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The 16th European Sociological Association Conference: "Tension, Trust and Transformation" (Porto, Portugal, 27–30 August, 2024)¹

From August 27 to 30, the 16th European Sociological Association Conference was held in Porto. The title of the 16th conference sounds as: "Tension, Trust and Transformation", and it "seeks to capture the experiences of recent times, crises and global challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change debates and activism, inequalities and violence, persisting levels of populism and the politics of instability. At the same time, it raises sociological concerns about perennial and new problems to assert the potential for sociological work to have a transformative societal impact in different social spheres"². The conference gathered around 4000 sociologists and researchers to discuss social changes and the challenges facing contemporary Europe. The conference includes almost 900 sessions where research and thought-provoking debates kept participants practically fully engaged for four days. Thus, conference emphasized pressing global social issues through the lens of sociology, featuring various plenary sessions, thematic workshops, and research presentations.

The ESA Porto Conference agenda includes three Plenary Sessions, nineteen Semi-Plenary Sessions and twelve Midday Special Sessions, organized by the ESA Former Presidents, the Executive Committee, members of the Councils of Research Networks and National Associations, the Local Organising Committee and collective projects such as the International Sociological Committee for the Digital Era³. Among the

¹ 16th ESA Conference "Tension, Trust and Transformation" Program. (2024). Retrieved from: <https://www.europeansociology.org/conference/2024>

² Final Programme for the 16th ESA Conference in Porto [Update]. Porto, 16 August 2024 (p. 5). Retrieved from: <https://www.europeansociology.org/conference/2024/event/3f6ca659-91a9-4dc3-87cd-9a077f2bf566>

³ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

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key speakers of this event were Michael Burawoy¹ and Anália Torres, two renowned scholars, who opened the conference addressing the topic of societal tension. Then three famous sociologists – Jason Arday, Chantelle Lewis and Nira Yuval Davis, took the floor of the Second Plenary. Trust was chosen as a subject area of their research, and they expressed exciting thinking and ideas on how societies could build and accommodate trust “when this seems a difficult goal to achieve”². Michael Biggs and Jana Hainsworth, highly recognised experts for their research in the sociology of transformation made contribution to the Closing Plenary Session, added new inspirational ideas arguing that sociology and social sciences build solutions based on solid knowledge that can design transformative scenarios and new dynamics for social life³. All three plenary sessions provided flabbergasting and overarching inputs into the conference’s leading topics dealt with tension, trust and transformation in global societies.

Hence, the 16th ESA Conference highlights contemporary global challenges — such as the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, rising inequality, and war in Europe — and their impact on sociological discourse and research. The conference serves as a platform for sociologists to critically engage with these issues and contribute to modern sociology’s evolution, emphasizing its transformative potential in addressing social tensions and rebuilding trust in institutions.

One can argue that the conference concentrates on the current trajectory of sociology, which has shifted towards addressing real-world crises with interdisciplinary approaches, blending theoretical insights with practical applications. Research Networks Coordinators cover such topics as: Ageing in Europe; The Sociology of the Arts; Biographical Perspectives on European Societies; The Sociology of Children and Childhood; Sociology of Consumption; Critical Political Economy; Sociology of Culture; Sociology of Education; Sociology of Emotions; Environment and Society; Sociology of Families, and Intimate Lives; Gender Relations in the Labour Market and the Welfare State; Global, Transnational and Cosmopolitan Sociology; Sociology of Health and Medicine; Work, Employment and Industrial Relations; Sociology of Communications and Media Research; Sociology of Professions; Quantitative and Qualitative Methods, and some others.

Therefore, the event reflects this trend by offering a diverse array of sessions and workshops across sociological subfields, with the aim of discussing pressing global issues, generating new research frameworks, and fostering collaborations that can impact both academic and policy-oriented environments.

Speaking about key linkages of conference topics to Modern Sociology one can debate in three directions:

¹ Michael Burawoy is a British sociologist working within Marxist social theory, best known as the leading proponent of public sociology and the author of *Manufacturing Consent: Changes in the Labor Process Under Monopoly Capitalism*—a study on the sociology of industry that has been translated into a number of languages. Burawoy is a Professor of Sociology at the University of California, Berkeley. He was president of the American Sociological Association in 2004. On the evening of February 3, 2025, Michael Burawoy died when he was hit by a car near his home in Auckland.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., p. 10.

