***Personal Recollections about the Research Committee 36 Prepared for the 40th Anniversary Interim Conference of RC 36 in Moscow, Russia May 22,23, 2019***

***Erkki Berndtson, University of Helsinki***

*Member of RC’s Executive Committee, 1991-2014, Secretary 1994-2000*

My own experience with the RC 36 on Political Power began in 1988, when the RC was still a Study Group. I gave a paper on “The Concept of Power in the Study of Political Science: Conceptual Changes and Future Possibilities” in the Group’s panel in the IPSA World Congress in Washington, D.C. The panel was chaired by David Baldwin and there were only two paper givers, Henri Goverde and me. At the time, I did not know that that was the beginning of a long journey with the RC and a friendship with Henri!

Before the next IPSA Congress in Buenos Aires (1991), the status of the Study Group had been changed into a Research Committee. Those were the days when IPSA wanted to start new groups as study groups, before they were given a recognition as research committees with more rights and responsibilities. One of the new responsibilities was that a RC had to have an Executive Committee. Accordingly, the first business meeting of the RC 36 was held in Buenos Aires. Although I was not present in the business meeting, I learned later that I had been elected as a member of the new Executive. To this day, I have no idea, who had proposed me. Maybe it was my 1988 paper.

One thing led to another, and in 1994, I found myself as Secretary of the RC, at the same time when Henri Goverde followed David Baldwin as Chair. I served as Secretary until 2000, and one of my duties was to produce a yearly Newsletter. This was a time when we had not really entered the digital world and very few of our members thought it as necessary to give the RC their email addresses. This meant that the newsletter had to be printed and then sent to all our one hundred members by regular mail. But times changed and when Mark Haugaard replaced me as Secretary in 2000, he was able to begin to distribute RC news electronically. Lucky him!

After I quit as Secretary, I continued as a member of the RC Executive until 2014. This was, of course, a way too long time, but being a member of the Executive, gave an opportunity to meet many great scholars, some of whom became good friends, Henri Goverde, Mark Haugaard and Phil Cerny, to name the few. Henri and I even found out that we had a common interest in “power and public space”, having courses on the subject in our own departments. We then managed to use the EU’s Erasmus teacher exchange program to visit each other’s courses. We used these visits also to plan the work of the RC. This helped to organize some of the interim meetings of the RC, which were held four times in Finland and twice in the Netherlands between 1995-2015.

I have good memories of all our meetings, but one of the most memorable of them was the 2010 interim meeting in the Soeterbeeck Conference Center in the Netherlands (Ravenstein). The Center is an old convent which offered a perfect environment for academic and non-academic discussions. The only problem was that during the meeting, the Eyjafjallajökull volcano in Iceland erupted and the European flight traffic was cancelled for about a week. The participants who had flew in had to find other means to get back home, by car, by train and for some also by boat. I myself stayed an extra night in Henri’s house, then took a train from Nijmegen to Hamburg (the train was packed!), then a bus and a boat from Hamburg to Copenhagen (where I stayed overnight at Henri’s friends), continued next morning by train to Stockholm and finally took an overnight boat to Helsinki. It is not only political and social power which affects us, but we should certainly pay more attention also to the forces of nature. The experience also showed, how important it is to have good friends which offer you help when you need it.

***Mark Haugaard,*** ***National University Ireland, Galway***

*RC Secretary 2000-2007, RC Chair 2007-2014, Editor of the Journal of Political Power (2011-present--formerly the Journal of Power-2008-2011)*

*Spaces Apart: The RC 36, 2010, interim meeting, at Soeterbeek, the Netherlands.*

It is April, the end of term, 2010. In Galway, exams have to corrected; reports to be filled in; meetings attended: it is a busy time. All the while, Kevin Ryan and I are in correspondence with Henri Goverde, in Nijmegen, concerning the proposed interim meeting. This one was to be different from the rest (how different we had yet to learn). We were not using the usual university facilities, nor staying in hotels. Henri had arranged that we hire a former convent, which is converted to a conference centre. It is located in the middle of the countryside, therefore without the usual urban infrastructure. We would live at the convent; eat most of our meals there, with only a conference dinner outside. The total hire was expensive, so it depended upon numbers, and as usual, there were last minute cancellations, all of which placed more pressure upon Henri’s shoulders, as the local organizer. All this created a certain tension in advance around the interim meeting.

