



Community  
Research

# Newsletter

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Editor: Francesca Donati

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## *Letter from the President*

Dear RC03 Members,

I hope this letter finds you well and that you are continuing your research with energy and passion.

For ISA and for our Research Committee, this is now a particularly busy and exciting moment, as preparations for the XXI ISA World Congress of Sociology in Gwangju are moving forward, and the Call for Abstracts is entering its final days. I would therefore like to warmly encourage you to take a look at the RC03 programme and consider submitting your abstract. Please remember that selected papers presented in RC03 sessions will be invited for publication in a special issue or an edited book, which gives us even more reason to build a strong and inspiring programme together.

This year, the RC03 programme includes a strong and diverse set of sessions, hosted and co-organized by our committee. The cultural dimension of community and urban studies — an area that RC03 has been developing for many years — is especially visible, with sessions addressing cultural policies, community museums, cultural heritage, culture-led development and urban regeneration. At the same time, the programme engages with some of the most pressing challenges faced by contemporary communities, including polycrisis, inequality, housing pressures, social fragmentation and local strategies of resilience and adaptation. Important space is also given to community-engaged research, planetary urbanization, solidarity, social integration and digital transformations.

Together, these sessions show the vitality of RC03 and the continuing importance of community research for understanding the turbulent times in which we live. They also create many opportunities for theoretical, empirical, comparative and practice-oriented contributions from different regions of the world.

We are working actively to make RC03's presence in Gwangju meaningful and visible. I would especially like to acknowledge the important work of our Board member, Professor Wonho Jang, who is serving as a local coordinator and is deeply involved in preparations for the Congress. Together, we are also working on a special event for members of our research network, so that the World Congress will be not only a space for presenting research, but also an opportunity to strengthen our community and future collaborations.

In this newsletter, you will find information from the Local Organizing Committee. Please do take a moment to read it, especially if you are considering travelling to Gwangju.

The Call for Abstracts closes on 14 October 2026 at 23:59 UTC/GMT. As is standard ISA practice, this deadline is strict and will not be extended. After this date, no new abstracts or authors can be added to the programme.

I therefore encourage you to use these final days to submit your abstract and to share the call with colleagues, students and networks who may be interested in contributing to RC03 sessions.

I look forward to seeing many of you in Gwangju and to building, together, a strong and inspiring RC03 programme for #ISAWCS27.

With warm regards,  
Marta Klekotko, PhD  
President, ISA RC03 Community Research  
RC03 Programme Coordinator



## Announcements

1. The next ISA conference will be celebrated in Gwangju, Korea from the 4th to the 10th of July 2027. The deadline for the abstract submission is the 14<sup>th</sup> of October 2026.

Check the RC03 sessions:  
<https://isaconf.confex.com/isaconf/wc2027/webprogrampreliminary/Symposium886.html> and submit your proposal:  
<https://isaconf.confex.com/isaconf/wc2027/cfp.cgi>

2. 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.
3. Apply for the **Research Network and the Co-organized Activities**. Enhance collaboration between members!
4. 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>

## Getting ready for Gwangju

### Gwangju — A City with a Distinct Historical Identity

Gwangju, located in southwestern Korea, is widely recognized as a city that symbolizes democracy, civic participation, and human rights in modern Korean history. In particular, the May 18 Democratic Uprising of 1980 was one of the most significant events in shaping the city's historical identity and gave Gwangju a distinctive place in the development of Korean democracy.

Yet Gwangju's historical significance extends beyond the events of May 1980. The city has also been an important site of resistance and civic engagement at different moments in modern Korean history, including the Gwangju Student Independence Movement of 1929 during the Japanese colonial period. These historical experiences have provided an important foundation for Gwangju's contemporary identity as a city associated with democracy, human rights, and civic participation.



