



3rd ISA Forum of Sociology
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ISA-RC 47 "Social classes and social movements"

Abstract proposals should be sent to the panel coordinators and submitted before September 30th 2015 **on the ISA Forum website** (<http://www.isa-sociology.org/forum-2016>)

Joint Sessions

Opening session of RC 47 & RC 48: Contemporary Social Movements

Session Organizer(s):

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We live in a time of deep reconfigurations of democracy, social movements and activism. Five years after the start of a major global movements' wave in 2011, the panorama for social movements and democracy in the 2010s is a contrasting one. How do new trends in social movements study help us to grasp this fast evolving situation and the changing forms and meanings of both social movements and democracy?

The decade started with a spread of emancipatory movements and democratic openings. After a phase of intense mobilizations, some of these activists have developed democratic and emancipatory practices in their daily life, while others experiment a partial shift to the institutional politics arena. By the mid-2010s, the panorama for social movements and democracy looks however far more contrasting. The democratic project has however come under serious threat. Social movements are repressed, journalists are killed, and citizens are spied by their states. Even in democratic regions, citizens seem to have little impact on major economic and political decisions. At the same time, conservative, racist and far-right movements are gaining impetus in the West and in the East, jihadism attracts thousands of young people from different regions of the world.

What have been the impacts, the challenges and the limits of emancipatory and conservative movements in the 2010s? How do the new trends in social movement studies help us to grasp these transformations and the challenges faced by social movements and democracy?

Democracy in the Squares: Global Resistance Movements and Women

Joint session RC47 / RC48 [host committee]

Session Organizer(s)

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A new wave of protest movements has emerged everywhere in the world, ranging from the Middle East, to the European cities, as well as Brazil and Ukraine. These movements follow transnational dynamics, while the domain of politics remain at the national scale. Citizens of the world elaborate new democratic imaginaries. A new public culture of contestation appears with art becoming its intrinsic dimension. These movements that we want to examine contribute to the enactment of forms of citizenship in the public square redefining the political subject. Especially female activists' struggles in the global resistance movements reveal the emergence of new subjectivities through the act of resistance.

While sociologists believe in the existence of a rupture between these newly emerging struggles and the heritage of the past social struggles, there are also remarkable continuities. The rupture women activists in the Tahrir Square created with patriarchy can only be understood with reference to Egyptian feminism. While Kurdish, Turkish, nationalist, leftist and Islamist female activists developed a sense of sisterhood during the Gezi movement in Istanbul, this sisterhood has been developing since the 1990s, along with the evolution of Turkey's feminisms. Women in resistance movements experience a dual suffering and have to challenge both the authoritarian/neoliberal regimes and the patriarchy that pervaded the movement along with the society. We will try to understand the new subjectivities constructed by female activists of these global resistance movements as a mixed consequence of the experience of resistance and the feminist heritage.

Silos or Synergies? Can Labor Build Effective Alliances with Other Global Social Movements?

Joint session RC47 & RC44 Labor Movements [host committee]

Session Organizer(s)

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On the defensive in the face of an increasingly aggressive global capital, labor needs allies. Operating in a "silo" – that is within carefully defined organizational and strategic boundaries that insulate worker organizations from other sorts of mobilization – is a formula for defeat. Alliances with communities and movements for democracy have always been crucial to labor's success at the local and national levels. Alliances with other transnational social movements at the global have been more sporadic, usually limited to specific campaigns.

Where are the most promising opportunities for building cross-issue synergies that enhance labor's political clout along with that of other social movements? What are the obstacles to building synergistic relationships? Few would question the contributions of movements for human rights to the quest for expanding workers rights. There is already a rich literature looking at labor's relationships with movements prioritizing gender issues and with environmental movements. But much work needs to be done before we understand why sometimes silo approaches prevail and what conditions create possibilities for synergies. What are the complementarities between labors' organizational and ideological strengths and those of other movements? What are the strategic contradictions that make synergies elusive?

This session seeks to bring together both work based on the analysis of specific successes and failures at building cross-movement alliances and work that seeks to offer a general analytical understanding of the foundations of synergies and silos.

The Sociology of Social Movements as a General Sociology. Around Alain Touraine

Joint session RC47 & RC48 [host committee]

Session Organizer(s)

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Alain Touraine has underlined the importance of considering the sociology of social movements not as a specialized subfield but as an essential part of general sociology. This session will gather contributions that have developed this perspective in different ways and studying a range of social movements on different continents.