Travelling from Ireland were a number of colleagues: Kevin Ryan, Kieran Keohane, Jonathan Heaney, Patrick O’Mahony and myself.

I, Kevin and Jonathan arrive together at Schipol, Amsterdam. It’s all hustle and bustle and we marvel at Dutch efficiency, contrasting it with Ireland (as all

Irish do, when they travel). We meet with Kieran and Pat, staying overnight in Amsterdam. Next morning, we catch a couple of trains, connecting into a rural rail network. On the train we joke about a strange text-message from Jonathan Hearn, who can’t make it from Edinburgh because of a dust-cloud – the most absurd excuse ever, we think.

Our instruction from Henri is to get off at a small station from which we can walk to Soeterbeek. The train slows and then stops. I look out and glance back at my friends. Should we really get off here? Is this the right place? There is a platform, a sign bearing the correct name, but with no buildings anywhere nearby, surrounded only by large fields. It looks like a stop purpose-built as a drop-off for agricultural equipment and supplies of fertiliser. The moment we step off, we enter a different space. As the train pulls away, we find ourselves in the depths of the Dutch countryside - fields, hedges, the hum of insects, swallows soaring and dipping overhead. The only road draws the eye towards trees in the distance, while the curving railway line, with the disappearing train, frames the outside. Together they are reminiscent of an art lesson in perspective and composition. From the hustle and bustle of exam deadlines, meetings, and the busy airport, we have been dropped into the calm of an archetypal Dutch rural landscape.

We walk toward the woods, the warm April sun on our backs. Signposts point us to our destination, which is a large 18th C. house situated in parkland. Inside, elegant windows, with countless panes of rippled antique glass, draw the landscape inside. The house is decorated in muted shades of grey, blue and white, which meld with the greens of outside. As you walk across the massive floorboards, they creak underfoot. The elegant facade of the house is oriented

toward a park, with two-hundred-year-old trees situated on a lawn that slopes down to a pond. In contrast to this public elegance, our rooms are sparsely furnished, and the refectory has a simple, enormous oak table. The private spaces retain the stark simplicity of a convent, dedicated to the simple life. There is no Wifi (in those days using the phone for the internet was the exception). We have entered a place apart.

The space and seclusion give the conference a special feel. We can concentrate on our papers, as the world outside recedes. For the conference dinner, we go to a restaurant in a 17th C. village nearby. The streets are lit by gas street lamps, which soften the lines of the weathered brick buildings and create deep shadows. We remain inside our perfect, calm, pre-modern world.

On the morning of the last day, I am standing on the terrace, contemplating the trees. Phil Cerny interrupts my reverie with a question: “Has the Icelandic volcanic ash-cloud affected your flight?”

I stare blankly at Phil. Has he taken leave of his senses? Is he on drugs? Iceland? Ash-cloud? What is he talking about?

Suddenly the word spreads, like a ripple, people start checking their phones. The world outside explodes in upon us. All flights are cancelled, indefinitely, because of an Icelandic ash-cloud.

The world-out-there demands our attention and, of course, we are way behind everyone else “out-there” in rearranging our travel plans. To return to Ireland my colleagues and I have to take the ferry back, from Le Havre to Rosslare. But how to get to Le Havre? The most obvious is to hire a car but we are too late now. There are no cars to be hired in the Netherlands – all taken. I recall the existence of an airport in Germany, which lies close to the Dutch

border. Yes, they have a car to hire. The last one, do I want it? Yes, although I feel slightly crazy saying so.

With Henri’s help, Kevin, Kieran, Jonathan, Pat and I make our way there via Nijmegen. There then followed a two-day drive to Le Havre. The trip was now entering yet a different space apart. We all knew each other but this was on a different level. We were five guys, unexpectedly, together on a road trip. We each assumed our role: I drove; Jonathan, with his infectious good humor, was the clever tech guy who knew how to use Google Maps on his phone (few of us did, back then); Kieran was the one who planned where we stopped, at sites which were always of French cultural significance; Pat was the expert upon food (especially cakes); and Kevin regaled us with stories of dust-bowls in the Australian outback and getting lost in Himalayas. We had the most amazing time together!