*Gwangju is a major city in southwestern Korea with a distinctive place in the country's modern history. Its historical identity has been shaped by major movements for independence, democracy, human rights, and civic participation, most notably the Gwangju Student Independence Movement of 1929 and the May 18 Democratic Uprising of 1980.*

**Source:** Gwangju Metropolitan City

### The Gwangju Student Independence Movement of 1929

The Gwangju Student Independence Movement, which began in Gwangju in 1929, was one of the major anti-colonial movements during the Japanese colonial period. What began as protests by local students developed into a broader movement against colonial education and discrimination, eventually spreading to schools and students across Korea. The transformation of a local student protest in Gwangju into a nationwide movement gave it an important place in the history of the Korean independence movement.

The Gwangju Student Independence Movement also provides an important historical context for understanding the city's identity today. It reminds us that Gwangju is not remembered solely for the May 18 Democratic Uprising of 1980, but also as a place where resistance to oppression and active social participation had emerged in an earlier period. Although the movements of 1929 and 1980 took place under very different historical circumstances, both are important to understanding how Gwangju came to be associated with democracy and civic engagement in modern Korean history.



*The Gwangju Student Independence Movement began in November 1929 and developed from student protests in Gwangju into a nationwide anti-colonial movement. Students across Korea participated in demonstrations against colonial rule and discriminatory education, making it one of the most significant student-led independence movements during the Japanese colonial period.*

**Source:** Independence Hall of Korea, Korean Independence Movement Information System

### **The May 18 Democratic Uprising of 1980**

The May 18 Democratic Uprising of 1980 is one of the most significant events in the history of Korea's democratization. Following the death of President Park Chung-hee in 1979, public expectations for political democratization grew. However, a new military leadership consolidated its power and expanded martial law across the country in May 1980, restricting political activities and closing universities. In response, university students in Gwangju protested against the expansion of martial law. The violent suppression of these demonstrations by martial law forces soon led to the participation of ordinary citizens, transforming the protests into a broader civic uprising.

From May 18 to 27, students and citizens in Gwangju continued their resistance and called for democracy in the face of violent military repression. As casualties mounted, increasing numbers of citizens joined the movement. Resistance continued around the former Jeonnam Provincial Office until May 27, when martial law forces re-entered central Gwangju and brought the ten-day uprising to an end.

In the years that followed, information about the uprising was suppressed and its meaning was distorted under authoritarian rule. Nevertheless, sustained efforts were made to uncover the truth, restore the honor of the victims, and establish responsibility for the violence. Through this process, May 18 came to be recognized not simply as a local event in Gwangju, but as a major turning point in Korea's struggle for democracy and an enduring symbol of the country's democratic development.



*The May 18 Democratic Uprising took place in Gwangju from May 18 to 27, 1980, as students and citizens resisted the expansion of martial law and military authoritarian rule. The uprising became a major symbol of Korea's struggle for democracy and later played an important role in the country's democratization and the development of its democratic consciousness.*

**Source:** May 18 Archives / Gwangju Metropolitan City

### ***The Gwangju Community — Solidarity and Civic Self-Organization in a Time of Crisis***

Another important dimension of the May 18 Democratic Uprising was the solidarity and spontaneous communal practices demonstrated by the citizens of Gwangju amid extreme violence and social disruption. After martial law forces withdrew from central Gwangju on May 21, the city became largely isolated from the outside, while normal administrative and policing functions were severely disrupted. Yet this situation did not simply lead to disorder. Citizens voluntarily took on various roles and participated in efforts to sustain their city and community. Citizens donated blood for the wounded, shared food and essential supplies, and cared for the injured and the families of those who had been killed. In particular, the sharing of rice balls (jumeokbap) and voluntary blood donations are still remembered as powerful symbols of solidarity and mutual aid during the uprising. At the same time, citizens worked to maintain public order, shared information, and gathered in front of the Jeonnam Provincial Office for public rallies where they expressed their views and demands. The communal experience that emerged in Gwangju therefore went beyond mutual assistance, involving forms of voluntary participation, self-organization, and civic self-governance.

These experiences have subsequently been discussed and remembered through ideas such as the “Gwangju Community” and the “May Community.” They refer to the ways in which citizens supported one another, helped maintain communal order, and acted collectively under conditions of severe social crisis. Scholars have approached this experience from various perspectives, emphasizing solidarity and mutual aid, civic self-organization, collective identity, participation, and self-governance.

