# Newsletter

*ph: Keivan Missaghi

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**Newsletter Editors** Francesca Donati and Alicia Domínguez

## Inside this issue

## *Letter from the Secretary Treasure*

Dear Colleague,

First, I would like to extend a warm welcome to the new members who joined RC03 in 2025.

- Justus Jonathan de Jong, Netherlands
- Corey Dolgon, USA
- Kimberly Huyser, University of British Columbia, Canada
- Michelle Janning, Whitman College, USA
- Richard Mora, Occidental College, USA
- Rebeccah Nelems, Athabasca University, Canada
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The total membership of RC03 currently stands at 70. Please note that, to continue functioning as a research committee, it is essential to maintain a membership of more than 50. With our current number, we are therefore comfortably meeting the membership requirement set by the ISA Statutes.

What remains crucial for RC03 is the continued demonstration of collective scientific activity. This is reflected in the high-quality and relevant research outputs produced by both long-standing and new members. I sincerely thank everyone for their ongoing effort, commitment, and valuable contribution to RC03's work.

The significance of the work undertaken by this research committee was reaffirmed during my recent visits to diverse communities around the world. I have seen cities striving to provide their citizens with levels of liveability that appear almost idyllic. In contrast, I have also visited cities burdened by excessive surveillance and regulation—places seemingly more committed to advancing ideological agendas than to serving their citizens.

Some cities suffer from corruption, with government officials siphoning off public funds for personal gain, showing little concern or moral responsibility toward their residents. In other cases, cities are marked by stark divisions between rich and poor—two worlds existing within the same urban space. Conversely, I have encountered cities where resources are limited but citizens live with a sense of equality, happiness, and contentment.

I have also witnessed the devastating effects of war, terrorism, and organised crime in cities where people live in fear, hardship, and resignation. Interestingly, even neighbouring communities can differ profoundly in their values and collective outlook—often shaped by the influence of past leaders. In one study I conducted in a city of about 36,000 inhabitants, I identified only 32 individuals who held significant power to shape the city's functioning, for better or worse.

These experiences underscore a key message: RC03, with its global presence, bears an important responsibility to shed light on the conditions prevailing in cities around the world—and to illuminate what cities could become when democratic and human values are genuinely upheld.

**Johan Zaaiman**

# Announcements

1. Call for participation in **Re-Co-wide Webinar Series** is open! Join the Working Group! The ISA Research Council (ReCo) is currently working intensively on a new version of the Aims & Requirements document. This is a key regulatory text that defines both the mission and the organizational rules for all Research Committees (RCs), Working Groups (WGs), and Thematic Groups (TGs). The ongoing consultation process is intended to collect input from all RCs, WGs, and TGs, so that the final text reflects the diversity and needs of the ISA community. After the upcoming round of discussions, the draft will be revised and put to a vote at the January 2026 ReCo meeting. This work may sound procedural, but it is in fact crucial: the Aims & Requirements document sets the rules of the game for how we, as communities of scholars, work together within the ISA framework.

2. Apply for the **Research Network and the Co-organized Activities**. Enhance collaboration between members!

3. The ISA ReCo Webinar Series has now been launched. The first two webinars are already available to watch on the ISA YouTube Channel and in the ISA Benefits Page. https://www.youtube.com/@isasociotube

4. The European Sociological Association (ESA) celebrates the 17th ESA conference in Warsaw (Poland) from the 25 to the 28 of August. It will be dedicated to "Strengthening Democracies: Social Action, Solidarity, and Sustainable Futures". Save the date!

5. The **RC03** and the Jean Monnet Chair in European Urban Policies and Governance hosted at the **Urban Governance Lab-Pablo de Olavide University** will hold a Seminar series on *Institutions, public policies and community development*. For more information check the webpage: https://www.upo.es/cspl/eurpol2/es/2026/02/03/seminarios-de-la-catedra-jean-monnet-en-colaboracion-con-el-rc03/

# BEHIND THEIR NAMES
# MEET OUR MEMEBERS

## *A note from the President*

One of the key goals of RC03 is not only to support excellent research, but also to strengthen the intellectual community that connects our members across countries, institutions, and research traditions. As a global research network, we benefit enormously from knowing more about the people behind the research and the diverse perspectives that shape our field.

