



In August 2020, Martha Zuber will retire as SASE Executive Director after a dozen years on the job. During that period, Martha has overseen SASE's growth from an association with some 300 members, drawn mainly from Europe and North America, to a society of more than 1000 members drawn from all over the world, including Asia, Latin America, and (to a lesser extent) Africa. Everyone involved with SASE during this period knows something of Martha, from her helpful messages and insistent reminders to her infinite kindness and insatiable intellectual curiosity (reminiscent of the Elephant's Child in Kipling's *Just So Stories*). Many will also have experienced Martha's remarkable capacity to connect people with undiscovered common interests, as well as her passion for sharing the fruits of her omnivorous reading, from socio-economics and contemporary politics to world literature. But how many of us really know Martha, as a person and an intellectual in her own right?

To fill this gap – and satisfy his own curiosity – SASE Past-President Jonathan Zeitlin invited Martha to answer a series of questions about her life history:

- How, where, and in what sort of milieu did you grow up?
- How did you come to move to and settle in France? What was it like to live there as an American expat with a French family?
- How did you come to work for the CSO (Centre de Sociologie des Organisations), and what was the intellectual environment there like?
- How did you come to know people like Michael Piore, Suzanne Berger, and the rest of the crowd from the Harvard Center for European Studies?

- How did you experience working with SASE over the past dozen years, and how you see the Society's growth and development?

Martha responded to these questions with an elegant autobiographical essay, which SASE is honored to publish on the Society's website.

Martha Zuber – An Unconventional Life in the World of Ideas

An invitation to write a reflection on one's professional trajectory prompts a large measure of anxiety as well as wonderful memories and retrospection. For me, it is usually the here and now that is most important....Even so, I guess I would say that the larger narrative where I am concerned is about building bridges. Here goes....

From Dorchester to Paris

My life in France started with the chance meeting of a Frenchman at Northeastern University when I was in my first year there. He was a senior in math. He was a voracious reader in philosophy and literature. Sartre and Camus were his heroes. When we first met, he was reading a book by Diderot describing a visit to an art exhibition. I found this very exotic! At that time, I had met very few men who read any sort of book except for school - let alone reading about going to an art exhibit. But I came from Dorchester, then a working-class Jewish neighborhood in Boston where the overriding concern of my parents was that their three daughters should only date and marry Jewish men or - we were often told - they would sit *shiva* for us [the seven-day mourning after the death of a close relative]. They did not believe in college for women, so I worked in a shoe store for a year after high school to finance my education.

Willy Zuber had been drafted into the French army immediately after his graduation. It was indeed a particularly uneasy time in France because of the war in Algeria. My husband was very much for Algerian independence but decided to serve for reasons of principle - he didn't want to be a deserter, he also wanted to experience the war for himself, in order, he always claimed, to make up his own mind about it. He refused to be an officer though, only a simple soldier.

I gave up Northeastern and the hope of any sort of career trajectory and followed my husband to France. A few days after our arrival (there were tanks in the streets of Paris at the time we arrived) Willy was in the army where he served, mostly in Algeria, for two years. It was a particularly uneasy time in France because of the war. At that time I knew very little about the war for independence.

There I was in a small Left Bank hotel room not far from where I live now. I had to find a job. I did not speak any French. Luckily through an ad in the New York *Herald-Tribune*, I found a job working for the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, colloquially known as SHAPE - where I worked as a typist for two years until De Gaulle ousted SHAPE from France. Most of the secretarial staff were French and spoke only French, although the engineers generating the work were Americans. It was there that I began to make real progress in French though I was typing texts in English.

The Cambridge Connection

A second act of chance was to shape my future in the world of ideas and social scientists: Relatives from Boston asked me to invite a lonesome Harvard student working in the Bibliothèque Nationale. It was Suzanne Berger, who in 1964 was working on her PhD thesis in Paris and Brittany which was to become the book *Peasants Against Politics* (1972). I love meeting new people, so I invited her for tea. She stayed until midnight. She and I immediately hit it off. We were two young rather naïve Americans (she already spoke good French, I did not) navigating the French scene, especially learning to deal and interact correctly with the French lest we make a faux pas. (Learning to go beyond the mostly impenetrable codes of social conduct among the French remains to this day a challenge.) We were pretty isolated those first years in France. I also owe a lot to my very French *belle famille* about face-to-face interaction and other important rules in France.