In this sense, Gwangju in May 1980 was not only a site of resistance in the struggle for democracy. It was also a space in which citizens demonstrated how communities can respond collectively to social crisis, build relationships of solidarity, and organize themselves under extraordinary circumstances. This communal experience remains an important part of how the May 18 Democratic Uprising is remembered today.



*During the uprising, citizens responded to violence and social disruption through remarkable forms of solidarity and mutual aid. They donated blood, shared food and essential supplies, cared for the wounded, exchanged information, and participated in public gatherings. These experiences have become an important part of the memory of the “Gwangju Community,” illustrating civic participation and self-organization under conditions of severe social crisis.*

**Source:** May 18 Archives / May 18 Memorial Foundation

## *A City of Memory — May 18 in Gwangju Today*

The legacy of the May 18 Democratic Uprising did not end in May 1980. Through continuing efforts to uncover the truth, preserve historical records, commemorate the victims, and pass their experiences on to future generations, the uprising has remained an important part of Gwangju's identity. In recognition of their historical significance, the archives documenting the May 18 Democratic Uprising were inscribed on UNESCO's Memory of the World Register in 2011.

This memory is preserved not only in documents and testimonies but also in the urban landscape of Gwangju. Geumnam-ro and the square in front of the former Jeonnam Provincial Office were central spaces where citizens gathered, held public rallies, and called for democracy in May 1980. Today, the square is known as the May 18 Democracy Square and, together with the former Jeonnam Provincial Office, remains one of the most important sites associated with the uprising. The May 18th National Cemetery also serves as a major place of remembrance and commemoration for those who lost their lives.

What is particularly significant is that these sites do not exist simply as historical monuments separated from the contemporary city. The May 18 Democracy Square and the former Jeonnam Provincial Office remain part of central Gwangju, alongside cultural institutions such as the Asia Culture Center (ACC) and spaces of everyday urban life. In this part of the city, memories of 1980 coexist with the activities and rhythms of contemporary Gwangju.

These spaces therefore illustrate how Gwangju not only commemorates its democratic past but also continues to incorporate that history into its contemporary urban identity. The square where citizens gathered in 1980 remains a place where history, memory, civic life, and culture meet today.

## *Interviews*

# **BEHIND THEIR NAMES MEET OUR MEMBERS**

### *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, I launched this 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.

Given the success of the first number, 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 ([francesca.donati@uniupo.it](mailto:francesca.donati@uniupo.it)).

We also want to promote the section titled Research Notes that in the last number did not have a great success. 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:***

### ***Eglė Butkevičienė,***

*Full professor at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities  
Kaunas University of Technology (Kaunas, Lithuania)*

#### **1. Academic trajectory**

How did your academic journey lead you to your current position and how did it shape your research interests?

My academic journey has always been closely connected to understanding social change and the ways in which people participate in shaping their communities and institutions. I am currently a Professor of Sociology at Kaunas University of Technology (KTU), Lithuania, where my work brings together sociology, public governance and interdisciplinary research. Over the years, participation in European research projects and international networks has increasingly drawn my attention to citizen participation, citizen science, social innovation and community resilience. This journey has also shaped my understanding of research itself: communities are not only something we study, but can be active partners in producing knowledge and developing responses to societal challenges.

#### **2. Research interests**

What are the main themes or questions that guide your research?

A central question running through my research is how communities respond to social change and how citizen participation can strengthen their capacity for collective action. My research interests include citizen participation, citizen science, social innovation, democratic and community resilience, and participatory governance. I am particularly interested in what enables meaningful and inclusive participation, how relationships and trust develop between citizens, researchers and institutions, and how different forms of participation contribute to community agency and resilience. More recently, I have also become interested in how digital transformation and AI are changing the conditions for civic participation, trust and democratic governance.

#### **3. Community in research**

What role does the concept of community play in your research?

