



Call for Abstracts/Session Proposals

European Sociological Association - Midterm Conference of RN 21- Quantitative Methods

3rd - 6th of October, 2018, Cracow, Poland

Potentials and Limits of Quantitative Research in the Social Sciences

Important Dates:

Abstract/session proposal submission: January 15th, 2018 – March 15th, 2018

Information about accepted papers/sessions: till mid of April, 2018

Conference: 3rd - 6th of October, 2018

Venue: Jagiellonian University, Cracow, Poland www.uj.edu.pl

Organizer: ESA RN 21 Quantitative Methods

Chair: Wolfgang Aschauer | **Vice-Chair:** Jolanta Perek Białas

Local Organiser: Jolanta Perek-Białas | Institute of Sociology, Jagiellonian University of Cracow, Poland (jolanta.perek-bialas@uj.edu.pl)

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The **ESA Research Network 21 *Quantitative Methods*** announces its midterm conference 2018 about **Potentials and Limits of Quantitative Research in the Social Sciences**.

Quantitative social research currently faces two major challenges: The first one refers to the spread of new technologies, which has for quantitative research positive as well as negative consequences. On the one hand our methods profit from new technological possibilities such as mobile communication, new internet platforms, cheap high-speed computing, computer assisted surveys, and big data collections. This opens new opportunities for the gathering and processing of information: by exploring the web, researchers get data about informal social networks, the self-representation of social-media-users, response patterns in computer assisted experiments and surveys, etc. On the other hand, the rise of explorative approaches based on-machine-learning and big data seems to reduce the importance of theory-driven research. Various disciplines collaborate in collecting and analyzing huge amounts of socio-technical data, often without taking care of measurement errors, sampling issues, etc. This trend endangers the established procedures of theory-driven empirical social research and calls for a discourse about rigorous research based on the new technological possibilities.

As a second challenge, quantitative methods are exposed to rising criticisms of being inappropriate for a "deeper" understanding of the social world. Regarding the major social problems of contemporary Europe such as cultural diversity, social inequalities, and rising gaps between and within the European countries, it may be advisable to include culture-specific research perspectives, to consider new units of analysis, and to draw conclusions based on quantitative and qualitative research methodologies (e.g. by mixed-methods approaches). Thus, for the community of quantitative researchers, this second challenge is a call to think more profoundly about the technical, ethical, and epistemological limits of its methodological approach. It is, however, also an opportunity to stress the strong points of quantitative research, e.g. by demonstrating its power in the fields of social planning, forecasting, policy evaluation, social reporting, monitoring of societal trends, comparative cross-national studies, scrutinizing social mechanisms, causal analysis by (quasi-) experimental designs, efficient visualizations of big volumes of data, etc.

Consequently, this mid-term conference aims at an overview of the potentials of quantitative research as well as a critical assessment of its technical, epistemological, and ethical boundaries. Thus, we welcome papers and panels about the following topics, which are of course by no means exhaustive:

- **The internet as a new data-source:** social media, web-links, big data, internet-based experiments, etc.
- **Mobile communication** as a device for data-gathering: activity-tracking, bio-medical monitoring, automated diaries, GPS data etc.
- **The new potentials of cheap high-speed computing:** statistical learning, social simulation, data- and text-mining, bootstrapping for parameter estimation, other numerically intensive statistical procedures, etc.
- **Epistemological questions:** explaining and understanding social reality in quantitative studies.
- **Mixed-methods as an alternative:** taking the best out of two worlds? Theoretical and methodological approaches of mixed-methods research, etc.
- **The issue of comparability:** etic and emic approaches for researching European developments.
- **Defining new units of analysis** beyond "methodological nationalism": social network analysis, research focused on relationships among social entities, etc.
- **Quantitative approaches with regard to applied topics** (e.g. value research, dealing with inequalities, quality of life).
- **Specific challenges with regard to "hard-to-reach" groups** (e.g. refugees, immigrants, older people, persons in closed institutions)

- **Ethical questions of new methods of data-gathering:** where are the limits set by the respect of privacy and the uncertainty about the informed consent of the field?
- **Reviving traditional methods:** Strategies for increasing the participation in surveys, methods for achieving international comparability, interviews about sensitive topics, measurement errors etc.

Confirmed keynote speakers:

○ **Markus Strohmaier** (3rd of October, 2018) - Professor for Methods and Theories of Computational Social Sciences and Humanities at RWTH Aachen (Germany), and the Scientific Coordinator for Digital Behavioral Data at GESIS - Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences

○ **Werner Raub** (4th of October, 2018) - Professor of Sociology at Utrecht University and the Interuniversity Center for Social Science Theory and Methodology (ICS).

○ **Filomena Maggino** (5th of October, 2018) - Professor of Social Statistics at the Sapienza Università di Roma.

At the fourth day of the conference (6th of October, Saturday) there will be organized a workshop. The topic and the lecturer will be soon announced (an additional registration will be organized).

Conference Fees:

- **40 €** for young academics (including PhD students),
- **60 €** for ESA members
- **80 €** for non-members

Fees include: welcome reception, coffee breaks, lunches and guided city-tour.

All further information about the conference will be available in January 2018 on the special web page of this event.

<https://sites.google.com/view/esa-rn-21-2018>

Instructions for Authors:

Please submit no later than 15th of March:

- For individual presentation: abstract of up to 300 words plus 3-5 keywords
- For session proposals: description of the session (ca. 300 words) plus an abstract with up to 300 words from at least three panelists

Please use this link for paper submission: <https://goo.gl/VSoXXD>

Participants will be notified regarding the acceptance of their submissions at the latest by the 15th of April, 2018.