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# RC23 NEWSLETTER

*Special Issue in Honor and Memory of Robert K. Merton  
& First Robert K. Merton Award for Distinguished  
Contributions to the Sociology of Science and Technology*

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Sociology of Science  
and Technology



## Forthcoming December 2019 Newsletter

Please send articles, book announcements  
and other material by September 1, 2019 to:

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# THE FIRST ROBERT K. MERTON AWARD CEREMONY

during the session

## “In Memory of First RC23 President Robert K. Merton”

at the XIX World Congress in Toronto (July 18, 2018)

Please find below speeches from the ceremony

**Nadia Asheulova:** Dear colleagues and distinguished guests! It is a great honor for us to open a special Session in Memory of the First RC23 President Robert King Merton. Robert Merton was one of the leading sociologists of the 20th century. The interest in his activity has not diminished. R. Merton's name is connected with many directions in sociological research, but first and foremost it turned into the eponym for sociology of science, the phrase the “Mertonian sociology of science” was widely accepted by the scientific community. In 1966, R. Merton became one of the founders, organizer and the first President of the Research Committee on the Sociology of Science (RC23) of the International Sociological Association. Merton's activity in this position was in many ways decisive for theoretical and institutional development of the sociology of science worldwide. In honor and memory of Robert King Merton, the RC23 Committee has established **The Robert K. Merton Award for Distinguished Contribution to the Sociology of Science and Technology**.

The Executive Committee of ISA approved the award in May, 2016 and it is intended to recognize and showcase the outstanding, long-term achievement of an individual researcher to the field rather than the excellence of an individual book or single idea. RC23 kindly invites Merton's students, senior researchers and younger scholars with an interest in Robert K. Merton's work to contribute. The session will reconsider Merton's legacy and attempt to link it with contemporary issues. RC23 produced the Silver Medal with a special design.



According to certificate, a single copy of the medal was produced on the 4th of July, 2018, which is also a special date, as it is the birthday of Robert Merton.

The first Lifetime Achievement Award will be granted during this Special Session. I kindly invite the Vice President of RC23 and Board member of the Award Committee Professor Emerita Alice Abreu to announce the decision.



**Alice Abreu:** It is my great pleasure to present to you **Francisco Sagasti** winner of **The Robert Merton Award for Distinguished Contribution to the Sociology of Science and Technology** awarded by RC23 in recognition of his contribution to the field of social studies of science and technology.

Francisco Sagasti has been one of the leading scholars and policy makers in the field of social studies of science and technology, particularly with reference to developing countries, for the last fifty years. Since he published his first monographs and academic papers in the early 1970s, Dr. Sagasti has made significant conceptual and policy analysis contributions to the better understanding of the relations between science, technology and society in developing countries. In addition, he has played important roles as a policy maker at the national and international levels, using his theoretical and historical insights to better understand the role that knowledge plays in the process of development.



He is a Professor at the Graduate School of the Universidade do Pacífico, with a Ph.D in operations research and social systems sciences from the University of Pennsylvania. From his very first papers, Professor Sagasti focused on the application of the systems approach to science and technology policy making and planning, on technology transfer, and on planning methods for scientific research and technological development in developing countries.

A good example is the STPI project a large-scale comparative policy research project on science and technology policy implementation in ten developing countries, in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

Since then his achievements have been many. He has been a visiting lecturer at universities in the United States, Europe and developing regions. In Peru, Dr. Sagasti has been founder and executive director of GRADE, a policy-oriented think tank; advisor to the ministers of Foreign Affairs, Education, Industry and the Prime Minister; advisor to the Chief of the National Planning Institute and member of the Board of the National Council for Science and Technology; and has taught at the Universidad del Pacífico and the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, and has been a consultant to numerous private, public and civil society organizations.

Dr. Sagasti has published more than 25 books including: *Looking back to move forward: a 40 year retrospective of the STPI project*, Lima, FORO Nacional Internacional, 2015; *Ciencia, Tecnología, Innovación: Políticas para América Latina*, Lima/Mexico, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2011 (2013); the first comprehensive assessment of the evolution of science and technology policies in the region, which is used as textbook in graduate courses *Knowledge and Innovation for Development: The Sisyphus Challenge of the 21st Century*, Cheltenham, Edward Elgar, 2004.

He is also the author of more than 150 papers and book chapters.

Combining academic research with policy practice throughout his academic and professional life, Dr. Sagasti has made unique contributions that amply justify awarding him the Robert Merton Prize for distinguished contribution to the sociology of science and technology.

**Nadia Asheulova:** It is a great honor for us that Dr. Harriet Zuckerman, Professor Emerita of Columbia University, the wife of Robert Merton, former board member of RC23, and a noted sociologist of science in her own right, has come to our special event. Dear Harriet we invite you to say some words and grant the Medal to professor Francisco Sagasti.

