

A short history of the Research Committee 10 'Participation, Workers' Control/Organizational Democracy and Self-management', International Sociological Association

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We had a dream – of a more democratic, peaceful and sustainable society. Practitioners and theoreticians came together in the 1970s to link and exchange on the global level their experiences, their approaches. The main background was the Yugoslav self-management experience, the cooperative movement, the German code-termination, the trade unions, the French *autogestion*, the Israeli Kibbutz movement, Scandinavian co-determination and socio-technical reorganization of work, and later privatization issues. Though it is located within a sociological association, it is not restricted to this discipline. As the name indicates, it is focussed on all aspects of participation and not on a discipline. Our basic keywords are about participation and ... globalization, ... workplace and industrial relations, ...organization, ... democracy, ... property, ... culture, ... participatory research. So, scientists and practitioners from many fields and realms come together. This co-operation between theory and practice is a specific feature of RC 10. The basic idea for the network is to create a continuous dialogue to study and to promote Participation, Organisational Democracy and Self-Management. A scientific policy is carried out in order to strengthen the bridges between theoretical and empirical studies, and to find various ways to cooperate with social actors. For instance, RC 10 invited them to its major events, and RC 10 contributed to the second World Social Forum in Porto Alegre in 2002, and the following ones.

We are looking therefore back now to more than 40 years of successful activities. Scholarly activities in relation to self-management that can be said were at the origins of the Research Committee recognized by ISA in August 1978. The Group was officially recognized as the Research Committee 10 'Participation, Workers' Control and Self-management' at the Ninth World Congress of Sociology in Uppsala (August, 1978). The statutes were drafted by György Széll, and voted unanimously in 1986.

Executive and Members

The first provisional Board was chosen at the first business meeting, at Uppsala (August, 1978). The officers were the following: Chairperson Rudi Supek (Yugoslavia; 1913-1993); Secretary Casten von Otter (Sweden; 1941-); Delegate to the RC Veljko Rus (Yugoslavia/Slovenia; 1928-2009). The delegate to the RC and the Secretary were in charge of the election, held by mail ballots in 1979. Of 110 persons registered in the Research Committee, 95 delivered their votes by mail (January, 1979). The newly elected persons were: Chairperson Veljko Rus (Yugoslavia); Vice-Chairperson Bjørn Gustavsen (Norway; 1938-2017); other members Eric Batstone (UK), Yvon Bourdet (France; 1920-2005), Cor(nelis J.) Lammers (The Netherlands; 1928-2009), Steven Deutsch (USA), Akihiro Ishikawa Japan; 1937-)

In November 1979, there were 130 members at the Research Committee. At the first business meeting held in Uppsala (August 1978) it was accepted the idea to establish closer cooperation with two other RCs, namely *Sociology of Organization* (RC 17) and *Committee on Conceptual and Terminological Analysis/COCTA* (RC 35). Other organisms and groups of interest to contact were: *Cornell Group* with Jaroslav

¹ For more details see my publications: *Participation, Workers' Control and Self-Management*. Trend report and bibliography. *Current Sociology*, SAGE, London, 1988, vol. 36, # 3; *Concise Encyclopaedia of Participation and Co-Management*. Berlin & New York, de Gruyter, 1992, Reprint 2017.

Vanek as chair, the *Centre International de la Coordination des Recherche sur l'Autogestion/CICRA*, Paris, chaired by Yvon Bourdet, and the *European Group of Organizational Sociology/EGOS*, where namely Cor Lammers was involved.

The RC was also interested in having some publicity in publications such as the *ISA Bulletin*, the *CICRA Newsletter*, *Organizational Studies*, and *Economic and Industrial Democracy*. In the latter two, it was suggested to submit interesting papers that are not being published in the Sage Series. An attempt would be made to arrange two workshops per year, each on a selected theme. At the same time, it was planned to encourage the constitution of smaller groups of 20-30 members, specialized on particular problems and/or on a regional base.

At the first meeting of the Managing Board (October 1979), it was agreed to make a particular effort to recruit members from regions then under-represented: Akihiro Ishikawa was to investigate the possibility of developing a regional Committee covering Asia and the Pacific; Steven Deutsch was to investigate similar possibilities for Latin America; and more tentatively, Eric Batstone would seek to investigate the extent of any interest in Africa.

At the Yugoslav Centre for Theory and Practice of Self-management (Ljubljana, Yugoslavia) the documentation centre of RC 10 was established, and was collecting all papers, articles and books produced by the members of RC 10. They were available to the members on the spot and/or be sent to them when the demand is expressed.