When we reached the ferry, it was jampacked. We slept on deck, which was a scene reminiscent of the black and white photos of the deck of a refugee ship. This was yet another space: one of openness among strangers. Everyone on the ferry had a story to tell. We had all travelled overland, using whatever means of transport we could find, from the far corners of Europe. I was reminded of accounts of wars and disasters, where people suddenly find their common humanity, and barriers break down.

Back in Ireland, Patricia has driven to collect us at Rosslare. The car is small, how will we fit the baggage in? Kevin opens the boot and peers inside. A stunned look crosses his face. A dead, brightly-feathered, cock pheasant is stretched out in the boot. “Oh, yes,” explains Patricia, “I found it as road-kill, so I thought we might cook it for dinner” - the culmination of surreal experience.

We all parted, with a feeling of warmth, but also sadness, as this was the end of a conference like none other. The last taste of this special event was checking emails from our friends at Soeterbeek: reading of their adventures on the way home.

***Kevin Ryan, National University Ireland, Galway***

*Secretary to RC36 from 2008-14*

Celebrating an historical milestone, whether a landmark wedding anniversary, a significant birthday, or indeed a special occasion to mark the longevity of a club or association, can be a tricky affair to the extent that the event generally follows a script. The mood or tone is one of celebration, and the stories that mark such occasions are generally happy, funny, perhaps laced with a touch of irony or occasional gravitas. Moreover, when people gather at such events to share stories, the script directs a focus on recollecting the good stuff, which of course entails forgetting much of what we endure and experience in the context of the ordinary and the everyday. The reason I mention this is not because I have any negative memories of RC36, in fact I don’t! The point I wish to make is that my memories of participating in the activities of RC36 over the years (since 2004) are memories of movement and occasional friction, by which I do not mean heated arguments, but rather a vibrant exchange of ideas and perspectives. How to capture this in a short reflection? I honestly cannot think of a single episode that sums it all up, so let me offer a few remarks instead: first, I have never sensed the likelihood that RC36 will generate something like a school of thought. At the risk of poaching on our colleague Mark Haugaard’s Wittgensteinian-inspired approach to the study of social and political power, RC36 is home to a constellation of language games, and this has shaped its character as an agonistic space of dialogue. That to me is a major plus, and long may it continue. Second, in the years I have been involved with the RC, there has always been a cohort of colleagues who appear time and again at the interim meetings and World Congress panels, but there have also always been people who appear one time only. This too is a major plus in my view, not least because newcomers are always warmly welcomed and never fail to bring something fresh and interesting to the discussion. Put remarks one and two together, and that combination to me is worth celebrating. More importantly, these are qualities of a forum that has arguably never been as important as it is right now in the age of ‘post-truth’ politics and pervasive demagoguery. As a transdisciplinary space for the study of political power, RC36 arguably has a role to play in the years ahead in terms of fielding and supporting critical inquiry.

***Henri Goverde, Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen***

*Former Secretary 1994 and Chair till 2007*

The World Congress in Moscow (1979) was my first participation in the   
context of IPSA. During that conference in the Lomonosov University I   
have joined the panels of the RC36 Political Power, then under   
leadership of Prof David Baldwin. During IPSA world congress in Paris   
(1985) I was elected as Secretary of the RC36 and during the business   
meeting in Berlin (1994), I have followed David Baldwin as president of   
the group. This presidency lasted till 2007, when the group participated   
with its interim-meeting in the Power conference organized by colleagues   
in Tampere (Finand).  
  
