



Futures
Research

XXI ISA
World Congress
of Sociology
2027 ISA 세계사회학대회

XXI ISA World Congress of Sociology
to be held in Gwangju, South Korea, 2027

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

FUTURES IN TURBULENCE



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Futures Research Newsletter
No. 58, August 2026

Call for Abstracts

XXI ISA World Congress of Sociology in Korea

Gwangju, South Korea, 4-10 July 2027

The ISA Research Committee on Futures Research (RC07) invites proposals for paper presentations at the XXI ISA World Congress of Sociology, to be held in Gwangju, South Korea, 4-10 July 2027. We welcome diverse theoretical, empirical, and practical approaches as well as interdisciplinary collaboration. The program offers an exciting spectrum of topics related to forward-oriented social research. It includes thematically open sessions and opportunities in any the ISA's three official languages, i.e. English, French, or Spanish.

A series of sessions are convened under the motto "Futures in Turbulence." This theme is meant to emphasize a forward-orientation and to resonate with the meetings' general theme of "Global Sociology in Turbulent Times." The erosion of democratic institutions in countries around the world, the concentration of power and wealth amidst technological transformation, the rise of expulsion, militarism and warfare, the sidelining of human rights and international norms, and the lack of concerted global action on climate change and environmental degradation create turbulence in the present and let us expect yet more turbulence for the future. Strictly speaking, the challenge for conceptualizing futures relates not merely to the turbulences from disruptive or convulsive changes but also to their deep uncertainty, novelty, and ambiguity. Outcomes are not predetermined, but are shaped by courageous resistance against oppression and creative seizure of opportunities. The stakes call for empirically and theoretically rigorous, imaginative sociological futures research. All RC07 members are cordially invited to submit proposals for papers on sessions listed below.

To accommodate proposals beyond these particular themes, we are also reserving one or more sessions for submissions to the "Open Theme".

Deadline to submit abstracts: 14 October 2026 (23:59 UTC/GMT)

All proposals (title; up to 4 keywords; abstract max. 300 words) must be submitted via Confex: <https://isaconf.confex.com/isaconf/wc2027/cfp.cgi> [updated link!]

Authors will be notified whether their abstract is being accepted by December 04, 2026.

Further organizational information and instructions can be found on the ISA website at:

<https://www.isa-sociology.org/sites/default/files/2026-08/Guidelines-for-the-Scientific-Programme-of-Sessions-Organised-RCWGTG-V2.pdf>

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SESSION PROGRAM

Call for Abstracts

1. Deliberative Democracy in Turbulent Times: Post-Habermasian Reflections

Session Organizer(s):

Chad Alan GOLDBERG, Hebrew University of Jerusalem and University of Wisconsin-Madison
Joint Session of RC07 Futures Research (host committee), RC16 Sociological Theory, RC10 Participation, Organizational Democracy and Self-Management, RC18 Political Sociology

Session in English

This session takes stock of the legacy of Jürgen Habermas (1929–2026) and revisits deliberative democracy in an era marked by democratic backsliding, epistemic fragmentation (“alternative facts”), increasing inequality, and global crises. The session intends to foreground Habermas’s enduring contributions—especially his theory of communicative action, public sphere, and discourse ethics—while examining how contemporary conditions strain the normative and institutional foundations of deliberative democracy.

Contributions are invited to explore three interconnected themes: (1) interpretations and extensions of Habermas’s work in light of recent social, political, economic, cultural, and technological changes; (2) empirical and theoretical analyses of challenges to deliberative democracy, including authoritarian resurgence, polarization, misinformation, and declining trust in public institutions; and (3) proposals for renewing or reimagining deliberative democratic practices, ranging from institutional design to emergent forms of civic engagement.

The session format is planned to include paper presentations and brief integrative comments by a discussant, followed by audience participation in the form of Q&A. The session aims to foster a critical yet constructive conversation about the future of deliberative democracy, asking what remains viable, what requires revision, and what new directions might be necessary in a post-Habermasian world.

2. Contesting Digital Formations in Turbulent Times: From Internet and Social Media to Generative AI

Session Organizer(s):

Attila MARTON, Copenhagen Business School, Denmark

Stefan LUECKING, Hans-Böckler-Stiftung, Germany

Markus S. SCHULZ, Max Weber Center for Advanced Cultural and Social Studies

Ligia TAVERA FENOLLOSA, Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales, Mexico

Joined Session of 07 Futures Research (host committee), RC10 Participation, Organizational Democracy and Self-Management, RC14 Sociology of Communication, Knowledge and Culture, RC23 Sociology of Science and Technology, and WG10 Digital Sociology