**Harriet Zuckerman:**

I didn't know that I would have the chance to award the first Robert Merton medal, of the International Sociological Association and the RC23. But I'm delighted that's the case. As I told Nadia Asheulova a little earlier today, I was in Evian, at the very first session of what came to be the RC23. Did I think at the time that



some 34 years later that I would turn up here in Toronto, across the Atlantic, and that the field would be as vibrant and as active as it is? I was not that prescient. What I can say is you can think of me as a historical artifact. I think I am the only living person in this room, there are no dead people in this room, I'm the only person in this room that goes back that far and it's testimony to the to the endurance of the research that interests us all. Robert K. Merton and I (emphasize the *K* because there is a Robert C. Merton, who was his son and who is an exceedingly distinguished economist) have been very pleased, very pleased, with the willingness, of Nadia and all our friends on the RC23 Committee to get this prize established. He would have been delighted, I'm sure, that this, what I am discovering, is a kind of walk in total sociology. I say total because I discovered today at lunch that we even have a sociologist of dance who has received this medal. Robert King Merton really liked the ballet, but he never conceived that there would be a sociology of dance. So just let me say that Professor Sagasti is a wonderfully apt recipient to receive this medal, and remember Robert K. Merton's doctoral dissertation "Science, Technology & Society in Seventeenth Century Britain" was written in the 1930s. He remained active in the field his very last book "The Travels and Adventures of Serendipity", published when he was 93 years old. Well, that is a demonstration of commitment. He was a sociologist for all seasons and so is Professor Sagasti.

**Nadia Asheulova:** We now invite Professor Francisco Sagasti, a notable Peruvian scientist, to come and receive the Robert K. Merton Award.



# The 2018 Robert K. Merton Prize acceptance address

**Dr. Francisco Sagasti, Professor, Pacífico Business School, Lima, Peru**

In the first place, let me thank the president of RC23, Dr. Nadia Asheulova, Dr. Jaime Jiménez, chairman of the Robert K. Merton prize committee, and the other committee members, Alice Abreu, Ralph Matthews, Gary Bowden and Antonio Moniz, for conferring on me such a high honor. Fully aware of the very special place that Robert K. Merton occupies in the study of science and technology, I am humbled by the decision made by the committee. I am also most grateful to have Dr. Harriet Zuckerman, a most distinguished scholar and partner of Robert K. Merton, to grace this event with her presence. Thanks again to all of you.



When thinking about how to express my gratitude for this honor, I went back half a century ago, when I started to work in the field of science, technology and development. A coincidence, clearly of the type Dr. Merton was fond of highlighting in his remarks about serendipity, led me to be in Lima at the time the National Research Council of Peru was created, and I was looking for a Ph.D. dissertation topic in social systems sciences and operations research. Soon I focused on how to design policy interventions and plan the development of science and technology capabilities in developing countries.

This is a most important issue, perhaps one of the most pressing in our times. While income and wealth inequalities between rich and poor countries have captured international attention, inequalities in science, technology and innovation capabilities are much more pronounced. The average income per capita of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries — the rich countries club — is about 60 times greater than that of the low-income countries as defined by World Bank indicators; however, the number of scientific articles published per 100,000 inhabitants in rich countries is 170 times greater than that of low-income countries, and the number of patents registered in the former is 1000 times greater than in the later. Bear in mind that rich countries have accumulated these advantages for a long time, and that the “Mathew effect” clearly identified and reported by Robert K. Merton and Harriet Zuckerman, confers additional advantages on those that already have science and technology capabilities.

Dr. Merton's *Science, Technology, and Society in Seventeenth Century England* monograph was among the first works I read on the subject at the suggestion of University of Pennsylvania professor Thomas Hughes. Together with contributions from scholars Derek the Solla Price, John D. Bernal, Lewis Mumford, Jacob Bronowski, Stephen Toulmin and June Goodfield, and Latin American intellectuals like Raúl Prebisch, Helio Jaguaribe, Jorge Sábato, Amílcar Herrera and Osvaldo Sunkel, among others, I began to develop a novel approach to the design and implementation of science and technology policies in developing countries. My dissertation advisor, Russell L. Ackoff and other mentors like Eric Trist, Ignacy Sachs, Geoffrey Oldham, Hasan Ozbekhan, Howard Perlmutter and Lawrence Klein guided my steps when venturing into the then no-man's land of science, technology and development.

Let me now link some of the work I did at that time with the seminal ideas of Robert K. Merton. In a sense, his characterization of "obliteration by incorporation" led to my taking several of his contributions for granted, and when revising his texts for this address I realized how much does my early work owes to him.

First, "middle-range theories" are what I set to develop in my dissertation and further research: those that lie between broad generalizations aiming at unified and universally applicable theories, and those intellectual constructs focused on specific issues derived from empirical evidence. As I worked in Latin American, African and Asian countries, I found similarities that afforded a certain degree of generalization, but also contextual differences that precluded sweeping statements and theories applicable in all settings. But my work was also "middle-range" in another sense: it lied squarely between academic intellectual work and practical public policy interventions. Theory and practice have been inextricably intertwined right from the beginning of my academic and professional life: not yet thirty years old, even before defending my PhD dissertation, I became vice-Chairman of the Board of the Industrial Technology Institute in Peru. The middle-range character of practically all my work, which combines theory and practice, continues until now.

