THINKING THROUGH TECHNIQUE

a workshop with John Levi Martin

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Department of Sociology

VUB - Brussels
In the age of the internet, touchscreens and digital media, sociologists often prove remarkably old-fashioned in their methodologies and continue to place their faith in traditional techniques of data-gathering, like the questionnaire or the interview. However, the validity and sustainability of these ‘paper & pencil’-techniques is facing increasing challenges. On the one hand, over-questioned and over-surveyed respondents show declining appetites for lengthy questionnaires and interviews leading to low response-rates and superficial answers. On the other hand, new theoretical developments within the field (practice theory, dual-process models, cognitive science, etc.) increasingly question the ecological validity of the type of data that can be gathered through surveys or interviewing. Such developments force sociologists to seriously explore the potential of new research techniques. Crucially, such an exploration needs to go further than the blind faith in the power of “Big Data” or “behavioral algorithms” to a serious discussion of the theoretical, epistemological and ethical challenges posed by new research-technologies.

This 1-day-workshop is open to sociologists who use innovative methods of data-gathering (video/audio/photo, quasi-experiments, Big Data, etc.) to tap into the practical logic that informs people’s actions, perceptions and judgments. It provides a forum in which researchers can present their findings and discuss the relevance and potential of new research techniques. Those who are interested are asked to send a title and abstract of their presentation to TTTbxl2019@gmail.com before May 1st 2019.

Participation is open to everyone, but participants are asked to pay a small administrative fee of 30 euro’s to cover logistics and catering.

**KEYNOTE SPEAKER: JOHN LEVI MARTIN**

John Levi Martin is the Florence Borchert Bartling Professor of Sociology at the University of Chicago. His research interests include the formation of social networks, the logic of belief systems, field theory and the epistemology and methodology of the social sciences. He is the author of ‘Social Structures’ (Princeton University Press, 2009) and ‘The Explanation of Social Action’ (Oxford University Press, 2011) which both received the prestigious “Theory Award” from the American Sociological Association. More recently, he published the trilogy ‘Thinking Through Theory’ (W.W. Norton, 2015), ‘Thinking Through Methods’ (University of Chicago Press, 2017) and ‘Thinking Through Statistics’ (University of Chicago Press, 2018).