To support this, we are launching a new initiative in the newsletter: short interviews with RC03 members. Through these conversations we hope to learn more about each other's research trajectories, interests, and current projects, and to create opportunities for new connections and collaborations across our network.

In this issue we present the first interviews prepared by our Newsletter Editor, Francesca Donati. We plan to continue and further develop this format in future newsletters, featuring 3-4 members in each issue. If you would like to take part in a future interview, please feel warmly invited to contact Francesca.

Starting with the next newsletter, we will also introduce a new section titled Research Notes. The aim of this section is to create a space where members can briefly share ongoing or recently completed research. Contributions may include early findings, methodological reflections, fieldwork experiences, conceptual ideas, or even research challenges and questions that could benefit from collective discussion. The format is intentionally open and informal to encourage participation and exchange within our community.

We warmly invite all members to contribute either through interviews or short research notes and to help us make the newsletter a place where we can learn about what our colleagues around the world are currently working on.

Marta Klekotko

President, ISA RC03

## Interview with:

## Saburo Horikawa
## Professor of Urban & Environmental Sociology,
## Hosei University (Tokyo, Japan)

**Q: How did your academic journey lead you to your current position?**

I'm currently **Professor** of Urban & Environmental Sociology, **Hosei University, Tokyo, Japan**. I was a **research associate** at **University of Chiba**, Chiba, Japan, before joining Hosei in 1997. I spent 2 years in Cambridge, Massachusetts as a **visiting scholar** at Reischauer Institute, **Harvard University** from 2004 to 2006.

**Q: What are the main themes in your research?**

Well... that is an interesting question, my research revolve around **why do place matter? Why preserve? What is so wrong with tearing down old structures and replacing them with new ones?** Those are the questions that have been guiding me. When I was a freshman in college in 1984, I had the chance to observe a community in northern Japan that tried to answer those difficult questions. The **community tried to save the old Otaru Canal**, an iconic and historic fabric of the community. Ever since, I have been studying it continuously, and this year (2026) marks the 42$^{nd}$ year of this study. I interview people who participated the preservation movement in the community.

I focus on the relationship between community (or more broadly, society) and the urban environment. We live our lives within a physical environment. Changes to this environment inevitably produce changes to our way of living and our social relationships. This point—namely, *the material nature of society* and *the sociality of the material world*—is so self-evident as to be often overlooked, but we must consciously incorporated into our field of vision. Social life never occurs in a vacuum. In the sense that it is led within the physical ordering of a specific urban environment, society is material in nature. **Meanwhile, in that we transform nature according to our needs and thoughts, creating and deploying man-made objects, physical objects have a social existence**. Once constructed, buildings are incorporated as a new condition of our social existence, and our lifestyle changes as a consequence.

Society does not simply produce new objects, it is remade by these objects in turn. What kind of changes to cooperative relationships are brought about by changes to the physical urban environment? And conversely, how do these changes transform the urban environment? I think our analysis must incorporate this "double-layered relationship." So, in addition to the qualitative data obtained by these interviews, **I have also been conducting the annual fixed point observation surveys since 1997**. The survey targets 270 buildings along the Otaru Canal. Since 1997, I have surveyed the exact same buildings every September. A detailed questionnaire sheet is created for each building. I supplement this questionnaire with door-to-door interviews with the building's occupants and firsthand assessments of the building's current condition, including photographic records.

Given that I have **combined** the **methods of architecture and urban planning** with a **sociological analysis**, this is something of a **groundbreaking approach**. Ultimately, these surveys yielded data that illuminate changes to the historic buildings along the Otaru Canal over the course of thirty years. While I was busy doing fieldwork in Otaru, my research grew from a Japanese case study to a comparison work looking at the U.S. and Japan. It seemed to me that preservationists were always fighting a losing battle in Japan. What about the American preservationists? Were they winning? If so, why? If preservation battles on both sides of the Pacific differed, those differences might say a lot about the social endeavor called preservation as well as the two societies. It is my hope that my case study of an American community (with comparison to the Otaru case) can speak to the universal themes of cities and preservation, change, and control.

