Louis Kriesberg will be 90 on 30 July 2016

On 30 July 2016, Louis Kriesberg will celebrate his 90th birthday. He is Professor Emeritus of Sociology, Maxwell Professor Emeritus of Social Conflict Studies, and founding director of the Program on the Analysis and Resolution of Conflicts (1986–1994), all at Syracuse University, NY, USA.

Through his teaching, his practical activities in constructive conflict resolution and his numerous scholarly publications Louis Kriesberg has influenced generations of students and scholars in the US and globally. He has also participated at several IPRA conferences in the past. On the occasion of his 90th birthday Lou’s pioneering work is honoured in a book:


Excerpts from the foreword of George A. Lopez, The Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C., Chair Emeritus in Peace Studies at the Kroc Institute, University of Notre Dame

Louis Kriesberg’s remarkable career, spanning seven decades, is characterized by multiple, diverse and continued contributions made to the fields of sociology and peace studies. Within each he became known for pioneering work in social processes, social movements, and patterns for dealing with social conflict in both domestic and international settings. As a sociologist his ability to bring conceptual clarity along-side basic empirical studies permitted him to generate meaningful findings that, in turn, led his work to be widely cited and a cornerstone of the sociology of conflict field.

Lou brought a clearheaded ability to explore with scholarly passion and depth theories and concepts that were just emerging in the field. ... His accomplishments result from his scholarly style that has been inclusive of colleagues, even those with drastically different ideas. He has always been an ‘engaged scholar’, seeing the boundaries between theory and practice as meant to be bridged. ... Throughout he has aimed at reducing violence by building the educational field of conflict resolution, so that we might - ultimately - realize peace. ... Lou has first and foremost been a committed and amazingly productive sociologist. ... He opened new avenues for his discipline to consider transnational actors and he demonstrated that the institutional paradigm of sociology could also embrace a focus on social movements. ... He brought these skills to the Peace Studies section of the International Studies Association in its early days, and to his work in the International Peace Research Association (IPRA). Most notably, along with fellow sociologist Elise Boulding, Lou shined in the meetings of the Consortium for Peace Research, Education and Development (COPRED). ...

Lou’s biographical essay details how he took advantage of opportunities in the mid-1980s to develop what was to become the highly regarded Program on the Analysis and Resolution of Conflict (PARC). ...

By having already engaged different groups of Syracuse faculty in intriguing shared research ventures, particularly regarding US-Soviet relations, Lou set a style of research for the new enterprise as being enriching due to the diversity of faculty interests. And in gathering these experts he also knew that high quality graduate education would emerge from such research. ... Objective observers could not help but be struck how, in his active and incredibly productive scholarly life, Lou Kriesberg has so often been a few steps ahead of his time. While being thoroughly engaged with the literature and the conversation of his era, he was not always swayed by the various fads of the time. He determined the style or substance with which he pursued his own work and activities. His biographical sketch shows him from the early days at the University of Chicago through his continued activity with the programs at Syracuse to be a remarkably collegial individual who is always interested in moving beyond the self-defined – and often too narrow - boundaries that scholars employ. Further, he has exemplified the openness and inquisitiveness so critical to successful scholarship. And finally, he is a scholar of constructive conflict, whose work can actually influence practice and policy. 

On the occasion of his 90th birthday Louis Kriesberg provides an informative account of his career, tracing the trajectory of his discoveries, contributions, and fumbles as he sought to help the advance toward a more sustainable and just peace in the world. His work contributes to ideas and practices in several areas of conflict studies, notably intractable conflicts and their transformation, reconciliation, conflict analysis, and waging conflicts constructively. Although neither an autobiography nor a memoir, he embeds the course of his work in the context of historical events and in the evolving fields of peace studies and conflict resolution. In addition, he discusses the interaction of those fields with major conflicts. The book includes seven previously-published exemplary pieces on these and other topics, a comprehensive list of his publications, and several photos.

Hans Günter Brauch, AFES-PRESS chairman, Mosbach (Germany)