In the following years RC 10 developed to one of the most dynamic RCs within the International Sociological Association with up to 350 members and many sessions during the World Congresses of Sociology, the Fora and numerous workshops and publications. More details can be found separately and on the homepage.

Presidents for the following years were:

- Cornelis J. Lammers (The Netherlands) from 1983 to 1987,
- György Széll (Hungary-Germany; 1941-) from 1987 to 1991,
- Raymond L. (Rusty) Russell III (USA) from 1991 to 1994,
- Åke Sandberg (Sweden; 1944-) from 1994 to 1996,
- Alain Chouraqui (France; 1949-) from 1996 to 2002,
- Michal Palgi (Israel), from 2002 to 2006,
- Heinz Sünker (Germany; 1948-) from 2006 to 2010,
- Isabel Da Costa (Portugal-France; 1958-) from 2010-2018,
- Dasarath Chetty (South Africa) from 2018 to 2022.

The longevity of our presidents shows that it seems to be quite healthy to be active within RC 10.

We had dozens of members of the executive committees from all realms of life, and from all continents. Besides the presidents eminent members were Yvon Bourdet (France; 1920-2005), Menachem Rosner (Israel; 1922-2013), Chintamani Lakshmana (India; 1935-2017), Akihiro Ishikawa (Japan; 1937-), Julia Rozanova (Russia/USA), Volkmar Kreißig (Germany). I have also to pay tribute to our past treasurers and secretaries. Without them RC could have not survived until today.

The name of the RC 10 has been changed in 1990 from *Participation, Workers' Control, and Self-management* to its present form, as the notion of Workers' Control seemed for most members to be out-dated.

To promote the participation of colleagues from Third World countries subcommittees for Asia (1980), and Latin America (1985) were established. The first was chaired Akihiro Ishikawa (Japan) and Chintamani Lakshmana (India), the latter by William Moreno (Peru), and Antonio Lucas Marin (Spain). For several years it was quite dy-

namic with own workshops and an own newsletter. Actually there were some tensions with the Iberoamerican subcommittee, which eventually led to the creation of an independent Iberoamerican Research Committee on Participation and Self-Management within the ISA.

The communication for the Iberoamericans went apparently much better in Spanish, although we published the Newsletter since 1979 quite early in three languages, i.e. English, French, and later Spanish.

There existed also for some time a subcommittee on *Privatization*, chaired by Volkmar Kreißig.

The main activities took place during the *World Congresses of Sociology*, and since 2008 within the ISA Fora. But besides there were many workshops organized between them. The list is separate. Many publications were the result of the RC 10 and its members. A list of the main publications is separate as well. Further a list of relevant journals and Internet sides as well.

A close cooperation exists namely with the ISA/RCS *Economy and Society* (01), *Sociology of Education* (RC 04), *Sociology of Organization* (17), Political Sociology (RC 18), *Environment and Society* (24),² *Sociological Practice* (RC 26), *Gender* (RC 32), *Sociology of Alienation* (36), and *Social Movements* (44). But also within the *European Sociological Association/ESA*, namely within the stream 'Work & Organisation'. There was also an overlapping for the French speaking members: Yvon Bourdet and György Széll created the Comité de Recherche 'Sociologie de l'Autogestion' within the *Association Internationale des Sociologues de Langue Française* in 1982. Actually quite a number of RC 10-members had and have several parallel memberships within different relevant organizations.

In 2019 the membership went down to 76 members in good standing. However, we have to say that in the early years there was no strict membership regulation. Actually, everybody who was on the mailing list, without necessarily paying membership fees was regarded as member. This relativizes the membership figures.

In conclusion, unfortunately as the Yugoslav self-management ended in the 1990s, democracy is challenged by populist, neo-fascist movements the idea and practice of democratic participation is in heavy waters. Also parallel to the ageing societies the membership of RC 10 is ageing as well. We have some problems

Nevertheless the idea and practice of democratic participation in all realms of life is more important than ever. The survival of humanity is even at stakes with the man-made ecological catastrophe, which will only be overcome by a global democratic participation. I hope that RC 10 will contribute to this endeavour as in the past, and will still have a long life.

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György Széll, vice-president of RC 10 from 1983 to 1987, and president from 1987 to 1991; member of the *Executive Committee* of the ISA from 1990 to 1994.

² It happened that György Széll has been president of RC 24 from 1990 to 1994.