The IPSA World Congress in Moscow was for sure a great international   
political event. Carl Deutsch, then IPSA president, was very proud of   
the fact that IPSA was able to negotiate successfully with the Sofjets   
to hold the conference in Moscow. The opening session, however, was in   
the main hall of the trade-union with the huge white marble pillars,   
i.e. the place where Stalin had ordered to start the main (show) court   
processes in the late thirties of the 20th century. The conference   
itself was organized at two floors in the main tower of the Lomonosov   
university. The space was far too small to host all the participants for   
two reasons at least. First, Moscow was political attractive in those   
days. For example, I remember that from the Netherlands we travelled as   
a group of circa 30 political scientists (via Leningrad) to Moscow.   
Travelling together is for Dutch scientists, generally being   
individualists pur-sang a very exceptional case: it never happened   
again. Second, there were many Russian students and young scientists   
standing outside not being part of the 'Russian delegation', who tried   
to find their way into the conference. As we got several types of badges   
in our conference information package, we could help some students to   
enter the conference. As a result, all conference rooms were permanently   
overcrowded. Though there were opportunities to present and discuss   
about many issues, there was also a type of filibuster because Russian   
colleagues expressed their thoughts in long written statements all in   
the non-official conference Russian language. So, interpreters had a lot   
of work. Helas, not all colleagues could get earphones to hear the   
translations. Frustration all over, of course. On the other hand, during   
the days of the conference there was openness as well. Many Dutch   
colleagues had prepared lists of dissidents. And it seemed that all   
taxidrivers (in front of the late Rossia-hotel) were fully prepared to   
bring us to every adress we want to visit. Therefore, it was possible   
that I could visit the Sacharovs in their flat together with some Dutch   
and Israeli colleagues. We got a short lecture about the activities of   
the KGB in those days.  
  
During this conference there were also two panels organized by the RC   
36. If I remember well the president David Baldwin (NY), and Frey from   
Philadelphia, as well the Swedish colleague Goran Therborn were among   
the paper-givers.  
  
In 1982, IPSA Worldcongress was in Rio de Janeiro. I have presented a   
paper in a session organized by the late Mattei Dogan (France). I   
remember two facts. Although it was allowed to speak about 20 minutes, I   
used 12 minutes only. As the session was just after lunchtime, it was   
not convenient for everybody. When I stopped speaking rather abruptly,   
it took some time before the panel-president, good old James Coleman,   
was able to finish his nap. Second, as I told the audience that Dutch   
people are generally proud to the the fact that instead God they have   
created their country, a Brazilian collaegue responded that the size of   
his country made him understood that God was a Brazilian.  
  
During the 1985 IPSA-conference in Paris, the RC36 had circa 30   
participants and two panels. In the business meeting I was elected as   
its secretary. In fact, it was only me who raised his hand when David   
Baldwin asked the audience who was ready to do it. As also Erkki   
Berntson has memorized we tried to keep the RC alive, mainly by   
distributing a short newsletter with the purpose to collect paper-givers   
for the next IPSA-world conferences. During the 1988 RC36 panels in   
Washington DC it was not successful. Besides Erkki and myself there was   
only one other paper-giver. However, the 1991 IPSA-conference in Buenos   
Aires was a success. We had three panels and a big audience.   
Furthermore, Baldwin and I concluded that it was time to try to   
organize an interim-meeting of the RC36 to create more ambition and   
continuity in the activities of the group. Our intention was okay, but   
it worked out not that superb in the short time. In 1994 however, during   
the IPSA-world congress in Berlin, we had two panels including some new   
participants (in particular Mark Haugaard and Steward Clegg) which have   
given a boost to the group during following conferences and particularly   
interim-meetings which became fruitful in common publications. The   
Berlin business meeting was not attended by many members. Because David   
Baldwin wanted to stop definitely his activities in the group, I   
followed him as president.  
  
Fortunately, in December 1995, Erkki Berntson found finances to organize   
the first interim-meeting in Helsinki. It was a success, about 12 papers   
were given during two days. It was a privilege to have Susan Strange as   
a very interesting discussant during this meeting, in particular because   
more than half of the papers concerned international power in political   
and economic affairs.  
  
The IPSA world-conferences brought us to Seoul (1997), Quebec (2000),   
Durban (2003), Fukuoka (2006). In Quebec I participated as member of the   
IPSA Executive Committee. It was a surprise for me, particularly because   
I was invited just a few days before the conference started. Anyway, not   
in this particular meeting but during the conference, I got the message   
that our group was officially accepted as a Research Group, because of   
our regular activities. A second interim-meeting was organized in my own   
university in Nijmegen (May 1998). Some members participated as key-note   
speakers and discussants in an international conference on behalf of a   
Lustrum celebration of the Faculty of Policy Sciences, besides our own   
RC36 panels. These resulted in two books: Global and European Polity?   
Organizations, politics, contexts (Henri Goverde, editor,Ashgate 2000),   
and: Power in Contemporay Politics. Theories, Practices, Globalizations   
(Henri Goverde, Philip G. Cerny, Mark Haugaard and Howard Lentner,   
editors, Sage, 2000).  
  
