

The concept of mechanism has been widely used throughout the history of social sciences in general and in sociology in particular. Most classical writers of sociological tradition (for instance Tocqueville, Marx, Durkheim or Weber) can be said to have spontaneously built some mechanism-based explanations.

Nevertheless, the notion of mechanism has been rarely explored as such. A critical change occurred with the 1996 Stockholm conference which focused on the concept of social mechanism itself.

Since, this intellectual movement has continued to expand. A renewed attention to the concept seems to be in progress also in economics, in political science, in history or in criminology.

In sociology, the concept of mechanism has been moreover linked to the notion of “analytical” sociology and, more recently, to some computational methods. These developments generate a new specific literature, but give birth to a new series of problems (as, for example, the rapport between “analytical sociology” and “analytical philosophy”, or the relation between “analytical sociology” and quantitative, mathematical or computational sociology).

Ten years after the papers published in *Social Mechanisms: an Analytical Approach to Social Theory* it is time to have a new synthesis, and explore the difficulties that appeared through the recent developments of the approach.

The conference aims to do it from four points of view:

- theoretical, regarding the kind of action, reasons and interactions that the concept of mechanism supposes, and regarding its differences in relation to concepts such as “process” and “narrative”;
- methodological, regarding the ways to implement the concept of mechanisms for empirical research and policy analysis;
- epistemological, considering its implications for the debate about causality and realism;
- historical, regarding the use of the concept in history of sociological thought.

Conference organized with the financial support of :

- Centre d'études sociologiques de la Sorbonne (CESS, Paris IV Sorbonne)
- Conseil scientifique (Paris IV Sorbonne)
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- Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS)
- Groupe d'étude des méthodes de l'analyse sociologique (GEMAS, CNRS)

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SORBONNE CONFERENCE

MÉCANISMES SOCIAUX ET SOCIOLOGIE ANALYTIQUE

SOCIAL MECHANISMS AND ANALYTICAL SOCIOLOGY

17 – 18 October 2008

Université Paris-Sorbonne
Maison de la Recherche
28 rue Serpente, 75006 PARIS
Salle D035
Métro : Odéon ou Saint-Michel

Scientific Organization

Pierre DEMEULENAERE, University Paris-Sorbonne
Gianluca MANZO, CNRS (GEMAS), Paris

Friday 17 October

09:00-09:15	Pierre DEMEULENAERE, University of Paris–Sorbonne <i>Introduction</i>
	Session 1 - Chair : Peter HEDSTRÖM, Oxford University
9:15-9:45	Raymond BOUDON, University of Paris– Sorbonne, Institut de France (ASMP) <i>Ordinary Rationality: The Backbone of 'Analytical Sociology'?</i>
9:45-10:00	Discussion
10:00-10:30	Dan SPERBER, CNRS (Institut Jean Nicod), Paris <i>Articulating Social and Cognitive Mechanisms</i>
10:30-10:45	Discussion
	Break
11:00-11:30	Mohamed CHERKAOUI, CNRS (GEMAS), Paris <i>Some Generative Mechanisms of the Intellectual Production: The Three Markets Theory</i>
11:30-11:45	Discussion
11:45-12:15	Robert SAMPSON, Harvard University <i>Neighborhood-Effect Mechanisms, Causality, and the Social Structure of the City</i>
12:15-12:30	Discussion
	Session 2 - Chair : Mario DIANI, University of Trento
14:30-15:00	Jon ELSTER, Collège de France <i>Emotional Mechanisms</i>
15:00-15:15	Discussion
15:15-15:30	Michel FORSÉ, CNRS (Centre Maurice Halbwachs), Paris <i>Is the Construction of Norms of Justice a Matter of Mechanisms?</i>
15:30-15:45	Discussion
	Break
16:00-16:30	Filippo BARBERA & Nicola NEGRI, University of Turin <i>Analytical Sociology and Social Structure</i>
16:30-16:45	Discussion
16:45-17:15	Emmanuel LAZEGA, University of Paris-Dauphine <i>The Social Mechanisms of Cooperation among Competitors</i>
17:15-17:30	Discussion

Saturday 18 October

	Session 3 - Chair: Gianluca MANZO, CNRS (GEMAS), Paris
9:15-9:45	Peter HEDSTRÖM, Nuffield College, University of Oxford <i>Middle-range Analytics</i>
9:45-10:00	Discussion
10:00-10:30	Peter ABELL, London School of Economics <i>Infrequent Mechanisms and Bayesian Narratives</i>
10:30-10:45	Discussion
	Break
11:00-11:30	François CHAZEL, University of Paris–Sorbonne <i>Les perspectives de sociologie analytique ouvertes par Talcott Parsons</i>
11:30-11:45	Discussion
11:45-12:15	Philippe STEINER, University of Paris–Sorbonne <i>Social Mechanism and Tension: a Neo-Weberian Approach</i>
12:15-12:30	Discussion
	Session 4 - Chair : Pierre DEMEULENAERE, University of Paris–Sorbonne
14:15-14:45	Michael MACY, Cornell University <i>Social Mechanisms and Generative Explanations: Computational Models with Double Agents</i>
14:45-15:00	Discussion
15:00-15:30	Keith SAWYER, Washington University <i>Conversation as Mechanism: Emergence in Creative Groups</i>
15:30-15:45	Discussion
	Break
16:00-16:30	Petri YLIKOSKI, University of Helsinki <i>Social Mechanisms and the Problem of Explanatory Relevance</i>
16:30-16:45	Discussion
16:45 -17:15	Michael SCHMID, Bundeswehr Munich University <i>The Logic of Mechanistic Explanations in Social Science</i>
17:15-17:30	Discussion
17:30-17:45	Gianluca MANZO, CNRS (GEMAS), Paris <i>Conclusion</i>