



Community Research

Newsletter

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January 2025 | Volume 54 | Issue 2

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Letter from the president

Dear RC03 Members,

I hope this letter finds you well.

On behalf of the RC03 Board, I am delighted to share some important news and updates with you.

First, I am thrilled to remind you that **the ISA Forum in Rabat is fast approaching**. The Local Organizing Committee and the ISA have been working tirelessly to ensure that this year's Forum will be both academically fruitful and inclusive for all participants. This year's Forum promises to be more dynamic than ever, with a **film festival** included in the official program. I believe this is a fantastic way to broaden sociological discussions and to engage with a wider audience through visual storytelling. The organizers take care to prepare a number of facilities for congress participants with special needs. Participants travelling with children will be happy to know that **onsite childcare** will be provided during the congress. This extremely useful initiative will ensure that everyone can fully engage with the sessions and networking opportunities. I am also pleased to share that **affordable accommodation** will be available for all students and ISA members from C-list countries at a rate of USD 150 for the entire stay in the students' dormitory. The Organizers understand that financial considerations can be a barrier to attending international events, and hope this option will help many more people to participate. I extend our collective gratitude to the Organizers of the Forum for their dedication and efficiency in putting together an event of this magnitude under challenging global circumstances. I would also to remind you that the RC03 offers **registration grants** for participants in need of financial assistance. I encourage you to check the ISA website or contact the RC03 Board for more details on how to apply. Please spread the word among colleagues and students who might benefit from this support.

Announcements

1. Call for participation in **Re-Co-wide Webinar Series** is open! Join the Working Group!
2. Apply for the **Research Network and the Co-organized Activities**. Enhance collaboration between members!
3. ISA Forum, Rabat 6-11 July, 2025
4. Architecture Media Politics Society (AMPS) conference: Livable Cities, 2025, Lisbon <https://amps-research.com/conference/lisbon-livable-cities/>

I would like to encourage you to involve in the RC03 activity through Research Networks and the Co-organized Activities. The first initiative provides an opportunity for researchers interested in a common theme or doing research in a specific stream to set up a platform for research collaboration. The second, on the other hand, supports RC03 members in taking joint actions. Both initiatives are thought to encourage members to collaborate across disciplines, regions, and research interests to create innovative and impactful proposals. The Board will support any such initiatives, facilitating networking and ensuring that they are widely disseminated to RC03 members and on the committee's website. You are always very welcome to contact the Board with any idea or request. Please do not hesitate to write me if you would like to get involved but do not know how.

(Continued on the next page)



Letter from the President (Continued)

I would also like to inform you that the ISA offers **Activity Grant** that RC03 can apply for. If you have a concept for any activity that aligns with our mission, let us know. The Board invite your proposals and suggestions so we can continue to innovate and support meaningful sociological endeavours together.

I am also proud to highlight a significant event from last year: In June, RC03 co-organized a **semi-plenary session** at the **15th Congress of the Spanish Sociological Association**, titled “**Does Postal Code Matter?**”. The session delved deeply into questions of how geography intersects with social phenomena. Scholars from diverse backgrounds presented research findings and reflected on the importance of the socio-spatial context as an explanatory element in contemporary sociological analysis, reviewed relevant contributions from sociological theory on this subject as well as discussed methodological possibilities and difficulties in this regard. The lively discussion underscored the importance of the socio-spatial context in urban studies. This event was a great success, with active participation and valuable contributions from our members. We look forward to organizing similar sessions and contributing to more national and international congresses in the future.

I would also like to inform you that **Marcus S. Schultz from the Research Council** has proposed running an **organizational study** of the ISA. As he says: “The idea is to form a working group for an Organizational Study, as a kind of ISA self-study, in a sense a follow-up to the useful previous study on RC/TG/WG elections. Organizational matters have come up in our debates time and again, but rather ad-hoc and without much time for deliberation. The idea now is to systematically think through and consult broadly about the various aspects of the ISA—from the tiny nuts and bolts to broader democratic governance philosophies. Are all templates from the 1950s still adequate, as ISA has grown and matured while the world around it is

changing rapidly? Irrespective of whether one might see such an organizational study as a mere intellectual exercise or as something with potential practical benefits, it would be great if we could form an organizational study group. We could think of a live meeting after the busy Forum in Rabat. I’ll be happy to receive names of anyone interested in participating”. If you have any ideas, suggestions, or would like to participate in the development of this initiative, please contact the RC03 Board. Your input is invaluable, and we welcome a diversity of perspectives to ensure that any potential audit will be comprehensive and beneficial to the ISA community.