Social Movements and the Future They Want

Joint session of RC07 Futures Research [host committee] and RC47 Social Classes and Social Movements

Session Organizer(s)

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Social movement scholars can make a significant contribution to the third Forum of the ISA entitled “The Futures we Want: Global Sociology and the Struggles for a Better World”. Social movements are major actors of our societies and contribute to shaping possible futures.

This session welcomes both concrete analysis and theoretical contributions on how progressive or conservative social movements imagine, shape and implement alternative futures. We notably welcome contributions on how social actors and social movements imagine and contribute to shape alternative lifestyles, policies and sociability in the global age, increasingly shaped by both global interdependency and the finitude of the planet.

Young Activists, Subjectivity and “the Future They Want”

Joint session RC34 Sociology of Youth and RC47 [host committee]

Session Organizer

Carmen LECCARDI, University of Milano-Bicocca, Italy, carmen.leccardi@unimib.it

This session welcomes contributions on how young activists imagine, shape and implement alternative futures. As framed in the third ISA Forum presentation, “Tomorrow no longer appears as pre-determined by inevitable trends but as a rather contingent outcome of complex, typically multi-scalar dynamics that vary in their intensity of contentiousness.” Young people aspire, desire, envision, expect, fear, imagine, plan, project, reject, sustain, and wage war over futures. Young activists are major actors of our societies in shaping our possible futures.

We notably welcome contributions on young activists’ perspectives on the future and how these perspectives shape their subjectivity and their personality. Young green activists and their visions of a future on a limited planet prove particularly insightful in that perspective.

However, to understand the specific potential of their vision – at the centre of which stand autonomy, self-determination, experimentation and creativity together with a high level of personal responsibility – the widespread representation of the future expressed by contemporary young people has to be considered. For the majority of them, the future is related above all with indeterminateness and uncertainty. Moreover, the imperative of choice is not flanked by their conviction that personal decisions will be effectively able to condition future biographical outcomes as well as collective environment.

ISA47 Sessions in alphabetical order

Cultural Signification: Making Sense of Action in Social Movements

Session Organizers:

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For many years, researchers have found that social movements contain cultural and psychological elements that guide actions in one way or another, leading eventually to movement mobilization. Cultural attributes, such as interpretation, emotion, collective identity, and frame, as they give meanings and signification to the action, work in participants’ engagement in the action.

While long recognized as indispensable for mobilization, these cultural components have also been regarded as the elements difficult to grasp; they are difficult to detect, observe, conceptualize, and generalize. We have come a long way to find frame and collective identity to work in a concrete movement setting. But we have to stop and think what else we have acquired as our common cultural languages. We know that emotions are important. But we are not sure if we have developed and conceptualized enough to bring emotion in our thought frame as a sound analytical concept. We are not sure further if these cultural languages can easily travel across researchers residing different continents, East and West and North and South. We may also have different methods and

methodologies to detect and observe cultural components of action.

This proposed session aims at bringing together our cultural findings in social movement research. Proposing a new concept, new ways of doing research aiming at digging out cultural materials, rearranging current conceptualization, displaying a region/location-specific research method, etc, should help understand where we are, and which direction(s) we should move on from here.

Environmental Movements in the Age of Climate Change

Session Organizer(s)

Christopher ROOTES, University of Kent, United Kingdom, c.a.rootes@kent.ac.uk

Environmental movements and protest appeared to be natural bed-fellows as activists struggled to mobilise an environmentally uneducated populace and to challenge the priorities of governments and parties more concerned about economic development than environmental protection. That changed as governments began to acknowledge environmental problems and, recognising the expertise of environmental NGOs, began to see NGOs as partners rather than adversaries. That relationship was consolidated as climate change rose on political agendas, as governments saw NGOs as potential mobilisers of citizens toward sustainable alternatives to the carbon-intensive economy. This created opportunities for NGOs, but, demanding more of them than they can deliver, it has created dilemmas about their identity and future action. Their dilemmas differ according to the dispositions of governments, from the EU, where governments have mostly accepted the need for action on climate change, to countries where governments have resisted action (e.g. Australia, USA, Canada). This panel will compare experiences at local, regional, national and transnational levels, to illuminate the variety of scenarios and responses of environmental movements and NGOs, and to consider the future of environmentalism in light of these developments. We shall be particularly interested in the development of new forms of environmental activism at local as well as international levels, and the emergence of activism on climate justice, including networks of NGOs, activists and experts in and around climate summits. Papers on transnational movements or multi-sited research in an international/global perspective will be especially welcome.