Session in English, Spanish, French

Digital formations from Internet and social media to Generative AI and robotics are reconfiguring the world, deepening inequalities, allowing unprecedented surveillance, and disrupting older models of communication, truth, attachment, identity, work, and social struggles. The bleak prospects of dependency on oligarchically controlled platforms and intensifying surveillance replaced the euphoria that the early Internet and later the early 'social media' inspired. The diverse social forces that create digital formations draw on differential access to resources, political-legal frameworks, and imaginative agency. The erosion of democratic institutions, worker protections, and international norms, the spread of authoritarianism and military conflicts, and escalating wealth and power disparities are changing the context in which digital technologies are being formed. The turbulences of intersecting crises raise the stakes of the digital formation's contested shaping. This session aims to bring into systematic dialogue scholars of communication, participation, STS, digital sociology, and futures research. We welcome empirical and theoretical contributions from the Global South and North that tackle questions such as:

- Why makes the capture of productive gains uneven?
- Who are the social actors that emerge to challenge current trends, expose preventable implications, and produce alternative visions?
- What leverage do users and activists have in concrete cases?
- How are regulatory agencies intervening or failing?
- How do approaches in different countries and groups of countries differ?
- How can social science research discover the leverage that exists for countering hegemonic trends, or how such leverage can be created?

What research priorities should social science pursue?

3. Disruption and Mobilization in Turbulent Times: Future Imagination

Session Organizer(s):

Markus S. SCHULZ, Max Weber Center for Advanced Cultural and Social Studies
Ligia TAVERA FENOLLOSA, Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales, Mexico

Joined Session of RC07 Futures Research (host committee), RC09 Social Transformations and Sociology of Development, RC44 Labor Movements, RC47 Social Classes and Social Movements, and RC48 Social Movements, Collective Action and Social Change

Session in English, French, Spanish

How do labor and social movements advance the struggle for a better world amidst the turbulences of warfare, eroding international normative frameworks, spreading authoritarianism, escalating wealth disparities, ecological crises, AI and rapidly changing media interfaces? How do subalterns overcome despair, challenge hegemonic codes and temporal regimes, engage with anticipatory modes of governance, and form political subjectivities beyond authoritarian and consumerist templates? Under surveillance and with scarce material resources, how can they create leverage through surprises? How are visions, tactics, and strategies adjusted for these convulsive constellations? What roles do assumptions about the future play in political imagination, and how are these assumptions being shaped? How do grassroots actors weave long-term visions, strategies, hopes and the solidarities that nourish these? How do they reshape authority, agency, and resonance? How are disruption and mobilization redeployed in the contentious politics of turbulent times?

This session invites empirical case studies, comparisons at different scales, and theoretical contributions from the Global South and North on questions such as these with the aim to bring into systematic dialogue scholars of social movements, working class struggles, culture, transformation, and futures research.

4. Contesting Tomorrow: Power, Resistance and Social Futures in the Age of AI and Automation

Session Organizer(s):

Tin-Yuet TING, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong

Session in English

In turbulent times marked by geopolitical conflict, ecological crisis, economic insecurity and democratic fragility, “the future” has become a crucial site of power and struggle. AI, big data, platform infrastructures, robotics, biometric systems and predictive analytics are increasingly used to govern populations, organize labour and care, allocate resources, shape culture, police borders, target consumers and anticipate risk. These technologies produce new possibilities, but also new forms of extraction, classification, dependency, exclusion and control.

This session examines how power and resistance are being reconfigured through emerging sociotechnical regimes. It asks how states, corporations, platforms, expert communities and cultural institutions make futures governable, profitable or imaginable—and how citizens, workers, activists, artists, communities and civil society actors contest, refuse, appropriate or redesign these futures.

We welcome papers addressing, but not limited to:

- How do AI, big data, robotics and automation reshape domination, inequality and social ordering across different contexts?
- How are algorithmic systems transforming work, welfare, care, education, policing, war, migration, public discourse and everyday life?
- What repertoires of resistance—data activism, platform organizing, algorithmic auditing, technological commoning, refusal, sabotage or prefigurative politics—are emerging?
- How do social actors imagine and institutionalize alternative, democratic, decolonial, feminist, ecological or community-based futures?
- What theoretical and methodological innovations can help sociologists study future-making in turbulent times?

Contributions from diverse geopolitical settings, theoretical traditions and methods are welcome, including futures research, digital sociology, STS, political sociology, critical AI/data studies, ethnography, comparative research, computational analysis and participatory or speculative methods.

5. Neither Dystopia Nor Melancholia: Imagining Convivial Futures

Session Organizer(s):

Sergio COSTA, Freie Universität Berlin, Germany

Juan PIOVANI, Scientific and Technical Research Council, Argentina and Universidad Nacional de La Plata, Argentina

Session in English

Few times in history have disputes over the future become as central to politics as they are today. Oversimplifying a broad and diverse debate, at least two competing visions of the future dominate contemporary discussions.

On the one hand, scholars and political actors, driven by “postcolonial melancholia” (Paul Gilroy), seek to restore a supposedly lost liberal order reaffirming the alleged virtues of Western modernity as the cradle of democracy, human rights, and peaceful coexistence. They just ignore both the globally entangled character of modernity and its evident connections to colonialism, slavery, the climate crisis, and brutal wars. On the other hand, tech oligarchs and far-right politicians disseminate dystopian visions of a future irremediably marked by civilizational clashes, social fragmentation, and widespread devastation.