As always, the RC03 Board is here to support your ideas and efforts. We greatly value your input and encourage you to:

- Share your ideas for the upcoming ISA Congress or other future events.
- Let us know about any proposals for the Activity Grant.
- Get in touch if you need guidance on forming research networks
- Contact us if you wish to collaborate on or contribute to the proposed organizational audit.

The Board sincerely appreciate your commitment to RC03 and look forward to your active participation in all our upcoming initiatives. Together, we can make our collective research stronger and more influential within the global sociological community.

Finally, as we step into 2025, I wish you all the very best, hoping it will be a year filled with collaborative success, meaningful research, and exciting new opportunities for our community.

Thank you for your continued support, and I look forward to seeing many of you in Rabat!

With warm regards,

Marta Klekotko

President, RC03 International Sociological Association



Case study

So Close, Yet So Far.

Associations Between Collaborative Intentions and Organisational Struggles. (A Study on Volunteering in Italy)

By Francesca Donati and Emanuele Polizzi
University of Milan-Bicocca, Italy

(For more information on this study, please visit:
<https://www.rapportoassociazionismo.org>)

Volunteering is one of the most significant forms of civic engagement and community building. Beyond providing essential services, it represents a space for socialisation, learning, and strengthening social bonds. However, economic and social transformations in recent decades have posed new challenges to its sustainability and impact. In particular, three key issues emerge: balancing voluntary commitment with personal life, the risk of fragmentation among associative networks, and the relationship with institutions.

The Challenge of Balancing Volunteering and Daily Life

One of the most pressing issues concerns volunteers' ability to balance their commitment with work, study, and family life. Research shows that this aspect is particularly challenging for students and workers, whereas retirees and unemployed individuals experience less difficulty. Time management becomes a crucial factor: volunteering requires flexibility, but job insecurity and unpredictable working hours often limit the space for civic engagement.

On the other hand, volunteering can also become a profession, mitigating the tension between work and associative activities. Organisations that offer paid employment provide greater stability for those who choose to dedicate themselves to these activities. However, this shift raises questions about the very nature

of volunteering: when commitment turns into work, is there a risk of losing the sense of altruism and collective participation?

An interesting aspect concerns gender differences. While in the past, women faced greater difficulties in balancing responsibilities, today men and women report similar levels of challenge. This change suggests an evolution in social roles, with increased sharing of family responsibilities and greater female participation in the labour market.

Autonomy and Associative Networks: Between Collaboration and Fragmentation

Another challenge concerns the ability of organisations to network effectively. While the internal cohesion of individual organisations is strong, collaboration among different groups often proves problematic. Sociological research highlights that building connections between local actors is crucial for the effectiveness of collective action and the success of advocacy strategies. However, associations tend to maintain strong ties with their own local context but fewer with other similar organisations.

This fragmentation is particularly evident between organisations of different ages and structures. Younger associations tend to seek greater autonomy from institutions and develop innovative practices, whereas more established ones aim to maintain privileged relationships with public entities, often to access financial resources and institutional recognition. The risk is that this dynamic fosters competition rather than strategic collaboration.

The difficulty of collaboration among associations weakens the entire social fabric, limiting the capacity to respond in a coordinated manner to emerging

community needs. Greater cooperation could lead to more effective resource use and a broader impact. Tools such as co-planning platforms and associative networks could facilitate the development of synergies and help overcome fragmentation.

The Relationship with Institutions: Between Independence and Collaboration

Historically, the relationship between associations and institutions has undergone continuous evolution. In the 1980s, in Italy, the availability of flexible public funding allowed volunteering to grow autonomously, fostering innovation and the experimentation of new social intervention models. Since the 1990s, however, there has been a process of increasing bureaucratisation and professionalisation of the sector.