Far Right Movements and Social Research

Session Organizer(s)

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The rise and spread of far right, populist and nationalist movements in Europe and elsewhere in the world opened a new framework of interest for social movement studies. The study of far right is mainly addressed by political science, focusing on parties and electoral trends. Very few researches are instead leaded from the point of view of social movement studies. One explanation can be linked with the methodological issues: social movements researchers usually use qualitative techniques, such as participant observation, in-depth interviews and sociological interventions to study social movements, often creating a relation with activists based on mutual respect and common perspectives. But how can this possible with activists whose discourses are often racist oriented, or whose initiatives are violent and disrespectful?

Which methodological obstacles arise for research oriented towards analysing protest participation in far right movements? And how do we overcome them?

The panel welcomes empirical and theoretical contributions that deal with reflection on methodology in the study of movements – such as racist, populist or far right organisations - with whose discourses and practises is difficult to empathise.

Regular Session

From Indymedia to #Occupywallstreet and Anti-Austerity Protests in Europe: Three Generations of Digital Activism Logics

Session Organizer(s)

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Across the last few decades the logic of activism, and of digital activism in particular, have changed dramatically. We have experienced what could be regarded as three waves of protests from the early 1990s to the present. Each of these waves is connected both by the transformations in global capitalism and the rise of the digital age, while still displaying differences or rather developments in movement-based organizing. Together however, we can conceive these three waves as part of one broader epoch of contention. Those particular waves of contention are: Global Social Justice, Occupy/Arab Spring, Syriza/Podemos.

In this panel, we propose to look at the logics of these waves of protest (or generations of digital activism) in order to explore their similarities and differences. The goal of the panel discussion would be to mine history assuming a diachronic perspective, but more concretely to understand the strengths and weaknesses of this epoch of contention as we watch the current wave of struggle unfold.

Some of the questions that will be tackled in the panel are: how have capitalist transformations informed the emergence of the current epoch of contention and how has the activists relation to communication technologies evolved and shaped the logics of protests and mobilizations? Can we conceive of an underlying meta-logics of movement politics informing the waves of protests and how are they best conceptualized, similar as well as differently enacted? What has been the evolution of the role of alternative media in an oversaturated media environment where corporate social media are increasingly dominating the digital activism scenario? What are the challenges that social movements and their communication face when they crystallize into political parties? What lessons have we learned from the analysis of this epoch of contention and what are the future horizons of digital activism and protest?

ICTs in the Media Ecology of Protest Movements: Infrastructures, Discourses and Practices for Social Change.

Session Organizer(s): Alice MATTONI, European University Institute, Italy, alice.mattoni@eui.eu

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Studies on ICTs and social movements flourished in the past few years, also due to the relevant role that social media platforms and mobile communication devices had in the 2011 protest wave. Literature on the topic, however, frequently considers ICTs independently from the context in which they are embedded resulting in a myopic look at the role of digital media in mobilizations. This flaw might be overcome through an analysis that takes into consideration the media ecology of ICTs. Starting from this assumption, the panel seeks papers that investigate ICTs in relation to: the material infrastructures that sustain ICTs used during protests, from corporate media clouds services to activist managed hardware and software; the discourses and imageries related to ICTs, including values and beliefs that activists and other political actors attach to ICTs used during protests; the (media) practices that include the use of ICTs during protests, also in combination with other media technologies and means of communication, like the live-streaming of face-to-face assemblies or the coordinated collective use of Twitter accounts. The panel welcome papers that explore the role of ICTs in recent mobilizations through qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods approaches. We are particularly interested in papers that considers protests in Southern, Central and Eastern Europe, also in a comparative perspective with protests that occurred in other parts of the world.

Genesis of the New Social Movements in the Global South

Session Organizer(s)

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The panel will be shaped around the so-called new social movements of the global South. The paradigm

which emerged as a response to the 'rights based' and 'quality-of-life' movements (e.g. feminism, LGBT rights, environment, human rights, etc.) in Europe and North America after the 1960s assumed that there is a clear distinction between these 'identity' movements and the old organized 'labor' movements. Although many Southern societies have witnessed the emergence of rights based and quality-of-life movements, scholarship lacks systematic analysis of these movements in non-western context. The panel aims at addressing this gap by focusing on the historical origins, participants and the relation of these movements to earlier struggles.