Looking at activism and scholarship in fields such as Indigenous, Queer, and critical migration studies and movements, a third strand becomes visible. Although internally diverse, actors and researchers in these fields articulate persistent struggles for alternative futures characterized by convivial forms of living together in difference, involving not only humans but also more-than-human beings and environments. Rather than romanticizing existing forms of suffering and injustice, these perspectives emphasize the collective imagination of different futures as an imperative for overcoming the past and surviving in the present.

We warmly invite contributions to this session and welcome both papers addressing major debates on dystopian and melancholic futures and contributions that explore emerging discussions and practices of convivial futures.

6. New Suns, Old Shadows: Ethnographies of Race, Struggle, and Hope

Session Organizer(s):

Miguel MONTALVA BARBA, University of Massachusetts Boston, USA

Session in English

In her 1998 classic, *Parable of the Talents*, Octavia Butler argued “there’s nothing new under the sun, but there are new suns.” Echoing Butler, this session examines how ethnography can illuminate the struggle to imagine and build futures under conditions of enduring racial inequality. Across various contexts, contributors analyze hope not as a universal striving, but as a situated, contested practice, forged at the intersection of race, class, gender, urban, and institutional power. Panelists will trace how “old shadows” persist even as actors labor to produce alternative futures: jailhouse lawyers navigating the courthouse as a site of radical resistance amid decades of criminal legal inequality; housing and neighborhood formations that generate racially stratified imagined pasts and foreclosed futures; intimate marital decisions shaped by competing temporal horizons and life stages; and encounters with white supremacist hate that demand new architectures of collective hope.

7. Envisioning Futures: Biographical Possibilities, Systemic Constraints, and Challenges for Social Research

Session Organizer(s):

Davide GIRARDI, Istituto Universitario Salesiano Venezia, Italy

Claudia ANDREATTA, Istituto Universitario Salesiano Venezia, Italy

Maria VALENTINI, Istituto Universitario Salesiano Venezia, Italy

Session in English, French

Over the past two decades, the socio-economic and cultural shifts identified by theorists of the "second modernity"- namely, the intensification of individualization, the rise of the risk society, and the precarization of social bonds - have fully solidified. Moreover, the radicalization of specific trends, particularly those linked to rapid technological advancement, has broadened the scope of these dynamics at play.

Consequently, the deinstitutionalization of biographical trajectories has resulted in life paths that are simultaneously more open yet increasingly vulnerable to the accelerating pace of systemic trends. Furthermore, young adults face unprecedented challenges in envisioning desirable and achievable futures, especially given the unequal distribution of material and symbolic resources.

This context urgently demands an update to the methodological and interpretive frameworks used to examine the nexus between (im)possible life trajectories and (im)plausible futures. On a theoretical level, this requires understanding the key variables that shape the capacity to "imagine" the future at a biographical level. Methodologically, it calls for epistemological approaches that move beyond present-centric analyses, which are often flattened on to the verification of already defined conditions and interventions. It is necessary to engage critically and creatively with "not-yetness," shifting from traditional problem-solving to anticipatory approaches of inventive problem-making.

To achieve this, future-oriented methods, within the field of Futures Studies, and speculative approaches allow researchers to examine subjects' agency within decision-making processes occurring in the "future-present." These methods foster narratives and devices that explore plural, open futures without eluding the material, social and symbolic conditions within which biographies are constructed.

8. A Better Future? Generational Imaginaries in Uncertain Times

Session Organizer(s):

Elisabetta RUSPINI, University of Milano-Bicocca, Italy

Session in English

Karl Mannheim's classic work on generations reminds us that generations are shaped not only by their location in historical time, but also by the ways they interpret and respond to shared social and historical experiences. By reworking inherited cultural legacies in light of new historical circumstances, generations become agents in the renewal of knowledge, helping to shape the future.

In contemporary societies, local and global challenges have multiplied. Climate and health crises, geopolitical conflicts, demographic transformations and economic insecurity are reshaping how generations imagine the future, raising questions about agency and hope for a better world. Understanding how generations envision the future is crucial in turbulent times, and several key questions arise: How do generations engage with the future in times of uncertainty? To what extent do historical experiences shape generational visions of the future? Are contemporary generations developing new temporal horizons and expectations compared to previous ones? How do generations imagine the future for themselves and for future generations? Do different generations still believe in a "better future"?

The session encourages theoretical and empirical contributions addressing generational imaginaries of the future across different social, cultural and geographical contexts. Comparative studies are particularly welcome, especially those exploring future orientations in both the Global North and the Global South and in settings marked by geopolitical, environmental and socio-economic challenges.

9. Future-Making from Below: Social Movements, Temporalities, and Sociologies of the Future

Session Organizer(s):

Ligia TAVERA FENOLLOSA, FLACSO, Mexico

Session in English, Spanish

This session explores how social movements imagine, contest, and enact alternative futures from below. Rather than approaching movements only as actors of resistance or reaction to crisis, the session invites contributions that examine their future-oriented capacities: their ability to prefigure new social relations, produce collective horizons of possibility, challenge dominant temporalities, and generate practices of democratic experimentation.