Through Suzanne I was pulled into the Harvard-MIT web of connections. All this time, I was raising my two wonderful daughters in a mostly French environment while running a household with lots of guests from both sides of the Atlantic. (Cooking is one of my passions and inviting people to my home is another.)

We had also bought a ruin in 1967, an old water mill in Burgundy for \$1,000. Willy who loved to work with his hands, spent 40 years on its restoration while working at a very stressful job at IBM where he and other colleagues in the sixties founded a CFDT union at the company.

With Suzanne's introductions, I started assisting some American academics writing on France. They were in the U.S.; I was on the spot. Laurence (Larry) Wylie [Professor of French Civilization at Harvard] on the events of May 1968 and Stanley Hoffmann [Harvard University Professor, international relations scholar and French historian] on a large trove of Vichy archives that he had been given special permission to consult were two of the many jobs. I remember travelling to a Peugeot factory in the Jura to conduct interviews for a large MIT study on automobiles. The group at MIT were trying to learn about the effects of robots replacing workers. I came away very much in favor of the robots which

was not politically correct. The French automobile unions were very much against the robots. Yet the workers were spraying poisonous paint on the cars! (Later on, I had a similar experience organizing some meetings for the Foucault prison group which made me change my mind about capital punishment.)

The CSO Years

For six years in the early seventies, I worked for six months as the administrative assistant on the annual Stanford Junior Year Abroad program in Paris. The director each year was a different academic from the Stanford French department. I also continued with the research assistance jobs. So, I was doing a lot of reading in the social sciences and meeting and working for many American scholars. In a way, I was in basic training in the social sciences which was leading me to the good fortune of being hired by the sociologist Michel Crozier [best known for his 1964 book *The Bureaucratic Phenomenon*].

A friend with an office next to my Stanford office told me that Michel Crozier was looking for an American research assistant. I did not think I had any chance, since I had no formal academic training and most importantly no diplomas! Art Goldhammer, a good friend, who at the time was holed up in a small Paris hotel, writing a novel, strongly urged me to apply. I got the job! And an appointment in the CNRS (Centre Nationale de Recherche Scientifique) to boot.

Michel Crozier was the founder and animating force for many years of the Center for the Sociology of Organizations (CSO), which began as a small independent CNRS research lab but today is part of Sciences Po, Paris. For three decades I worked for Crozier on the myriad activities which constitute the lot of an eminent academic and intellectual entrepreneur: the running of a rapidly expanding research lab, author of numerous books and articles, consultant to many French government and business notables, leader of many large-scale research studies, organization of seminars and conferences, director of a master's degree program in sociology at Sciences Po.

The CSO was - and is - such a stimulating environment. This is where the SASE office is located. Everyone had an office from the researchers to the grad students. This was very unlike most French research centers at the time. We ate lunch together, first at the CNRS cafeteria and in recent years on the premises. Michel Crozier and his long-term collaborator Erhard Friedberg also directed a master's degree program at Sciences Po, from which many of the students went on to write PhDs at the CSO. Of the many wonderful moments that stand out during those years is first working with Crozier. I had my own personal seminar many days while working on his books. I spent a great deal of time in libraries. Internet did not exist in those days.

The weekly seminars are yet another example. One that particularly stands out in my mind and which Crozier ran for several years was on social innovators. Mostly at early points in their careers, these men and women presented their ideas, new work concepts to the master's degree students. The debates that followed were often very lively. Some went on to being heads of large companies such as the Club Med, and Nouvelles Frontières. There were also invited scholars from Europe and the U.S at the CSO. I was asked to conduct a reading group on classics in Anglo-Saxon sociology. During the seventies and beyond Michel was known in France as an "American" sociologist. In those days this was not a compliment.

Another CSO adventure was the two trips I took to the U.S. with Erhard Friedberg and a French film crew to make videos on the founding fathers of organizational sociology. We drove all over the United States interviewing these men (when I think about it now, there were only men!): James March, Herbert Simon, Mark Granovetter, William Foote White, Thomas Schelling, Charles Perrow and others. Many of them were to come for research *séjours* to the CSO as well.

I also became the American correspondent - and still am - for a popular monthly social science magazine, *Sciences Humaines*, sold on French newsstands. I travelled frequently to the U.S. with the French journalists to interview American scholars.