Moving Refugees? Mobilisation and Outcomes of Refugee Movements, Solidarity Groups, and Anti-Asylum Activities

Session Organizer(s)

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Sieglinde ROSENBERGER, University of Vienna, Austria, sieglinde.rosenberger@univie.ac.at

The past ten years have witnessed an upsurge of mobilizations and protest activities by asylum seekers, irregular migrants and migrant rights solidarity activists and groups. With forms of collective public action they demand advocacy for human rights, a fair asylum process and access to labor markets. Furthermore, they demonstrate resistance to pending deportations. In contrast to these pro-migrant movements, we have noticed also a rise of counter-movements that take action against asylum seekers and their accommodations, mostly on a local level.

First, the panel focuses on organizational aspects, framing strategies and identities of these protest movements. Which practices, discursive alliances and mobilization strategies do they use? What are the similarities and differences among these movements? In which ways do pro-refugee and anti-refugee movements relate to each other?

Second, the panel will deal with internal effects and social and political outcomes of these movements. These movements produce cultural effects, through their framing strategies they aim to change perceptions in the society; they produce individual/biographical effects, protests against the deportation of failed asylum seekers results in some cases to legalization. However, asylum seekers may also run the risk of being deported. Reactions of governments and other state institutions may also result in repression, co-optation, and prevention.

This panel addresses refugee, solidarity and anti-asylum movements and focuses on both their different forms of mobilizations and their social, political and movement-related outcomes. Comparative papers with regard to movements, countries and political levels as well as single case studies are also welcome.

Popular Dissent in Sub-Saharan Africa

Session Organizer: Marcelle DAWSON, University of Otago, New Zealand,
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The nature of popular resistance in sub-Saharan Africa has much in common with the waves of protest that have swept across the globe in recent years. Consequently, scholarship on protest in Africa – while it certainly must take into account the diversity on the continent – has much to offer the field of social movement studies. This session aims to attract a range of important voices that will examine the history, character and trajectory of grassroots struggles in sub-Saharan Africa but, at the same time, highlight the ways in which popular dissent in this region is connected to global patterns of protest. In particular, this session welcomes contributions that address, but are not limited to, the following issues:

- Working class struggle in sub-Saharan Africa
- Leadership and the role of key political thinkers in past and present sub-Saharan contexts.
- 'Dynamics of contention' in sub-Saharan Africa both within and outside of the context of organized social movements.
- The intersection between community and labour movements in sub-Saharan Africa.
- Theoretical implications for social movement studies that draw on African cases.

Preference will be given to contributions that contextualize African struggles within the global picture of popular resistance.

Social Movements As Sites of Social Development

Session Organizer(s)

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Social movements are a crucible in which activists collectively generate which new forms of social organization as they attempt to make new subjects, worlds and histories in the context of—and in response to—the old; they may equally be moments of stymied progress where few advances are made on critical questions facing movements and the social groups they represent. Whereas recent scholarship on social movements has emphasized their microfoundations, conceived as strategic interactions and choice-points, it has tended to play down the more macro-level, longer-lasting features of capitalist societies (including their historical encoding of class, race, gender, and nationality) and the often-contradictory nature of these features. In favor of analytic formalism, social movement studies have largely abandoned systematic social criticism. This formalist turn also tends to play down the extent to which movements are a site of collective learning. Reticence about social critique leads analysts to abjure judgments about whether and how collective action leads toward or away from social development. Emerging Marxist scholarship on social movements has attempted to join the focus on on-the-ground interaction typical of formalist theories with the analyses of the larger, structured dynamics of capitalism and class; and as a body of work grounded in a theory of the “self-emancipation of the working class” (variously defined), its central concern is movement development towards more encompassing modes of social action and social identities. This panel welcomes papers that focus on efforts to weave together theories of strategy and learning and larger-scale historical and social contradictions.

Social Movements in Latin America: Contributing to a North-South Dialogue

Session Organizer(s)

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Ilan BIZBERG, El Colegio de México, Mexico, ilan@colmex.mx

Session in Spanish and English

Social movements from the global South are usually investigated by applying theories developed by and for the global North. But what happens when theories travel across diverse social contexts? Can theories and concepts developed in the global North fully capture the complexities of social movements and societies that have followed different historical trajectories? For instance, nationalism, “populism,” and socialism, or key institutions like the state or labor unions cannot be assumed to have universal importance and meaning. To what degree theories and practices from the global South inform social movements and studies developed in the global North? How do situated cultures and meaning-making practices require a re-elaboration of social movement theories and concepts?