Bringing together social movement studies and the sociology of the future, the session asks how movements construct visions of desirable futures, how these visions are embedded in

everyday practices and organizational forms, and how they respond to uncertainty, crisis, and competing narratives of what is possible. It also seeks to examine the temporal dimensions of collective action, including memory, anticipation, urgency, waiting, hope, and prefiguration.

We welcome theoretical, methodological, and empirical papers addressing diverse movements, contexts, and scales of action. Contributions may explore how movements make futures through protest, mutual aid, institutional experimentation, ecological struggles, feminist and decolonial practices, digital activism, or community-based alternatives. The session aims to open a dialogue on how sociology can better understand future-making as a central dimension of collective action and social transformation.

10. AI and the Futures of Care: Health and Aging in Turbulent Times

Session Organizer(s):

Julia ROZANOVA, Yale University, USA

Session in English

As the global care workforce shrinks and the elderly population grows, AI is changing experiences of health and aging at individual, organizational, and societal levels, fundamentally reshaping healthcare. AI is also empowering older adults to extend their independence and autonomy, giving them tools for monitoring health through wearable devices, smart homes equipped with wireless systems to swiftly detect behavioral changes, ensure medication adherence, and provide fall detection, and augmenting capacities of caregiver and clinical workforce. In long-term care industry that faces severe staff and bed shortages, AI is taking on administrative burdens like charting, documentation, and first-pass summarizations, letting staff focus on human touch to medicine. However, AI adoption introduces significant risks, including but not limited to disparities in digital literacy especially among the oldest old, data privacy issues associated with collecting and sharing massive amounts of highly sensitive personal health information, and lack of robust ethical and regulatory infrastructures to ensure technology is safe and transparent. This session invites papers that explore the future possibilities AI may bring to health, healthcare, caregiving, and aging, to the benefit of patients, caregivers, healthcare staff, and societies at large, as well as limitations associated with AI, and ways to mitigate them. Empirical research using qualitative, quantitative, and/or mixed methods, systematic and scoping reviews of relevant literature, and conceptual pieces are all welcome. We look forward to showcasing studies co-produced by older adults, caregivers, AI developers, clinicians, and other lived experience stakeholders, alongside academic researchers, from around the world.

11. Debate on the Future Impact of Technology on Work

Session Organizer(s):

Isabel DA COSTA, ENS Paris-Saclay, CNRS, France

Tania GARCIA-RAMOS, Universidad de Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras campus, Puerto Rico

Joint Session of 07 Futures Research (host committee) and RC30 Sociology of Work

Session in English, Spanish

There is a debate about the future impact of technology on work and whether it will displace, merge, improve, or create jobs. Some authors argue that people will face technological unemployment in the present turbulent societies. Other authors contend that the main challenge is not technology itself but the ecological crisis and resource management. In this regard, it is crucial to consider how societies distribute the benefits of technological innovations, with particular attention to those who might be affected by labor transformations. These changes must be addressed through equitable social policies, education, and adaptive AI training, among other measures, within an ethical framework. Theoretical and empirical studies that integrate results and potential proposals from both the Global South and the Global North will be considered in this session.

12. Open Themes / Temas Abiertas / Thèmes Ouverts

Session Organizer(s):

Jian-Bang DENG, Department of Education and Futures Design, Taiwan

Radhamany SOORYAMOORTHY, University of Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa

Ligia TAVERA FENOLLOSA, FLACSO, Mexico

ISA Research Committee on Futures Research (ISARC07)

Session in English, French, Spanish

One or more sessions are planned on themes not covered by the topics above in English, French, and/or Spanish. /

Uno o más sesiones están previstas sobre temas no incluidos en los temas anteriormente en Inglés, francés, inglés y / o español. /

Une ou plusieurs sessions sont prévues sur des thèmes non couverts par les thèmes ci-dessus en anglais, en français et / ou espagnol.

13. Critical Perspectives on War, Global Dynamics, and Future Scenarios

Session Organizer(s):

Jian-Bang DENG, Dept. of Education and Futures Design, Taiwan
Kevin GRAY, University of Sussex, United Kingdom

Session in English

The second decade of the twenty-first century has thrown into sharp relief overly confident predictions that “globalisation” had rendered inter-state conflict increasingly obsolete. Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the US/Israeli attacks on Iran have in particular demonstrated that inter-state war remains a persistent feature of the contemporary world system. At the same time, these conflicts have unfolded against the backdrop of broader geopolitical transformations, including the relative decline of the US-centred international order, the rise of China and other emerging powers, and growing claims that a more multipolar world is taking shape. These developments have been accompanied by new forms of geoeconomic competition, including the weaponisation of trade, finance, technology, supply chains, and critical mineral resources. This session seeks to critically examine these interrelated processes from diverse perspectives by asking questions such as: What are the principal drivers of contemporary geopolitical rivalries and military conflicts? How should we understand the relationship between inter-state war, imperialism, and global capitalism in the twenty-first century? To what extent are these processes evidence of a genuinely multipolar world order? How are contemporary conflicts linked to wider crises of climate change breakdown, the global economy, social reproduction, and democratic governance? What future scenarios can be envisaged for the international system, and what social, political, and economic forces are likely to shape them?