1. Tension: The sociological examination of tensions in society, especially those stemming from nationalism, populism, and conflict, is central to modern sociology. This theme is particularly relevant in the context of Ukraine, where the war serves as a case study of how sociopolitical conflict exacerbates existing inequalities and creates new tensions. Ukrainian participants and sessions related to Ukraine's situation address these themes directly, situating the war within broader discussions of global tensions that modern sociology seeks to understand and resolve.

2. Trust: Modern sociology increasingly focuses on the erosion of trust in institutions - governments, media, science, and academia - and how this impacts social cohesion. The conference includes a session on "Ukraine under Attack," which examines how war challenges societal trust, both within Ukraine and internationally. This discussion links to a broader sociological effort to explore how trust can be rebuilt in societies fractured by conflict, misinformation, and political instability, a crucial area in contemporary sociology.

3. Transformation: One of the defining characteristics of modern sociology is its commitment to societal transformation, using research to effect real-world change. The conference encourages sociologists to reflect on their roles in transforming society by addressing inequalities, fostering inclusivity, and promoting sustainability. Sessions on energy transitions, urban challenges, and migration -topics directly influenced by the war in Ukraine—illustrate the transformative potential of sociology in navigating crises. Ukrainian scholars are at the forefront of these discussions, contributing to the global debate on how sociology can guide the transition to more equitable and resilient societies.

One can stress that the Ukrainian context plays a significant role in the conference, with particular attention given to the ongoing conflict and its sociological implications. One of the key sessions that highlights Ukrainian perspectives is titled "Ukraine under Attack" scheduled for August 28. This session focuses on the sociopolitical, economic, and cultural ramifications of the war in Ukraine, examining how the invasion has affected Ukrainian society and its global relations focusing on how the war has reshaped Ukraine's social fabric, economy, and political landscape. This focus exemplifies modern sociology's concern with global interconnectivity and transnational issues, illustrating the discipline's evolution towards addressing global crises that cross borders and impact diverse populations.

Ukrainian scholars also contribute to the growing body of research on conflict sociology, examining issues such as migration, identity, and post-war recovery, which are critical to understanding contemporary Europe and global peacebuilding efforts.

The author of this review Olena Goroshko and the leading research fellow at the Institute of Sociology, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine Nataliia Boiko also presented report devoted to The Trust to the Internet Information: Through the Ukrainian-Russian War Context.

In summary, the ESA Conference is deeply linked to modern sociology's evolution, addressing the global challenges of our time through the lenses of tension, trust, and transformation. Ukrainian scholars' contributions are particularly significant, highlighting how sociology can help navigate crises like war, foster international dialogue, and influence societal change.

One can argue that sociological work is fundamental for dealing with societal challenges in crisis time, and sociological conferences must be the engines driving the ideas which can address these challenges.

A paradox for sociology is that it must remain at the critical edge of discourse to identify institutional and systemic failures and yet it must also be involved in finding solutions to problems through in-depth analysis of the individual's practices and understandings, and thereby contribute to the building and maintenance of trust.



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ОЛЕНА ГОРОШКО

16-та конференція Європейської соціологічної асоціації: “Напруженість, довіра і трансформація” (Порту, Португалія, 27–30 серпня, 2024)

Метою конференції було розглянути сучасні суспільні виклики, зокрема пандемію COVID-19, зміну клімату, соціальну нерівність та політичну нестабільність. Вона надала соціологам платформу для обговорення цих питань та вивчення трансформаційного потенціалу соціологічних досліджень у різноманітних соціальних сферах. Також конференція підкреслила важливість соціологічних досліджень для розуміння та подолання сучасних глобальних викликів, стимулюючи дискусії про напруженість, довіру та трансформації. Також вона підкреслила роль соціології в просуванні суспільних змін та формуванні обґрунтованої політики.

Ключові слова: сучасна соціологія, 16-та Європейська соціологічна конференція “Напруженість, довіра і трансформація”, Порту, Португалія, 2024

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The conference aimed to address contemporary societal challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, social inequalities, and political instability. It provided a platform for sociologists to discuss these issues and explore the transformative potential of sociological research in various social spheres. Also, the conference underscored the importance of sociological research in understanding and addressing current global challenges. By fostering discussions on tension, trust, and transformation, it emphasized the role of sociology in driving societal change and informed policy-making.

Keywords: modern sociology, 16th European Sociological Conference “Tension, Trust and Transformation”, Porto, Portugal, 2024