Moreover, constructing theories to guide the creation of science and technology capabilities in developing countries is decidedly a "middle-range" task. During the last five decades I have been fortunate to be involved in numerous actual policy and political problems that required innovative concepts and interpretations to guide practical interventions. These include my work in several Peruvian and Latin American public and private institutions, in the Science and Technology Policy Instruments project carried in ten developing countries with more than 150 full-time researchers during the 1970s, in the preparations for and negotiations the 1979 UN Conference on Science and Technology for Development, in the creation of GRADE the leading Peruvian think-tank I helped to set up during the 1980s, in the organization of the strategic planning division at the World Bank, in the UN Advisory Committee on Science and Technology as member and chairman, in several international boards and advisory committees, and in many other organizations and agencies I have had the opportunity to work and collaborate with.

Second, the idea of "unanticipated consequences of social action," articulated by Dr. Merton, has led to detailed examinations of inconsistencies in science and technology policy design and implementation. Finding that science and technology policies often hit a wall when other policy interventions — economic, social, financial, trade, labor, and so on — block their intended effect, we developed the concepts of "explicit, implicit, and resultant policies;" "equivalent explicit policies;" "policy instruments

structures, vintages, and pathologies;” and “clusters of function- and issue-oriented policy instruments;” as well as criteria for evaluating the adequacy and effectiveness of different ways of designing and implementing science and technology policies.

With some trepidation, following in the footsteps of Robert K. Merton and Harriet Zuckerman, I would like to propose a “second Mathew effect.” According to verse 6:3 of the Gospel of Matthew, “when you do merciful deeds, don’t let your left hand know what your right hand does.” This clearly explains what happens when the merciful deed of designing and implementing science and technology policies with a government’s right hand is frustrated by the impact other government policies designed and implemented with the left hand. Since the early 1970s we have found many instances of the “second Mathew effect” all over the world, in which other public policies undermine and sabotage efforts to develop science and technology capabilities. This is also closely related to what has been called the “Sisyphus syndrome,” which describes how carefully built capabilities are destroyed at the stroke of a pen by indifferent, ignorant or incompetent politicians and government officials.

I wish there was more time to describe how Robert K. Merton’s contributions relate to my academic and professional activities during the last half century. However, let me conclude with some remarks on how they will affect my work in the future.

Robert K. Merton’s references to Sir Francis Bacon in his *Science, Technology and Society in Seventeenth Century England* awakened my interest in the life, work and impact of this extraordinarily complex philosopher and statesman. Over the years I have tried to flesh out and understand better what philosopher Hans Jonas referred to as the “Baconian program” of dominating nature through understanding. After many years of research, I am now half way in the process of writing a book on “the twilight of Bacon’s age,” which attempts to provide an account of the unfolding, deployment, triumph and twilight of the program that Bacon articulated four centuries ago. I hope there will be another opportunity to exchange views on this subject with the members of RC23 in the not too distant future.

Finally, there is a passage in Robert K. Merton’s seminal 1972 article on “Insiders and Outsiders” that I would like to quote somewhat at length:

“As the society becomes polarized, so do the contending claims to truth, At the extreme, an active and reciprocal distrust between groups finds expression in intellectual perspectives that are no longer located within the same universe of discourse. The more deep-seated the mutual distrust, the more does the argument of the other appear so palpably implausible, even absurd, that one no longer inquires into substance or logical structure to assess its truth claims. ... In the political arena, where the rules of the game often condone and sometimes support the practice, this involves reciprocated attacks on the integrity of the opponent; in the academic forum, where the norms are somewhat more restraining, it leads to reciprocated ideological analyses (which easily declines into innuendo). In both, the process feeds upon and nourishes collective insecurities.”

Bearing in mind such clear-headed admonishment, I decided a couple of years ago to fully wade into the political swamps. Together with a dedicated leader, Julio Guzmán, and many other committed colleagues, we are in the process of creating a new political party to participate in the 2021 national elections. I will run for political

office, attempting to find common ground between those holding opposite views, and to introduce integrity and some measure of sanity in the way our country is run.

Armed with a panoply of intellectual weapons, several of them inspired by Robert K. Merton, in a very “middle-range” way I hope to contribute both to a better understanding of the human predicament at the twilight of Bacon’s age, and to help improve the opportunity structure and the quality of life in my own and in other developing countries. Thank you once again for this honor, and I look forward to remaining engaged with the members of the International Sociological Association Research Committee 23 that Robert K. Merton so presciently founded.



**Nadia Asheulova:** We now have the pleasure of giving the floor to Professor Sari Hanafi, Vice-President of the International Sociological Association, for a final word.

**Sari Hanafi:** I am so pleased that RC23, my RC, took such initiative and on behalf of Margareth Abraham, President of ISA, who could not be here because of the parallel Past Presidents Session which she is chairing, I would like to congratulate you all for institution of the Robert K. Merton Award for Distinguished Contributions to the Sociology of Science and Technology. We found this initiative as exemplary and hope that other RCs will follow you example. Congratulations also to Prof. Francisco Sagasti, the first recipient of the award. Thank you all.