**Q: Which of your publications do you particularly enjoy or recommend?**

Horikawa, Saburo [2021] ***Why Place Matters: A Sociological Study of the Historic Preservation Movement in Otaru, Japan***, *1965–2017*. Cham, Switzerland: Springer (https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-030-71600-4#toc) - This is the English version of my book, *Machinami hozon undo no ronri to kiketsu* published by the University of Tokyo Press in 2018. It took me 33 years to write this original Japanese version, and another 3 years to translate into English (2021). **The Japanese version has won 3 major academic awards in Japan**; most notably, "the Ishikawa Prize," the highest award bestowed by the City Planning Institute of Japan. It is extremely unusual that a sociology book receive such important recognition from the city planning discipline. The English version was reviewed in *the Journal of the American Planning Association* (Vol. 88, No. 3, 2022).

A related work (with emphasis on collective memory of the community) is as follows: Horikawa, Saburo [2021] "Do as Democracy Demands: The Irony of Historic Preservation Movement and Its Relevance in Popular Sovereignty in Postwar Japan," in Helen Hardacre, et al., eds., *Japanese Constitutional Revisionism and Civic Activism*, pp.279-289, Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

And my latest work is forthcoming from Palgrave Macmillan: Horikawa, Saburo, et al., eds. [Forthcoming] *Environmental Victims' Movements in East Asia: Their Philosophies, Practices, and Environmental Justice*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. [To be published in April 2026] https://link.springer.com/book/9783032152091

**Q: What do you enjoy doing outside academic work?**

I am a sociologist whose motto is "Say it with data," and am also a designer and a photographer. I have my own (virtual) design house "Studio 1110" (pronounced as "studio eleven-ten"). The Studio's motto is "Say it with *style*." Please visit the following website (I myself designed it, too) for some of my design works:**https://horikawa-seminar.ws.hosei.ac.jp/studio-1110.html**

*Interview with:*

*Matt Patterson*
*Associate Professor in the Sociology Department*
*University of Calgary (Alberta, Canada)*

**Q: How did your academic trajectory lead you to your current position?**

I am currently working as **an associate professor** in the Sociology Department at the **University of Calgary in Alberta, Canada**. Prior to that, I did my **graduate education** in sociology at the **University of Toronto** under the supervision of John Hannigan, best known in urban sociology for his 1998 book *Fantasy City*. Interestingly, I began my university career studying computer science at the University of Waterloo. As a computer science student, I worked at technology companies that include IBM and Siemens. However, I never much liked computer programming and, after taking an elective in sociology, **I immediately switched my major**. One of the computer jobs I *did* like was working as an IT technician at the Ontario College of Art and Design (OCAD) in Toronto. When I arrived, OCAD had just moved into a new avant-garde building designed by architect Will Alsop. Next door to OCAD, the Art Gallery of Ontario was about to begin its own architectural transformation designed by Frank Gehry. *Being surrounded* by so many interesting architectural projects is likely what led me to eventually focus my sociological research on landmark architectural projects and their contribution to cities.

**Q: What are the main themes in your research?**

Very broadly, my research examines the **relationship between cities and culture**. I'm interested in how places give rise to, and are shaped by, unique cultural practices, products, and institutions. My dissertation research used **comparative analysis to study the renovations** of Toronto's two most prominent **museums**: the Art Gallery of Ontario (mentioned above) and the Royal Ontario Museum. Both museums employed celebrity "starchitects" to design striking, avant-garde buildings. The study looked at the motivations behind these projects, demonstrating how public arts organizations use high profile architectural projects to build legitimacy and attract outside support (Patterson 2012). I also looked at the community politics surrounding the projects, and how the cosmopolitan sensibilities of the architects and developers clashed with the more locally-focused views of the surrounding community (Patterson 2016; Patterson 2020). I subsequently expanded this research, looking at the impact of landmark architectural projects on cities across Canada and the United States (Jeong and Patterson 2021; Patterson 2022).

**Theoretically**, my work applies a **cultural lens to study urban issues and processes**. I use concepts and theories from cultural and cognitive sociology to study how people perceive and make sense of the urban environment, and how these understandings shape urbanization. In essence, people shape the built environment according to explicit and implicit cultural schema they carry with them. Once built, the urban environment communicates meaning and shapes daily practices. I try to bring these cultural dynamics into dialogue with other perspectives in urban sociology such as political economy and ecology.