14. Early Career Futures Researchers Present

Session Organizer(s):

Mariolina GRAZIOSI, Università di Milano, Italy
ISA Research Committee on Futures Research (ISARC07)

Session in French, Spanish, English

The session provides a special place for Futures Researchers at an early stage in their career to present their work. (Graduate/doctoral) students and professors in their initial years of service are cordially invited to submit proposals for their presentations. The format of the session and invited senior discussants will depend on the number of submissions and themes that are being addressed.

15. Envisioning Queer Futures of / in Sociology

Session Organizer(s):

Terrell WINDER, University of California, Santa Barbara, USA

Ying-chao KAO, Virginia Commonwealth University, USA

Session in English

How are queer futures central to social equity? Building on the conference theme, this panel session invites papers that offer insights into queer futures beyond turbulent times. While some countries have made considerable headway in recognizing queer rights (e.g., same-sex marriage, adoption, legality of relationship, LGBTQ-inclusive education, etc.), others have more recently doubled down on restricting queer life in public and private space (e.g, criminalization of homosexuality, restricting same-sex parental rights, etc.). These issues lie at the intersection of key moral debates around human rights, legal protections, and cultural progress. Given the contemporary instability of queer human rights the world over, projecting the next frontiers in queer research is essential to understanding the future of queer life in all societies. We are especially interested in papers that can offer recommendations for queer futures and insights into the advancement of human rights for all in society. Building on the call of sociologists to reduce the *joy deficit* (Shuster and Westbrook 2024) in sociology, we aim to accept papers that not only document and project trends of the queer future(s) but also that envision preferable outcomes for queer futures in our societies.

16. Future, Crisis, and Political Action in Turbulent Times

Session Organizer(s):

Alexandre NOGUEIRA MARTINS, Freie Universität Berlin, Germany

Mariana MOTTA VIVIAN, Freie Universität Berlin, Germany

Session in English

Our session invites contributions discussing how imaginaries, practices, and affections towards the future are produced, disputed, and transformed in times of crises. Particularly, it welcomes contributions attentive to the dimension of political action, in which the future appears not only as a contested arena but also as a resource for collective mobilisation. The significance of these questions becomes especially apparent in contexts marked by turbulence and social transformation. While “crisis” remains a disputed concept within the social sciences, there seems to be no doubt that our present moment is one of multiple, overlapping crises. Against this backdrop, the relationship between temporalities, crisis interpretations, and action emerges as a particularly important field of inquiry. How have different political actors navigated these times, and what rationalities inform their practices within this context? What kinds of futures become imaginable, possible, or attainable in

periods such as the one we inhabit today? To what extent do turbulent times condition social and political action, and how do actors relate to the future amid these transformations? How are futurities accelerated, delayed, maintained, abandoned, opened, and foreclosed? These are some of the questions that inspire the present session. It follows the hypothesis that a qualitative differentiation between moments of crisis and non-crisis fundamentally changes political action and its relationship to the future. We welcome contributions from different fields of research that address these and further related questions, both empirically and theoretically, across different social, institutional, and geographical contexts.

17. The Futures of Doing Research in the Social Sciences in the Era of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI): What Can We Do? What Should We Do?

Session Organizer(s):

Inga GAIZAUSKAITE, Lithuanian Centre for Social Sciences, Lithuania

Michael GROTHE-HAMMER, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Norway

Dirk MICHEL-SCHERTGES, Aarhus University, Denmark

Markus S. SCHULZ, Max Weber Center for Advanced Cultural and Social Studies

Joint Session of RC07 Futures Research (host committee), RC17 Sociology of Organizations, RC33 Logic and Methodology, RC36 Alienation Theory and Research

Session in English

Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) has changed and continues to change how research in the social sciences is conducted and published. In empirical research, GenAI has affected established practices from hypotheses generation to data collection, data analysis, model building, and interpretation. Whereas some changes seem minor, others, such as the use of GenAI in inductive coding, pose unresolved questions of reliability and validity. For writing, text-generating tools such as ChatGPT have raised wide-ranging questions regarding originality, authorship, and slop. GenAI is affecting also the review and editing process, for example, when “AI Assistants” help journal editors and publishers with copyediting, index creation, and more.

Many developments seem rapid, with researchers struggling to keep up. Hopes, promises and opportunities go hand in hand with uncertainties, risks, and fears. Many challenges continue to remain unresolved while the stream of new challenges seems to grow. This session aims to address the challenges related to GenAI in the social science research process. What innovations of GenAI uses for research are on the horizon? Is our research and writing still our “own”? How can or should we (re-)organize our research, writing, editing, and teaching practices? How does the rise of GenAI change the scientific profession,

its self-image, and standing in society? What should be done about alienation of intellectual work from the scientific process? What kind of new policies and collective interventions do we need? What can academic organizations do to meet the challenges? What methodological innovations shall we embrace, avoid, and seek to develop?

