspective. Unlike much of today's social analysis, which often zeroes in on the present without historical context, this approach

offers a broader and often deeper view of societies. In her keynote, Marta Bucholc underscored how figurational sociology provides a fluid, interconnected method to uncover patterns and shifts across eras and cultures. By framing current issues within expansive temporal and spatial networks, the conference affirmed historical sociology's vital role in decoding modern crises and proposing solutions.

Spanning four days across multiple Prague venues, *Social Figurations* captured the depth and variety of contemporary historical-sociological research. Beyond showcasing innovative studies, it sought to breathe new life into the field as a collaborative, interdisciplinary pursuit. Its broad themes and varied methods gave attendees a platform to tackle a core question: How can historical perspectives clarify and confront today's urgent problems? Through lively theoretical debates and rich empirical insights, the event advanced the discipline while mapping its future.

Opening Keynote and Key Themes

Helmut Kuzmics opened the conference with a compelling keynote, weaving together emotions, state formation, and habitus across history. Leveraging his expertise in historical sociology, civilisation theory, and emotional studies, he demonstrated how emotional development and state-building shape modern society. His exploration of emotional habitus and its ties to governance offered a fresh lens for understanding today's political shifts, rooting the conference in broader debates about historical sociology's relevance.

Over the next three days, sessions spanned topics from colonial legacies to mental health, all anchored in a dedication to long-term perspectives, reflecting the processual approach's wide reach.

Gender, Power, and Transformation

Gender emerged as a central thread, with discussions tracing its historical evolution and ongoing impact. Highlights included Dominique Memmi's study of individuation and dominance, Lucy Císař Brown's reframing of the civilising process through church, witchcraft, and gender, and Miklós Hadas's global analysis of shifting gender norms. Emilia Siczka's innovative look at legal responses to sexual violence showed how

history can inform policy today, while Mariana Montagnini's work on teacher training norms and Tatiana Savoia Landini's research on child exploitation laws reinforced historical analysis's role in addressing gender violence and child protection.

Global Dynamics and Colonial Legacies

Sessions on global and colonial processes showcased historical sociology's power to challenge Eurocentric views. André Saramago pushed for broader narratives, and Gordon Hughes examined colonialism within the Western civilising framework, both unravelling lingering colonial effects. Christian Ramirez's case study of Afro-Indigenous ties in colonial Veracruz added empirical depth, illuminating racial and ethnic dynamics in the Americas. John Hobson's keynote, chaired by Stephen Menell, critiqued Eurocentrism, highlighted inter-civilisational ties and probed the historical forces still shaping global power.

Nationalism and Authoritarianism

The long arc of nationalism and authoritarianism featured prominently, offering frameworks to dissect these trends. Simina Dragoş framed nationalism as a lasting process, while Borys Cymbrowski applied Elias's lens to dictatorships. Waldemar Rapior and Tomasz Detlaf's timely study of Polish-Ukrainian ties during the Russo-Ukrainian War showed how historical sociology clarifies geopolitical tensions. Dane Erlo Matorres's analysis of intellectuals under the Marcos regime highlighted their role in legitimising power, and Marta Bucholc's keynote linked gender, illiberal constitutionalism, and threats to democracy in Eastern Europe, proving figurational sociology's real-world relevance.

Mental Health and Emotional Histories

Mental health took on new dimensions through processual lenses. Baptiste Brossard's historical take on war trauma and Eva-Maria Griesbacher's "neurofigurations" concept reimaged mental health as tied to shifting social ties. Keith Goldstein's dual focus on Holocaust and Nakba trauma, paired with Eva Kalousová's generational study, revealed how past wounds echo into the present.

Environment and Sustainability

Figurational sociology also tackled environmental crises. Gilles Verpraet linked social history to ecological challenges, and Carsten Kaven explored survival amid ecological strain, both emphasising long-term ties. John Lever's practical insights into sustainable food system barriers showed how historical sociology can shape sustainability debates.

Methods and New Horizons

The conference underscored historical sociology's methodological dynamism. Benjamin Etzold and Katja Mielke's refugee displacement study and Robert Van Krieken's work on digital technologies illustrated the field's adaptability. Jiří Šubrt's reflections on the meaning of "figurations" and its evolving usage also underscored the need for further theoretical interrogation of the fundamentals of process sociology.

