



Instructions for authors, subscriptions and further details:

<http://rimcis.hipatiapress.com>

## **Editorial. Our Contribution to Overcome the Current Threat to the Social Sciences**

Marta Soler<sup>1</sup>

1) Department of Sociological Theory, University of Barcelona, Spain

Date of publication: July 30th, 2012

---

To cite this article: Soler, M. (2012). Editorial. Our Contribution to Overcome the Current Threat to the Social Sciences. *International and Multidisciplinary Journal of Social Sciences*, 1(1), 1-4. doi: 10.4471/rimcis.2012.00

To link this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4471/rimcis.2012.00>

---

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

The terms and conditions of use are related to the Open Journal System and to Creative Commons Non-Commercial and Non-Derivative License.

# Editorial. Our Contribution to Overcome the Current Threat to the Social Sciences

Marta Soler  
*University of Barcelona*

**W**e are pleased to present the first issue of the *International and Multidisciplinary Journal of Social Sciences*, RIMCIS, a new effort to make visible high quality articles of scholarly work from diverse disciplines such as sociology, political science, economy, anthropology, geography, philosophy, law, among other. In a moment in which an unprecedented economic crisis is affecting societies worldwide, and particularly the Western world, and the model of society that used to guarantee people's rights and liberties is being questioned, the social sciences are also under threat. In Europe, where societies are most affected, there were people at the European Commission and the Parliament who questioned the need for social sciences research in the new Framework Program of Research – known as Horizon 2020 – which will set the scientific research priorities in the EU for the next six years. This meant that EU funded research would focus on climate change, energy, security, biotechnology, nanosciences, information technology, etc., and the social be relegated to transversal aspects to be accounted for. Some argued that the social sciences projects provided discourses about social problems but no evidence of how to actually overcome these problems and improve society. After strong efforts, some European social scientists were able to influence

the Parliament and maintain the social sciences in the research policy agenda. However, the struggle is not finished yet, when the allocation of public resources on science is still asked to be accountable not only for policy makers, but most importantly to society. Then we, the social scientists, have a great challenge to answer back. The main goal of RIMCIS is to provide a scientific forum able to take on this challenge and overcome the threat. In this way, the journal will publish critical and interdisciplinary work based on empirical evidences and/or rigorous theoretical analyses oriented to the betterment of society.

Along these lines we find today relevant contributions from social sciences and scientists taking clear stances (voluntary or involuntary) towards this challenge. [Burawoy \(2005\)](#) argues that there is a public sociology that is accountable to civil society, and includes professional, critical and policy sociology. The key question is the knowledge we generate from social sciences research is for whom, and for what. Answering to these two simple, but crucial questions, we can deeply rethink the reasons behind the work we do. That is, with whom (if anybody) do we engage in society, how is our academic work going to make a difference in their lives, how are they going to influence our scientific contributions. In a different way, [Wright \(2010\)](#) defends the need today for emancipatory social sciences and important tasks that must be therefore performed. The analysis of “real utopias”, or institutional arrangements that are “real” somewhere in the world in which the social has been empowered, provides a framework of possibility for current research from the social sciences, which has been this year discussed as a main theme for the upcoming annual conference of the American Sociological Association. [Touraine, Wieviorka & Flecha \(2004\)](#) also frame a similar approach with the need to engage and dialogue with the excluded populations to enhance the social utility of social sciences research.

The social sciences are then, more than ever important today, to generate the necessary knowledge to advance towards a more democratic, egalitarian, efficient, sustainable and just society. Thus the social sciences need to demonstrate their capacity of analysis to contribute to better understanding of current societies, comprising their structural, political, economic and cultural changes, as well as the social

actions that a vast diversity of agents undertake. RIMCIS starts with the compromise to publish excellent research and theoretical contributions that can serve to this goal. Its articles will contribute evidences and promote reflection and debate with a multidisciplinary perspective that has not yet been provided by any other journal in the social sciences. RIMCIS is also defined as multilingual journal, in order to open up possibilities to make visible excellent work from worldwide by tearing down the language barriers. It will therefore become another necessary contribution from the social sciences to the international scientific community. For that, the journal has the support of an international and prestigious Editorial Board from diverse areas of the social sciences, engaged to the idea of opening up our disciplines to public and scientific debate.

RIMCIS' first issue is tightly connected to the development of sociological theory including authors from Latin America, Northern Europe, and Southern Europe and from the Mediterranean. The four articles are different but at the same time coincide in contributing with new knowledge enhancing the intellectual debate in the social sciences. The first article is written by Pekka Sulkunen (Finland), current President of the European Sociological Association (ESA), who brilliantly draws a political, historical and social scenario that current societies encounter. The lack of answers to citizens' needs provided by the representative democracy put at risk the actual concept of democracy and, in this process, nondemocratic alternatives rise but also debates and practices that aim to radicalize democracy and the continuous processes of negotiation come up. The second article is written by Anália Torres (Portugal), former President of the ESA, in collaboration with three of her colleagues. The data and the analysis presented identify a new reality that questions traditional gender roles among men and women in Europe and provides a basis for progress towards more equality. Consequently, Raquel Sosa (Mexico) and Lúdia Puigvert (Spain) provide relevant contributions to the future of sociology. Being Vice-president of the International Sociological Association (ISA), Sosa opens up a sociological debate at the institutional level, in relation to the role of the ISA. The author provides excellent arguments and thoughts about the challenges of sociology in

the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as an academic discipline and a professional practice, especially concerning to her position and contribution to overcoming the increasing inequalities in the globalized world.

Similarly, Puigvert contributes with reflections from the sociological theory to an intellectual debate about a shift of the social sciences towards the relevance of dialogue. In 2003 she co-authored a book on contemporary sociological theory, in which these ideas were first outlined. Today, in this article, she deepens in the discussion of dialogic theories that not only allow for a better comprehension of reality but also to identify the processes and actions that combat power relations and violence. In this way, the article exemplifies this dialogic turn through transformations in the feminist theory in which she has been deeply involved (Beck-Gernsheim, Butler, & Puigvert, 2003), as well as in the struggle against power based gender violence in Spanish universities. The issue concludes with a book review of one of the latest Ulrich Beck's books, *A God of One's Own*, in the Spanish edition (*El Dios Personal*), which reflects about the plurality of religions as a result of a plural and reflexive society and the challenges that must be faced by modern democratic societies. In the end, this review also contributes to the whole issue discussion about the relevance of social sciences today.

Finally, I would like to express my satisfaction to make this project become reality as part of the scientific journals of Hipatia Press. This prestigious editorial group is committed to disseminating scientific knowledge on a free access basis and I truly appreciate their support to this new academic adventure.

## References

- Beck-Gernsheim, E., Butler, J., & Puigvert, L. (2003). *Women and social transformation*. Lanham, ML: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Burawoy, M. (2005). For Public Sociology. *American Sociological Review*, 70 (1), 4-28.
- Touraine, A., Wieviorka, M., & Flecha, R. (2004). *Conocimiento e identidad. Voces de los grupos culturales en la investigación social*. Barcelona: Roure.
- Wright, E. O. (2010). *Envisioning real utopias*. London: Verso.