18. Rethinking Development: Interrogating China's Ecological Civilization Initiative

Session Organizer:

William CARROLL, University of Victoria, Canada
(Hosted by RC02 Economy and Society)

Language: English

In China, the last two decades have seen a pivot toward building an Ecological Civilization, initially in response to pollution problems. Ecological Civilization is the overarching vision that redefines development from 'growth at any cost' –mimicking the logic of capital – to 'harmony between humanity and nature.' In Ecological Civilization, the practices that link humanity to the rest of nature are reconceptualized as 'new quality productive forces' which supplant the 'black productivity' of resource extractivism with 'green productivity', decoupling development from environmental degradation. The scope of China's Ecological Civilization initiative is very wide. In addition to its prominence in political doctrine and law, it has been fully integrated into the 14th and 15th Five-Year Plans and now is at the core of national strategy and planning. The initiative's aesthetic aspect frames 'Beautiful China' is a key goal, encapsulated in the aspiration for 'blue skies, clear waters, and lush mountains.' Ecological Civilization is also a salient aspect of China's approach to global cooperation and governance. This session invites papers that take up the prospects and challenges in the Ecological Civilization initiative, both within China and in the wider global context. How is China's initiative situated within a deepening ecological crisis that is spurring other projects such as Green New Deals, Degrowth, Climate Capitalism and eco-fascism? What social forces are aligned with these projects and how might Ecological Civilization articulate with (or against) them in struggles for hegemony?

19. The Future of Democracy in Turbulent Times

Session Organizers:

Isabel DA COSTA, ENS Paris-Saclay, CNRS, France,
Sheetal BHOOLA, The University of Zululand, South Africa
(Hosted by RC10 Participation, Organizational Democracy and Self-Management)

Language: English, French and Spanish

Forthcoming.

20. Refusal and Beyond: Between "Non-Working Lives" and Everyday Reorganization of Labor after Withdrawal from Work

Session Organizers:

Lisa RICHAUD, KU Leuven, Belgium

Baijun FENG, Université Paris Cité, France

Kailing XIE, University Birmingham, United Kingdom

(Hosted by RC30 Sociology of Work)

Language: English and French

If the “future of work” has become a central question in the discipline, what do sociologists learn by looking at “non-work”? Recent literature on “anti-work” trends ask whether changing relations to work translate into actual resignation and durable refusal of labor. Other studies explore the underlying motivations of the “Great Resignation”. Little is known, however, of the post-resignation everyday of those who quit deliberately, across lines of gender, age, and class. Inspired by our research on narratives and practices of “non-work” which sit uneasily between refusal and reorganization of labor in the Chinese context, from relocation to rural co-living spaces to withdrawing into the domestic sphere, this panel seeks to bring together qualitative studies conducted in different regions of the world, to ask whether and how the reclaimed present may become a site for experimenting with new ways of living. We wish to advance existing debates in “post-work” scholarship regarding the transformative dimension of the refusal of work. Critiques contend that “withdrawing” may not enable structural transformations as one’s reclaimed freedom relies on the unfreedom of those who remain productive. Yet, this perspective may be complicated through carefully contextualized studies, as small-scale change is produced through material and affective engagements in the everyday, and forms of labor may be re-organized. We thus invite papers addressing the modes of sociality and spatiality of post-resignation lives, as well as new regimes of valuation and “teleoaffectivities” that may arise out of detaching from work as a central value to human life.

21. Temporalities in Agriculture and the Environment: Rethinking Technologies, Socionature, and Alternative Futures

Session Organizers:

Katharine LEGUN

Karly BURCH, University of Auckland, New Zealand

Jon KIM, INRAE, France

(Hosted by RC40 Sociology of Agriculture and Food)

Language: English

We invite papers that use a frame of temporalities to understand social phenomena, particularly as they relate to technologies, socionature, and the everyday aspects of agriculture and the environment. In developing the session, we draw inspiration from Doreen Massey's concept of space/time, Maria Puig de la Bellacasa's temporalities of care, and James Bridle's work on digital technology and the end of the future. In addition, we note an expanse of work on anticipation and future-oriented imaginaries, all within a popular context of urgency brought about by climate change, accelerationism advocated in the tech sector, and counter notions of slowness, care, and degrowth. We would like to look at these together, and question how power is related to temporalities in material and ecological practice. Within this frame, we are also interested in epistemic-affective labour and processes through which particular technological futures are rendered scientific, credible, or inevitable, while others are foreclosed — a further way of asking not only how temporalities are experienced, but how they are actively produced.

We invite empirical work that deals with temporalities, and can add nuance, complexity, or clarity to the temporal dimensions of past, present, and proposed future technological developments. In particular, we invite papers that grapple with temporalities and technologies in relation to power, and in a context of agriculture and the environment.