**Q: What are you currently working on?**

**Around 2020, I switched from museums to my current project**: studying ongoing efforts to **preserve historic Chinatowns in Canada and the United States**. Chinatowns were first established in the late-19th century under conditions of racist discrimination and segregation. I'm interested in why these neighborhoods continue to resonate for the people fighting for their preservation today. I'm also interested in how these groups employ arts, culture, and placemaking strategies to preserve Chinatowns in the face of challenges such as gentrification, and the suburbanization of the Chinese and immigrant population. The first major publication from this project is forthcoming in *American Sociological Review* and is entitled "Living with Ghosts: How Physical Traces of the Past Shape Cultural Trauma in Chinatowns."

**Q: Which of your publications do you particularly enjoy or recommend?**

The piece I enjoyed writing most was entitled "**Scoreboard Urbanism: Theorizing Mental Life in the Digitally Mediated Metropolis**" which was published in *City & Community* in 2024 (Volume 23, Issue 1). When I arrived at the University of Calgary in 2015, I joined an interdisciplinary group of researchers studying "smart cities" (Burns et al. 2021). Through this work, I began thinking about the impact of new digital technologies and social medial apps on urban "scenes" (Silver and Clark 2016). I was particularly interested in how these apps have introduced so many opportunities to quantify our experience of the city, through rankings, ratings, and scores and this made me think of Georg Simmel's 1903 essay "Metropolis and Mental Life," which examined the quantification in the industrial era city. The paper compares these two forms of quantification and develops the concept of "scoreboard urbanism" in contrast to Simmel's ideas. Having taught classical sociological theory for over a decade, this was my one and only paper on the topic!

**Q: What do you enjoy doing outside academic work?**

I'm the father of three boys (aged 6, 8, and 11), which keeps me very busy and means that any hobbies I develop need to somehow include them. For that reason, we're all avid downhill skiers. In Calgary, winter can last from October to April, so taking part in winter sports is a must, especially if you're trying to keep three boys busy. Thankfully, the Rocky Mountains are only an hour's drive away. We're out there most weekends of the winter.

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*Interview with:*

*Francesca Donati*
*Postdoctoral researcher at the Sustainable Development and*
*Ecological Transition Department*
*University of Eastern Piedmont (Vercelli, Italia)*

**Q: How did your academic trajectory lead you to urban sociology?**

I am currently a **postdoctoral researcher** at the **Università del Piemonte Orientale**, **Vercelli, Italy** where I work within the broader framework of Age-It – Aligning Bottom-Up Policies, a national research initiative dedicated to the study of ageing in Italy. Alongside this role, I also serve as a **teaching tutor** for a master's course on life course and social inequalities at the **Università di Torino**, **Torino, Italy** where I support students in exploring trajectories of adulthood and wellbeing shaped by life course events.

My academic journey has been shaped by mobility across institutions and countries. I received my PhD from the **Università degli Studi Milano-Bicocca**, **Milano, Italy** in co-tutorship with the **Universidad Pablo de Olavide, Sevilla**, **Spain** within the sociological PhD programme *URBEUR-Urban Studies*. My doctoral dissertation centred on **local care systems**, examining how territories develop diverse responses to care needs of the younger and the older population. The project pushed me to reflect deeply on how care is distributed, organised and negotiated within places that differ in institutional capacity, cultural practices and available resources.

However, my path into sociology began rather unexpectedly. After completing my bachelor's degree in Political, Social and International Sciences at the Alma Mater Studiorum – Università di Bologna, I opted for a degree in local and global development. Urban Sociology was one of the elective courses, and I selected it without much thought. Yet it captivated me from the first lecture. This fascination influenced my decision to choose the Universidad Complutense de Madrid (Madrid, Spain) as my Erasmus destination because at the sociology department they were carring out a research project about **urban vulnerability, citizenship and participation**. This experience marked a turning point: I spent months conducting qualitative fieldwork and analysing neighbourhood dynamics. From that moment, territorial approaches became the core of my research identity.

**Q: What are the main themes in your research?**

My research interests revolve primarily around **care strategies**, **care policies**, and **territorial and urban policies interpreted through a gender-sensitive lens**. I am particularly drawn to understanding how local systems respond to needs that emerge from demographic ageing, social and territorial inequalities.