In the Durban panels (4 altogether) a long range of papers were debated   
intensely. Especially some colleagues promotes to change direction away   
from all the structural power research, back to methodological   
individualism. Furthermore, I remember that Mark Haugaard and myself   
were approached by more than one producer of academic journals to   
enhance us to start a magazine concerning affairs in political power. It   
was not the first time we were asked to do it. Speaking for myself, I   
had not the courage to take the opportunity without strong and garanteed   
professional support of native English writing editors. When Mark   
Haugaard, together with Kevin Ryan, were ready to elaborate this great   
task, it was a real excellent boost for the RC36 as well. Since the   
Journal of Political Power is in the academic market it is all the more   
clear how many colleagues were waiting for publishing their ideas and   
thoughts concerning political and social power, be it in political   
philosophical terms, in international political relations, or in   
empirical social scientific studies.  
  
A very interesting interim meeting in 2004 was organized by our   
colleagues and friends at the City University New York, the late Howard   
H. Lentner with helping hands of Benedetto Fontana and the late Anoush   
Koshkish. The result was another edited book: Mark Haugaard and Howard   
H. Lentner (editors), Hegemony and Power. Consensus and Coercion in   
Contemporary Politics, Lexington Books, Lanham, 2006.  
  
During the conference concerning power issues organized by Finnish   
colleagues in Tampere (2007), the RC 36 could organize circa 5 panels. A   
selected series of papers were elaborated for publication in a special   
issue about Power and Space (Journal of Power, August 2009).   
Furthermore, it was a great honor and pleasure for me to be able to   
transfer the presidency of the RC36 to one of the most active authors in   
the field of political power in the last 20 years, the Chief Editor of   
the Journal of Political Power, prof Mark Haugaard.  
  
The RC should also be grateful for Philip C. Cerny for his continuous   
concerns and activities in our main field of academic interest. Finally,   
since the RC 36 has grown as a real academic adult, I wish the president   
Giulio Gallarotti and his crew the best of success in all the activities   
in the near future, first during the 40th anniversary celebration in Moscow.

***Philip G. Cerny, University of Manchester (UK) and Rutgers University (USA)***

*RC 36 Chair 2014-2015*

When I was an undergraduate, I was taught by old fashioned political philosophy professors known as "Straussians" because they themselves had studied with the University of Chicago guru Leo Strauss. What I took from that very mixed experience (...!) was that ever since Plato, political theory was about the uneven, often unstable, even incoherent tension or conflict between two permanent, underlying principles of political and social life -- power and (or *versus*?) justice. For Plato, justice should be made to win out. It was normatively metaphysically genuine and authoritative. Real world power continually just got in the way and had to be controlled by philosophically trained, wise and good elites (like the Straussians themselves ...). For Machiavelli and Hobbes, however, it was the other way around. Political stability and progress demanded effective power structures first and foremost, even if they were controlled by nasty people. Despite the best intentions of the Straussians and my normative preference for justice (if not the kind of justice that Plato and the Straussians preferred), it seemed to me that we really needed to study power first and foremost in order to explain politics, society, history, and increasingly importantly, economics in the modern era -- unlike the neoliberal dominant economic ideology of recent decades. So when I came across IPSA RC36 at the World Congress in Paris in 1985, the section organized by my former colleague David Baldwin (he was a professor and I had just been a visiting professor at Dartmoth College), I was hooked. Been hooked ever since.

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***Lena Partszch, University Freiberg***

*Member RC 36*

The first time that I participated in a RC36 meeting was in Madrid. It was a very nice summer. I presented a paper which I had written together with Doris Fuchs and which was later published in Political Power. Stefano Guzzini gave a long comment on our paper, basically saying that there is no more power research without in-depth consideration of Foucault. We had a very fruitful discussion and later strolled around the city with the whole RC36 bunch. It was also in Madrid where I met Flor Avelino who has become a close friend.

***John Gaventa, Institute of Development Studies,***

*Member RC 36*

While I have only attended one set of events of the RC 36, the panels in the IPSA World Congress in 2016 in Poznan, Poland, I feel as if I have benefitted from the work of its members over the years.   Many of your names have featured in the collective work of the Power and Popular Politics group at the Institute of Development Studies, where I am based, as well as in my own writing. I look forward to further interactions in Moscow, 2019!