It was also during this time that I asked Erhard for an office for Peter Hall, who was going on sabbatical. So, Peter was at the CSO at the exciting time of the shift to the euro. I managed to get the *Revue Française de Sciences Politiques* to translate his then recent article with David Soskice on "Varieties of Capitalism". There was still this odd suspicion about American social science. It took them a long time to decide.

When I first began at the CSO, Michel and Erhard were searching for a translator for *Actors and Systems*, which was to be published by the University of Chicago Press. I strongly recommended Arthur Goldhammer. Art had been a translator in the Vietnam war from Vietnamese to English and did not want to work as a mathematician although he held a degree in math from MIT. He had never translated anything professionally from French to English although he had previously mentioned to me that he would like to try his hand at translation. Michel trusted me and it was the beginning of a brilliant career. Art is the translator of both Tocqueville and Piketty, to name only two of the over 120 books he has translated.

SASE Executive Director

Retirement was compulsory for CNRS staff when turning 65 and I found myself looking for a new job. Michael Piore was the incoming SASE president. And Michael's first task

was to look for an Executive Director. Michael likes to say, and it's true, that he brought SASE to Paris. It had been previously located in Baltimore. By this time, Michel Crozier had retired and Erhard, very generously, agreed to give SASE an office. At the beginning the scholars from the CSO did not attend SASE meetings. This has completely changed, I am happy to report. Many CSO/Sciences Po researchers and grad students today attend SASE meetings and find themselves involved in international research projects. SASE scholars have research appointments and/or give lectures at the CSO.

The recurrent influence of working in the world of ideas took on another dimension, 12 years ago, when I became the Executive Director of the Society for the Advancement of Socio-Economics. I went from working within the everyday life of scholarship at the CSO to entrance into a growing worldwide network of scholars which only gathered once a year. Each year there was a new president and a new program committee. They were located in different geographical settings, together with a new umbrella theme for the annual event. Working alone at the beginning, I had little understanding of what I was supposed to do or contribute. My third chance has been working with Jacob Bromberg and Pat Zraidi, who came on board several years after I began.

The job took some retooling on my part. Delving into a new field was very exciting. First, I read about economic sociology as well as on the subject of conference organization in general. The SASE flagship journal, *Socio-Economic Review*, was a help. A subscription to *The Economist* was another. What I liked best - and still do - is reading what the scholars I work with write about. Each year there is a new intellectual landscape to be discovered! For my part, getting the chance to actually communicate with the SASE scholars about their work, after reading what they write, in view of promotion on the SASE website and other social media is not only a priority but an ongoing project. Bringing people together from different parts of the globe with similar research topics is yet another part of the job.

What a great group of people to work with! Across the years there have been so many serendipitous meetings. First on a professional level but often, what began long ago as a professional encounter - and here I look up suddenly all these years later - I find myself with friendships made during the SASE years including emails and visits when colleagues from far flung places such as Brazil and Japan turn up in Paris. So many new worlds to discover! For the past ten years, SASE has sponsored the organization of four regional meetings every two years in Latin America. And then there was SASE's first foray into Asia with an annual meeting in Kyoto in 2018.

My job is not just the organization of the logistics of the SASE meetings, but once again through my immersion in scholarly literature in addition to all the rest, the people I encounter on both sides of the Atlantic, and fascination with current events, I was able

to identify new themes of interest to social scientists across the world. From straddling the world of French-American academic social science and building from there to encompass new groups: Japan, Italy, Spain, Mexico. Bringing scholars together.....Providing organizational continuity, building and maintaining SASE membership are top priorities.

Just when I thought I might have mastered all I needed to know about organizing a SASE meeting, COVID burst upon us. Hence the imperative of SASE quickly going digital. The destabilizing effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on SASE has once again taken me on to a new learning curve with the wise decision by the President and the Executive Committee of SASE to pivot the annual conference from an onsite people-event to an online virtual format.

Hence the pressing need for many decisions to be made very quickly, from finding a virtual-event platform which would work best for SASE to revamping the 2020 program And then there was the thorny question of organizing a meeting with almost 1000 participants and 250 sessions across four time zones! I do wonder in what ways academic conferences will change in the future. Will there be a return to people-only events, or will there be more hybrid forms of academic meetings?

So, I am still learning. That is the best part of this job. Time passes with a rewarding career that has taken many facets in the *longue durée*. What next?