The introduction of accreditation mechanisms and quality control has led many organisations to adopt managerial models similar to those of businesses, increasing the divide between volunteering and the professionalised Third Sector. While this has ensured greater stability and economic sustainability, it has also reduced the space for informal and spontaneous volunteering, that is, processes of community building.

Many associations, to maintain their independence, have chosen to limit relationships with institutions, preferring self-financing and autonomous organisation. However, complete independence risks restricting access to strategic resources and opportunities. Conversely, excessive dependence on public funds can turn associations into mere service providers, reducing their capacity for advocacy and critical participation.

Conclusions: Towards More Inclusive and Participatory Communities

Volunteering is not merely an economic resource or a supplement to public services but a central element of active citizenship, social cohesion and community building. Addressing the challenges of balance,

fragmentation, and institutional relationships requires a rethinking of action strategies and a strengthening of collaborative networks.

To prevent fragmentation from weakening the transformative potential of associations, it is necessary to promote spaces for dialogue and cooperation between different organisations and institutions. Only through a balance between autonomy and cooperation can we build more resilient communities capable of responding innovatively to emerging social needs.

RC03 at the ISA Conference:

The RC03 will host two sessions:

Governing Cities & Materialities: Author-Meet-Critics on Monday, 7 July 2025: 11:00 - 12:45, Faculty of Legal, Economic, and Social Sciences (JES), SJES025

“The implementation or urban governance politics on the level of actual processes of how things in cities are done, is sometimes overlooked in how questions of urban justice are addressed. This authors-meet-critics session discusses two books published in the IJURR-SUSC series, the book series connected to Research Committee 21, in recent years. Eduardo Marques' edited volume 'The Politics of Incremental Progressivism: Governments, Governances and Urban Policy Changes in Sao Paulo' and Armelle Choplin's Concrete City: Material Flows and Urbanization in West-Africa' to debate the various ways in which governance and government agents produce urban (in)justices and the kind of knowledge on which they draw.”

Indigenous Community-Based Research in Academia on Tuesday, 8 July 2025: 11:00 - 12:45, Faculty of Legal, Economic, and Social Sciences (JES), SJES029

“Through Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Decolonization (EDID), Canadian universities attempt to prioritize Indigenous scholars and knowledge systems through calls of reconciliation aimed at supporting Indigenous Community-Based Knowledge. However, key problems tied to incommensurability and mistranslation through colonial languages limit the integration of Indigenous methodologies and research practices within universities. By acknowledging Indigenous ways of knowing, teachings, and philosophies we can support anti-colonial educational process rooted in ceremony and community that are foundational to Indigenous pedagogies and worldviews. This regular session prioritizes Indigenous Nation-specific approaches for cross-cultural knowledge sharing to the broader public to dismantle mechanisms of superiority and dominance while allowing Indigenous ways of learning to inform. Therefore, highlighting relationships with other world beings, connection to land and place, and uplifting worldviews that have been overlooked as not “scholarly enough.”

This session will share the breadth of Indigenous knowledge through Indigenous communities in Canada, specifically the Nehiyawak (Four-Spirit) by defining accountability, authenticity, intentionality, relationality, and reciprocity to better understand the impact that Indigenous Community-Based Research should have in Academia.”

And it will co-organise other three sessions:

Dignified Aging in the Digital Age? (Part I) on Monday, 7 July 2025: 13:00 - 14:45, Faculty of Legal, Economic, and Social Sciences (JES), SJES005

Dignified Aging in the Digital Age? (Part II) on Monday, 7 July 2025: 15:00 - 16:45, Faculty of Legal, Economic, and Social Sciences (JES), SJES005

Sociology of Global Populism, Part IV on Wednesday, 9 July 2025: 11:00 - 12:45, Faculty of Legal, Economic, and Social Sciences (JES), SJES023

While the business meeting of RC03 will be held:

On Thursday, 10 July 2025: 19:00 - 20:30, Faculty of Legal, Economic, and Social Sciences (JES), SJES023

Contacts

New Website: RC03 has a new, revamped website. You can find it at:

<https://www.upo.es/cspl/rc03-isa/isa/>

Please send future announcements to

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