



The 39th World
Congress of the
International Institute
of Sociology
Yerevan, Armenia

JUNE 11-14, 2009

www.iisoc.org/iis2009

Title of Session: Mechanisms of Globalization: The Making of World Society

Name of Session Convener(s): Boris Holzer, Tobias Werron

University/Organization incl. City: University of Lucerne (Switzerland), University of Bielefeld (Germany)

Chair: Boris Holzer, Tobias Werron

University/Organization incl. City: University of Lucerne (Switzerland), University of Bielefeld (Germany)

I) Title of Selected Paper: Technologies of Knowledge

Name/s of Author/s: Raf Vanderstraeten

University/Organization incl. City: Ghent University (Belgium)

Abstract: Of the many labels pundits have suggested to identify modern world society, the expressions 'knowledge society' and/or 'information society' have perhaps become the most used ones. From a sociological-historical perspective, this paper aims to clarify why/how information and knowledge define our epoch. It focuses on basic characteristics of the demand for information, its supply, and its 'organization' in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the so-called Age of Reason, governments were 'enlightened' in the sense that they claimed to protect and enhance the nation, not just the sovereign. This meant gathering information about citizens and disseminating it broadly. To this end, governments added effective administrations that could actually count populations, survey land, distribute the mail, and subsidize science in ways that had never been done before. The officials' demand for information accelerated the collection of information. And the increasing amount of information elicited innovations in the methods of handling it. Hence the development of scientific taxonomy, cartography, lexicography, statistics, and postal services that characterized the Age of Reason. In

general sociological-historical terms, this paper aims to show how world society was/is shaped by such technologies of knowledge.

II) Title of Selected Paper: Complexity and the Evaluation of 'Glocalized'

Interventions

Name/s of Author/s: Rita Sever

University/Organization incl. City: Hebrew University, Jerusalem (Israel)

Abstract: Speaking of 'globalization' we may refer to the universalizing effects of interconnectedness and interdependence in the world we live in. However, on the other side of this same coin we find 'indigenization'. The combination of these universalizing and particularizing trends has been coined 'glocalization' (Robertson, 1997). Over the past two decades we've been witnessing a move away from project-oriented international interventions to an increasing emphasis on "partnership", "ownership" and integrated interventions which aim at creating "synergies" that will produce results which single initiatives would not have brought about in isolation. While globalization seems to be reducing diversity in transnational interventions by its homogenizing effect on conceptions, programs, products etc, *glocalization* makes such interventions highly complicated and complex due to its "simultaneous promotion of what is, in one sense, a standardized product, for particular markets, in particular flavors" (Robertson, 1997). Where decision-making is both pulled upwards to transnational networks and downwards to regional and local networks, multi-level interventions are born. These interventions are *complicated* due to vertical and/or internal diversity, and often *complex* due to their dynamic and highly uncertain nature caused by recursive causality, disproportionate relationships and emergent outcomes. The paper will discuss some of the central challenges facing evaluators of complicated and complex interventions, and a few of the creative notions and methodological approaches attempting to cope with these challenges. Drawing upon open-systems theory, complexity theory and chaos theory, insights gained by these attempts may be relevant also for research addressing other mechanisms of globalization.

III) Title of Selected Paper: Integrating World Society through Conflicts: A

Conceptual Approach

Name/s of Author/s: Stephan Stetter

University/Organization incl. City: Universität der Bundeswehr, Munich (Germany)

Abstract: There is an underlying tendency in many social science disciplines to emphasise the disruptive characteristics of conflicts for society. In contrast - and building on several conflict theories - this paper highlights the integrative dynamics of social conflicts. However, rather than discussing this issue from an abstract theoretical standpoint, the paper combines theoretical reasoning with an explicit empirical focus. The paper addresses the ways in which conflicts integrate the 'arena' of Middle East politics. The main insights of this analysis are twofold. Firstly, any discussion on integration through conflicts needs to be embedded in a systematic understanding of 'globalisation' in which the 'global' is not one amongst several different 'levels' but rather a general condition of the political. Secondly, this integration through conflicts has a specific societal function, namely to 'problematise' specific global forms of political communications (and political structures) on this region. This in turn requires relating any discussion on integration through conflicts to the dynamics of functional differentiation, in general, and the dynamics of politics as a key 'functional' system, on the other. These two arguments are presented here by drawing from a rich set of empirical data on Middle East politics.

IV) Title of Selected Paper: Theorizing Theorization: 'Otherhood' as a Mechanism of Globalization

Name/s of Author/s: Boris Holzer, Tobias Werron

University/Organization incl. City: University of Lucerne (Switzerland), University of Bielefeld (Germany)

Abstract: The paper explores common ground between neoinstitutionalist world polity research and systems theoretical world society theory. On common macro-constructivist ground, both approaches converge in similar difficulties from different directions: Whereas neoinstitutionalism is strong in conceptualizing diffusion, including the globalizing and accelerating effects of "otherhood" and "theorization" in the world polity, systems theory's strengths lie in the systematic and historical reconstruction of system differentiation and evolution. Both strengths have corresponding weaknesses: Whereas neoinstitutionalism succeeds in capturing the isomorphism induced by the growth of the world polity but fails to explain particular field dynamics in which diffusion and theorization of diffusing models are embedded, systems theory gives elaborate accounts of fields such as the economy, politics, law, science, religion etc. but fails to show how these fields actually developed their specific globalizing dynamics. For

different reasons, then, both perspectives fail to explain how world society has become the creation of “others” specializing on the construction, theorization and evaluation of actors and contributing to global isomorphism and to the dynamic production of differences in specialized global fields. The paper submits that a sophisticated concept of “public otherhood”, by distinguishing more sharply between “significant others” and “generalized others”, may contribute to a solution of this problem and, consequently, to mutual stimulation between both theoretical perspectives.