22. Demographic Imaginations and Migration Futures

Session Organizers:

Gert VERSCHRAEGEN, University of Antwerp, Belgium

Milena BELLONI, University of Antwerp, Belgium

(Hosted by RC05 Racism, Nationalism, Indigeneity and Ethnicity)

Language: English

Across the globe, demographic projections increasingly shape debates about migration, diversity, ageing, fertility decline, and population growth. Governments, international organizations, media actors, and social movements routinely invoke demographic futures to make sense of social change and justify policy interventions. Yet such futures are never neutral forecasts. They are socially produced, politically mobilized, and deeply entangled with questions of race, nationhood, and inequality. In particular, imagined migration futures increasingly serve as powerful lenses through which societies anticipate demographic change and define the boundaries of political communities.

This session explores demographic imaginations and population politics from a comparative and global perspective. We are particularly interested in how demographic projections, expectations, and anxieties are produced, circulated, contested, and transformed into political narratives about more or less inclusive collective futures. Special attention is given to the role of imagined migration futures in shaping public discourse, political mobilization, and policy responses to demographic change.

Contributions may address:

- demographic threat narratives, including replacement theories and population anxieties;

- imagined population and migration futures and their impact on political discourse and mobilization;
- the production and circulation of demographic and migration knowledge by states, experts, media, and international institutions;
- demographic counter-narratives and alternative futures emerging from social movements, minority groups, Indigenous communities, or Global South perspectives;
- the relationship between demographic imaginaries, nationalism, racism, and belonging.

By bringing together perspectives from the sociology of migration, futures research and critical demography, this session aims to advance a global and comparative understanding of how demographic imaginations and migration futures shape contemporary societies.

23. South Korea's Digital Sociology in (or without) a Comparative Perspective

Session Organizer:

Esther BRAININ, Ruppin Academic Center, Israel

(Hosted by WG10 Digital Sociology)

Language: English, French and Spanish

The ISA World Congress will be held in Gwangju, a city recognized as a pivotal moment in South Korea's democratic transition in 1987. Since that time, South Korea has evolved into a hyper-connected, tech-driven nation, largely thanks to its "Act on Digital Platforms," which has led to some of the highest rates of sophisticated Information Communication Technology (ICT) and internet penetration worldwide. South Korea is considered a leader in digital governance, setting itself apart from Western models such as those of the US and UK by emphasizing strong leadership and a robust ICT governance framework that includes continuous investments in digital infrastructure, the development of integrated platforms, and a commitment to building public trust. This technological prowess has positioned South Korea as a significant global hub for digital sociologists examining the interactions among the state, technology, and everyday citizens' lives, aiming to understand how institutional policies, entwined with digital platforms' affordances, influence society. However, discussions surrounding the impact of "algorithmic governmentality," the "datafication of education curriculum," digital platforms as a soft power system, nationalism-preservation through algorithms, and the core concepts of digital citizenship and smart cities continue to generate multidisciplinary discussions among scholars.

The session welcomes all theoretical and empirical papers that use a variety of frameworks and methodological approaches to examine either online behaviors and interactions or the effects of technological advancements in face-to-face settings. Submissions that critically engage with the role of technology in sociological inquiry, both in South Korea and comparative countries, are of particular interest.

Call for Nominations

Distinguished Contribution to Futures Research Award

RC07 members are invited to make nominations for the Distinguished Contribution to Futures Research Award. This award was established in 2012 to recognize a living scholar who has made a significant contribution to future-oriented sociology. The award is intended to recognize achievements in futures research regarding one of three categories: (a) a career-long contribution spanning over at least two decades, (b) a publication of outstanding scholarly excellence, originality, and relevance, or (c) long-term distinguished service to RC07. The winner of the award will be most highly esteemed by future-oriented sociologists throughout the world.

How to Nominate

Nominations should be accompanied by a curriculum vitae, list of publications, and brief justification of why the nominee would deserve the award. Nominations must be made in English or with an accompanying English translation. Nominations must be submitted electronically to isarc07@gmail.com with a copy to isarc07repository@gmail.com and the words "Distinguished Contribution to Futures Research" in the subject line.

Deadline: **September 30, 2026**

Eligibility

Any living sociologist or social scientist, whether or not she or he is a member of RC07 and/or of the ISA, is eligible. Currently serving members of the RC07 Board or Distinguished Contribution Award Subcommittee are not eligible to receive the award. A condition of acceptance of the award is that the winner delivers a presentation in an event sponsored by RC07 or, in case of travel inability, contributes a written paper for a publication sponsored by RC07.

Selection Process

All nominations will be reviewed by an international jury of distinguished scholars. In accordance with the Award Rules, the jury can decide to split the award or to not make an award at all during this term. The selection process will be completed in time for the winner to make travel arrangements for the XXI ISA World Congress of Sociology in Gwangju, Korea, 4-10 July 2027.