We would welcome papers that establish a dialogue between theories and movements from the global South and the global North, with a special focus on Latin America. Papers may contribute to this collective enterprise in various ways, for instance, looking at (1) the social and organizational basis of activism and collective identities; (2) how different cultural and historical contexts require new ways of thinking about contentious repertoires, “frames” and the mobilization of resources; (3) the links between social movements, governments, and institutional politics (e.g. the relevance of “patronage politics” in Latin America); and (4) the convergences, influences, and tensions between the global North and global South (e.g. the influence of the Bolivian process of social change in the actions and ideas of Podemos in Spain).

Social Movements in the Arab World

Session Organizer(s):

Maha ABDELRAHMAN, University of Cambridge, Egypt, mma49@cam.ac.uk

The approaching fifth anniversary of the Arab Uprisings which started in Tunisia and spread like wild fire

across many countries of the region is a sober reminder of the challenges faced by social movements. The demand for 'Bread, Freedom and Social Justice' was able to mobilise millions of people who came out to the streets to protest against a political and economic order based on policies of dispossession and exclusion. This order has long sustained its hegemony through means of political repression and inflated security apparatuses at the national level. A wide range of movements created new types of activism and mobilisation strategies from workers to students to small farmers, slum residents, professionals, the unemployed and the retired. They crossed regional, gender, class and often ideological divides. The panel aims to explore the trajectories of these movements and how they have unfolded in the aftermath of their peak in 2011. It also hopes to locate them within a comparative perspective with social movements with similar features and histories across the world. We especially welcome papers that explore how these movements have evolved, disappeared, were coopted/ integrated into the political process or completely repressed after 2011. We also encourage papers which examine mainstream theoretical tools in studying social movements in light of the experience of these movements. Comparative research which examines social movements in the Arab region with similar movements in other parts of the world including countries of both the global North and South are also highly welcomed.

Social Movements, Sociology and Climate Change

Session Organizer(s): Jackie SMITH, Pittsburg University, USA, jgsmith@pitt.edu
Esin ILERI, École Hautes Études Sciences Sociales, France, esinileri@gmail.com

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has stated that we need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to near zero by 2050 to avoid more devastating climate change scenarios than are already underway. As government negotiations continue to fail to generate meaningful action in this regard, social movements have been developing concrete projects to enact practices that move in the direction of a low-carbon society.

This panel welcomes contributions on two main axes. • Analyses and case studies about grassroots social movements who promote worldviews, behaviors and policies more compatible with the reality and constraints of the limited nature of the planet and about how these studies provide us with empirical data for grasping some features of the global age and its consequences on life, democracy and society. How do they imagine, implement and contribute to shape alternative futures, starting in daily life and personal experience or contesting actual policies.

• Can our work as sociologists and with social movements help us find ways to achieve a seemingly impossible goal of radical social transformation? What lessons can be learned from these movements? What movements are or should be happening among academic professionals to both reduce our own carbon footprint while also helping advance the movements responding to the climate crisis?

What's Left of 2011? Continuities and Outcomes of the 2011 Protests

Session Organizer(s)

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Though large protests often surprise observers, they hardly start from scratch. Mostly, they are rooted in previous mobilisations. And often they produce outcomes that in turn will influence future mobilisation. The panel explores continuities and outcomes of social movements in the context of the wave of protests for social justice starting in 2011 – including the Arab Spring, the European anti-austerity mobilisations and the Occupy movement. This perspective allows looking at protests not as isolated events, but as part of a historical trajectory, considering both antecedents and legacies. How did previous mobilisations affect this wave of protest? How did the 2011 wave of protests influence more recent mobilisations? What are the consequences of the 2011 protests for politics more generally? This panel hence will focus on movement continuities and outcomes, before and after the 2011 protests. On the one hand, we are interested in the contents of continuities and the role organisations, submerged networks, abeyance structures, free spaces and other actors and mechanisms play in

ensuring this continuity. On the other hand, we aim to shed light on outcomes both with respect to policy-making and political representation as well as the effects on activists' life-courses and movements' internal organization.