

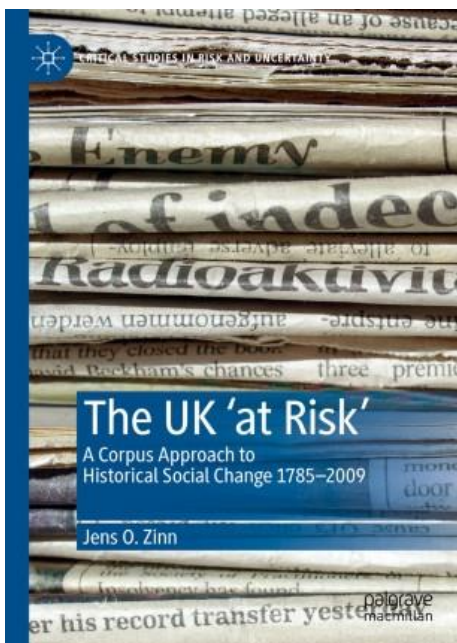
SOCIOLOGY SALON

3 AUGUST 2022

SOCIOLOGY SALON WITH GUEST SPEAKER DR. JENS O. ZINN: *WHAT CAN A WORD SUCH AS “RISK” TELL US ABOUT SOCIAL CHANGE?*

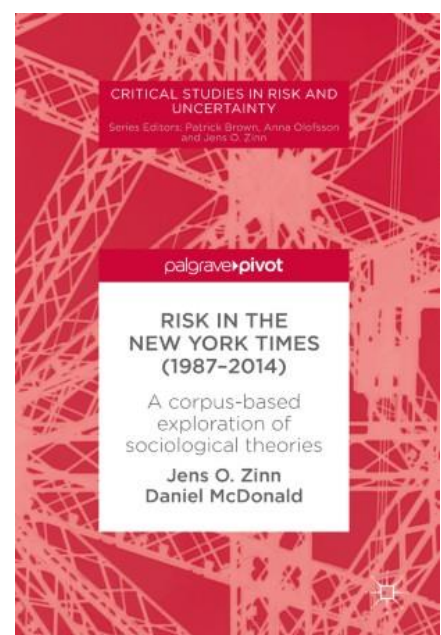
TIME: 3 AUGUST 2022: 4PM - 5PM

VENUE: LEVEL 4 - LINKWAY, JOHN MEDLEY BUILDING



One might think a word is just a word and can hardly tell us much about the more fundamental structural and cultural dynamics of the social world. Others might suggest that a word can tell us almost everything about society since language is a constitutive part of the social world and an important medium involved in the exchange, reproduction and shift of (social) meaning. In language, the past leaves traces, as does the imagined future. Language combines long-term social changes as well as short-term variations. In language, social structures are reproduced as much as social changes are anticipated. In short, language is an ideal source to examine how the past and the anticipation of the future are interwoven and change over time.

In this presentation I present some results of my exploration of the social changes informing the discourse semantic shift towards risk in the 20th and 21st century. Specifically, I will reconstruct the sources of the rapidly increasing use of the ‘at risk’ expression in the print news media that characterises a fundamental shift towards a new *zeitgeist*. The work rests on a research initiative which started about a decade ago utilising corpus linguistic research tools for the analysis of sociological theories (Zinn, 2010, 2019, 2020; Zinn & McDonald, 2018; Zinn & Müller, 2022).



Speaker Biography

Dr Jens O. Zinn studied Sociology, Social Psychology and Political Science at the University of Saarland and the University of Bielefeld. He worked at the Collaborative Research Centre Status Passages and Risks in the Life Course in Bremen (1995-99), the Collaborative Research Centre Reflexive Modernization in Munich (1999-02) and in the ESRC priority network Social Contexts and Responses to Risk at the University of Kent (2003-08). Jens has founded a number of international research networks on the Sociology of Risk and Uncertainty (SoRU) within the European Sociological Association (2005) and the International Sociological Association (2006). His research activities include a number of studies on people's management of risk and uncertainty during the course of their life – e.g., youth transitions into the labour market, certainty constructions in reflexive modernity, and British veterans' management of risk and uncertainty.



References

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- Zinn, J. O., & McDonald, D. (2018). *Risk in The New York Times (1987-2014): A corpus-based exploration of sociological theories*. doi:10.1007/978-3-319-64158-4
- Zinn, J. O., & Müller, M. (2022). Understanding discourse and language of risk. *Journal of Risk Research*, 25(3), 271-284. doi:10.1080/13669877.2021.2020883

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WHEN: 3 AUGUST 4PM-5PM



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