Theoretically, I rely on a **territorial lens**, which helps me analyse how local policies and strategies come into existence. This approach considers territory as a holistic, dynamic and multilevel actor, constantly shaped by the people who inhabit it and by the broader institutional arrangements in which it is embedded (Mingione and Oberti, 2003; Scarpa, 2016). A central component of my framework is the notion of **re-scaling** (Keating, 2013). I approach territory as a system of overlapping, interconnected and often asymmetric scales (Brenner, 2004).

This conceptualisation helps unpack how the "local" is never purely local, but is rather the outcome of continuous interactions with supra-local forces. Decisions made at national or regional level can profoundly shape what municipalities and communities are able to do. At the same time, local actors reinterpret, adapt and sometimes resist external directives, generating hybrid and situated forms of policy-making.

I also combine this territorial framework with insights from the **ethic of care** (Held, 2005; Tronto, 2013; 2015; Sevenhuijsen and Svab, 2004). Care ethics challenges the dominant idea of individual autonomy by emphasising our inherent interdependence and relational nature. It starts from the premise that care is not a private issue nor a marginal activity—it is fundamental to the functioning and survival of society. Without care, social reproduction would simply collapse. Adopting this lens allows me to rethink concepts such as wellbeing, responsibility, and citizenship, imagining forms of *caring democracy* (Tronto, 2015) in which vulnerability and dependency are acknowledged rather than hidden or stigmatised. Integrating territory and care ethics enables me to study policies not only as technical instruments, but as a relational and spatial practices.

### Q: What are you currently working on?

At the moment, my main research revolves around a project investigating **care strategies and care needs among older adults living in inner and rural areas**. Conducted in six small municipalities—four in northern Italy and two in the south—this work forms part of the broader **Age-It** research project. My colleagues and I focus specifically on **rural and inner areas**, contexts that is now at the centre of the Italian policy debate for supposedly being unsustainable from a welfare perspective. The extreme peripherialisation and abandonment of rural areas represent a challenge for the respect of citizens' rights. The aim of the project is to understand the everyday experiences of older residents who live in geographically fragile and underserved territories. Many of these areas face infrastructural decline, limited services and demographic shrinkage, which pose specific challenges to ageing well. Our first step was therefore to map local needs, expectations and lived difficulties. Building on these insights, we engaged older people and key local stakeholders in a series of **co-inquiry** processes, designed to explore problems collaboratively and identify shared priorities. We then moved into a **co-design phase**, during which residents and practitioners worked together to imagine and refine possible solutions. The overarching goal of the project is to support them and take the first step together towards a collective, bottom-up development of their local areas. Through workshops, community events and targeted dissemination, we try to foster connections that can outlast the project itself.

**Q: Which of your publications do you particularly enjoy or recommend?**

Well... Although my favourite piece of writing is currently under review, my second favourite piece is the development of a **gender integration assessment scale for territorial policies**: *Gender mainstreaming in urban projects: A measurement proposal applied to Spanish urban regeneration policies* published on *Cities (150, 105090)*. This tool is part of a broader effort to evaluate the quality and inclusiveness of local policy design. It has both ex ante and ex post utility: on the one hand, it guides policy makers in ensuring gender

mainstreaming throughout all stages of policy formulation; on the other, it helps scholars and practitioners assess the gender sensitivity of policy outputs and reports. I consider it a valuable contribution to bridging academic research with concrete policy practice.

**Q: What do you enjoy doing outside academic work?**

I love taking long walks, especially in cities. It's my favourite way to discover new corners, observe how places change over time, and clear my mind. I also enjoy making videos: recording voices, expressions and everyday moments helps me preserve memories that would otherwise fade. Walking and filming, in different ways, allow me to pay attention to small details—something that often shapes the way I look at places and people in my research as well.

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## Research Notes
### A new section in the RC03 Newsletter

Beginning with the next issue, the RC03 Newsletter will include a section titled Research Notes. The section is intended as an open space for members to briefly share insights from their current or recently completed research.

Research Notes may include (but are not limited to):
• early research findings,
• methodological reflections,
• fieldwork experiences,
• emerging theoretical ideas,
• short reports from ongoing projects,
• or reflections on challenges encountered in research.

The format is intentionally flexible and concise. The aim is not to present fully developed publications, but rather to stimulate exchange, visibility, and dialogue within the RC03 community.

Members interested in contributing are warmly invited to contact the newsletter editors.

## *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 f.donati12@campus.unimib.it