

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)
- École doctorale 5 - Concepts et Langages (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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Centre d'Études Sociologiques de la Sorbonne (CESS)  
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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<br><i>Introduction</i>   |
|             | <b>Session 1 - Chair : Peter HEDSTRÖM, Oxford University</b>   |
| 9:15-9:45   | Raymond BOUDON, University of Paris– Sorbonne, Institut de France (ASMP)<br><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<br><i>Articulating Social and Cognitive Mechanisms</i>  |
| 10:30-10:45 | Discussion   |
|             | Break  |
| 11:00-11:30 | Mohamed CHERKAOUI, CNRS (GEMAS), Paris<br><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<br><i>Neighborhood-Effect Mechanisms, Causality, and the Social Structure of the City</i>                     |
| 12:15-12:30 | Discussion   |
|             | <b>Session 2 - Chair : Mario DIANI, University of Trento</b>   |
| 14:15-14:45 | Jon ELSTER, Collège de France<br><i>Emotional Mechanisms</i>   |
| 14:45-15:00 | Discussion   |
| 15:00-15:30 | Michel FORSÉ, CNRS (Centre Maurice Halbwachs), Paris<br><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<br><i>Analytical Sociology and Social Structure</i>  |
| 16:30-16:45 | Discussion   |
| 16:45-17:15 | Emmanuel LAZEGA, University of Paris-Dauphine<br><i>The Social Mechanisms of Cooperation among Competitors</i>                                   |
| 17:15-17:30 | Discussion   |

Saturday 18 October

|             |   |
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|             | <b>Session 3 - Chair: Gianluca MANZO, CNRS (GEMAS), Paris</b>   |
| 9:15-9:45   | Peter HEDSTRÖM, Nuffield College, University of Oxford<br><i>Middle-range Analytics</i>   |
| 9:45-10:00  | Discussion  |
| 10:00-10:30 | Peter ABELL, London School of Economics<br><i>Infrequent Mechanisms and Bayesian Narratives</i>                                   |
| 10:30-10:45 | Discussion  |
|             | Break   |
| 11:00-11:30 | François CHAZEL, University of Paris–Sorbonne<br><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<br><i>Social Mechanism and Tension: a Neo-Weberian Approach</i>                    |
| 12:15-12:30 | Discussion  |
|             | <b>Session 4 - Chair : Pierre DEMEULENAERE, University of Paris–Sorbonne</b>  |
| 14:15-14:45 | Michael MACY, Cornell University<br><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<br><i>Conversation as Mechanism: Emergence in Creative Groups</i>                             |
| 15:30-15:45 | Discussion  |
|             | Break   |
| 16:00-16:30 | Petri YLIKOSKI, University of Helsinki<br><i>Social Mechanisms and the Problem of Explanatory Relevance</i>                       |
| 16:30-16:45 | Discussion  |
| 16:45-17:15 | Michael SCHMID, Bundeswehr Munich University<br><i>The Logic of Mechanismic Explanations in Social Science</i>                    |
| 17:15-17:30 | Discussion  |
| 17:30-17:45 | Gianluca MANZO, CNRS (GEMAS), Paris<br><i>Conclusion</i>  |