The final day ventured into fresh terrain, with Hannah Farrimond and Mike Michael rethinking stigma, and Michael Dunning and Jason Hughes exploring psychedelic microdosing. Gerda Reith's closing keynote on addictive consumption tied together capitalism, modernity, and excess, encapsulating the conference's breadth through Eliasian insights.

Final Thoughts

The *Social Figurations* conference spotlighted historical sociology's essential role in unravelling today's social complexities. By rooting current challenges in long-term processes, it offered a bold alternative to the narrow, fragmented approaches often seen in social science. It reaffirmed Norbert Elias's relational, process-driven vision, with contributions tackling authoritarianism's roots, gender inequities, and colonial power structures.

The event also proved the field's practical value. Closing discussions urged the those in the field to avoid isolation, embracing its potential to link research, theory, and action. Through interdisciplinary ties and a historical lens on pressing concerns, it can illuminate society's intricate webs across time and space. *Social Figurations* celebrated the field's achievements while charting its course as a vital scholarly and practical pursuit.

VI Call for Papers

“War and Worker Power in the Twenty-First Century”

Special Issue of *Global Labour Journal*

Co-Editors: Zep Kalb (Princeton University) and Corey R. Payne (University of Richmond)

Key Dates:

- May 2, 2025 – Abstract submission deadline
- June 1, 2025 – Notification of intention to include paper in special issue
- December 1, 2025 – Initial submission of paper – begin peer review process

Background:

An enduring argument in the historical social sciences has been that, at least in the West, war and war-making contributed to the growth of state capacity, the advancement of democracy, and the establishment of the welfare state, as working people bargained with their states over the conditions under which they would become critical cogs in ever-expanding war efforts.

In recent years, attention has turned to how war’s silver linings for working people may no longer hold, as an era of neoliberal globalization marked significant transformations in the organization of global capitalism and of warfare itself. Political economic transformations restructured everyday life for workers around the world, as globalization, neoliberalism, and financialization wreaked havoc on communities North and South. What’s more, war itself seemingly transformed, becoming less often fought directly between belligerent states (occurring more often in the forms of civil wars and proxy conflicts), involving fewer workers and citizens (while being significantly more capital-intensive), and “hybridizing” through the expansion of sanctions and economic warfare.

Yet, now, debates rage over whether neoliberal globalization (at least, as we know it) is exhausting itself. For example, intensifying great power rivalry—especially between the US and China—has led to industrial policy and tariffs that may mark a shift away from liberal notions of free trade and comparative advantage toward growing state interventionism and protectionism. There is evidence to suggest that such shifts in the

global political economy have been accompanied by changes in warfare, such as a resurgence of conventional mass mobilization warfare (in Russia-Ukraine) and the expansion of comprehensive embargos and blockades by the US and its allies (e.g., against Iran, Syria, Venezuela, and Lebanon).

This special issue seeks papers exploring how these broad transformations in the political economy of geopolitical conflict have interacted with labor movements, union organizing, and worker power. Topics may include (but are not limited to):

- How these transformations have shaped workers' movements
- How workers and their movements shaped these transformations
- Wartime labor regulation and repression
- How sanctions, embargos, and blockades affect national economies and local workforces
- The labor impacts of conscription and mobilization for war
- The effect of military demand on workers and their organizations
- Union organizing in military-industrial sectors
- Labor in global weapons commodity chains, including in emerging sites of expanded military production
- Labor and great power rivalry (e.g., the role of industrial policy, trade wars, etc.)
- Labor (especially, workers involved in war efforts) and anti-war movements

We are interested in both comparative papers and single case studies. Papers from all methodological approaches are welcome. Papers that grapple with twenty-first century dynamics (either on their own or through historical comparison) are especially encouraged.

Please send a paper proposal of no more than 500 words to corey.payne@richmond.edu and zepkalb@princeton.edu by **May 2nd, 2025**.

Submissions should follow the *Global Labour Journal* [Author Guidelines](#). Papers should generally be no more than 8,000 words.

After abstracts are accepted, the editors will coordinate a series of exchanges among the authors, including through online workshops and at a gathering at the 7th conference of the International Association of Strikes and Social Conflicts (September 5th-6th in Washington, DC).

VII RC56 Board 2023-2027

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