Recognition

The award is non-remunerated and consists of a certificate with honorary citation and lifetime RC07 membership benefits. Winners will be asked to deliver a presentation in an RC07-sponsored event and their names will be reported to the ISA Executive Committee and announced in the RC07 newsletter.

2027 Competition

for

Best Graduate Student Paper Award

The International Sociological Association Research Committee on Futures Research (ISARC07) is pleased to announce for the third time a competition for the award honoring the best graduate student paper related to sociological futures research. The winner/s will present her/his/their paper in one of RC07's sessions at the XXI ISA World Congress of Sociology in Gwangju, Korea, 4-10 July 2027 and their name(s) will be published in the Newsletter. The award consists of a certificate with a citation and a monetary reward in the amount of US\$1200, which can be used toward expenses for attending the World Congress.

Eligibility

Eligible are graduate student-authored papers accepted for inclusion into RC07's program at the XXI ISA World Congress of Sociology in Gwangju, Korea, 4-10 July 2027. The author(s) must be registered for a graduate degree at a degree granting institution at the time the paper is submitted. Employment as academic staff or junior faculty is no reason for exclusion. Candidates must hold an undergraduate degree (B.A. or equivalent) but cannot yet hold a Ph.D. (or equivalent) at the time the paper is submitted. Not eligible are papers that were co-authored with a faculty advisor or someone holding a Ph.D. (or its equivalent), that have been published already, or that have been accepted for publication more than three years prior to submission. Papers must be submitted in English or with an accompanying English translation. The maximum length for the paper is 8,000 words, including bibliography, plus an abstract of not more than 500 words. Winners must be member of both the ISA and RC07 at the time of receiving the award.

Deadline to submit full paper: 15 December 2026

How to submit

Applications must be emailed to isarc07GraduateStudentAward@gmail.com with a copy to isarc07repository@gmail.com and the words "Graduate Student Award 2027" in the subject line and the paper and cover letter as separate attached files. The paper must follow scholarly standards, including proper referencing and documentation of sources. It should be typed

double-spaced in 12-point font on numbered pages in a standard size (such as A4 or US letter of around 21cm × 29cm) with 3 cm margins. Notes and the bibliography should appear at the end. The paper may be formatted in one of these three formats: Adobe PDF (*.pdf), Rich Text File (*.rtf), or Word document (*.doc). The front page should bear the paper's title, brief abstract, and up to five keywords, but not the author(s) name or affiliation.

The cover letter must include author(s) names, full contact information (for the period until July 2027), paper title, and a brief curriculum vitae indicating which institutions were attended in what years and what degrees were obtained or are in progress. The names of degrees must be indicated in the original language; English translation or explanation of equivalency may be added.

In addition, a statement must be submitted on whether or not Artificial Intelligence has been used during any phase or in any aspect of preparing the research for and writing this paper. If Artificial Intelligence has been used, then this statement must describe the use(s) in a transparent manner with appropriate details.

Candidates normally residing in the Economic South (= ISA's category B/C countries) are encouraged to provide further details on their residency status and periods spent abroad so as to be considered for further special mentioning or travel subsidies.

Submissions not conforming to these rules run risk of rejection. The jury reserves the right to request further particulars.

Selection

The papers will be evaluated by an international jury of distinguished scholars. The primary criteria for selection are originality of ideas, social relevance, conceptual rigor, analytical perceptiveness, and clarity of style.

In accordance with RC07's Award Rules, the jury can decide to split the award, extend special recognition for the best paper from the Economic South (ISA's category B/C countries), make honorary mentions of runners-up, or to not give an award at all. The winner(s) will be notified by March 15, 2027.

Join RC07 - Become a Member Today!

Stay informed. Participate in RC07 events and activities. Network with colleagues around the world. Enhance your career and professional acumen. Contribute to thriving futures research and crucial scholarly endeavors.

Regular dues for membership in the ISA Research Committee Futures Research (ISA-RC07) are only US\$20.00 for an entire four-year period. Discounts are available for members in countries with softer currencies and for students (US\$10.00). There are also membership categories available for voluntary supporters (US\$40) and for ISA Lifetime Members (US\$40.00/US\$20.00).

For more details and for registering directly via the ISA secure website:
<https://www.isa-sociology.org/en/membership/individual-membership/>.

Web

ISA RC07 Website: <https://www.isarc07.org>

Social Media

ISARC07 endorses alternative social media. Follow @isarc07 on mastodon.social
Visit <https://mastodon.social/@isarc07>

NEWSLETTER

RC07 newsletter aims to be a means of communication among the members of RC07 as well as other scholars interested in futures research. It is published non-periodically according to the needs of our scientific community. In addition to announcements of events organized by our RC, or related to our research concerns, we include news from our members, reports of activities, information on new publications, ongoing projects and works in progress as well as short thought pieces on pressing issues and current debates in our field.

Please contribute to our newsletter and help making it an effective tool for interaction. Send your comments and any news item for the next newsletter to isarc07news@gmail.com.

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Acknowledgments and Disclaimers

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