Community is both an object of study and an active research partner in much of my work. This perspective is particularly important in my work on citizen science, where citizens and communities can move from being research subjects or data providers to becoming co-creators of knowledge. At the same time, community participation is never automatically inclusive. I am therefore interested in who participates, whose knowledge is recognised, whose voices remain unheard, and what conditions enable communities to exercise their agency.

#### **4. Current research**

What project or topic are you currently working on?

Several of my recent and current projects explore different ways in which communities participate in knowledge creation and social change. In RECONNECT, funded by the Research Council of Lithuania, we examined how citizenship and citizen science can contribute to strengthening community and societal resilience. In the Horizon 2020 project YouCount, we explored youth citizen social science, involving young people as co-researchers in investigating social inclusion and issues affecting their own communities. I am now involved in the new Horizon Europe project Science4Everyone – Bringing Science Closer to Citizens, which explores how science can become more accessible and connected to citizens through large-scale participatory activities outside traditional scientific settings.

#### **5. Key publication or idea**

Is there a publication or idea from your work that you would particularly recommend to RC03 members?

One idea that has become increasingly central to my work is citizen science as a form of civic participation and community capacity building. Citizen science is still frequently understood primarily as involving citizens in collecting data for scientific research. I think its sociological potential is much broader. When designed as a genuinely participatory process, citizen science can create new relationships between citizens, researchers and institutions, mobilise local and experiential knowledge, and provide spaces for collective learning and action.

#### **6. Community studies today**

In your view, what are some of the most important questions or challenges for community studies today?

One important challenge is reconsidering what we mean by “community” in societies where relationships increasingly cross geographical, institutional and digital boundaries. Communities are facing demographic change, inequalities, climate and environmental challenges, misinformation, political polarisation and rapid technological transformation. Understanding how communities develop the capacity to respond collectively to these interconnected challenges is, in my view, becoming increasingly important.

#### **7. Beyond academia**

What do you enjoy doing outside of your academic work?

I love travelling, particularly when it gives me the opportunity to discover places by walking and experiencing everyday life beyond the usual tourist routes. I enjoy nature, mountains and long walks, but I am equally happy exploring cities, their architecture, local food and culture. Travelling is probably my favourite way of switching off from work; although, I suspect we never completely disconnect from work and stop observing environment around us through the lenses of sociology ☺

## ***Interview with:***

### ***Johanne Jean-Pierre,***

*Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology,  
York University (Toronto, Canada)*

#### **1. Academic trajectory**

How did your academic journey lead you to your current position and how did it shape your research interests?

As a first-generation university student and now Associate Professor, I consider myself fortunate to have had instructors who explicitly told me that I had potential and that I should consider graduate school when I was an undergraduate student. Completing a PhD in Sociology at McMaster University led me to eventually secure a position as an Assistant Professor in Child and Youth Care at Toronto Metropolitan University (formerly Ryerson University) in 2017, and subsequently in the Department of Sociology at York University in 2022. My personal story certainly informs my research program with a focus on educational experiences, school-community connections, and first-generation university students' journeys.

#### **2. Research interests**

What are the main themes or questions that guide your research?

Community groups and organizations often strive to create and maintain connections with local schools and postsecondary institutions. Part of my research program involves building connections between community organizations and scholars. In my research, I investigate schools' organizational logics, the multilayered forms of socialization in educational institutions, as well as adolescents' aspirations, and stories. I pay attention to the ways in which students make sense of their journeys and accomplishments while also enacting their agency as they face challenges and barriers in their community. I am particularly interested in the coupling/decoupling of policy and practice, in the effects and impacts of institutional interventions, and the different ways community groups' advocacy contribute to change. I have published works regarding community advocacy, school discipline, curriculum, and postsecondary pathways.

#### **3. Community in research**

What role does the concept of community play in your research?

Community plays an important role in my research projects. Community-driven research questions inform several inquiries that I engage in. Community-engaged research (CER) is a framework that I have mobilized in my previous research, and that I am mobilizing in my current inquiry with adolescents. I also publish about the ethical, ontological, and epistemological implications of conducting research with historically marginalized populations.

#### **4. Current research**

What project or topic are you currently working on?

Now, in the context of a community-university research partnership, including an artistic component, I am leading a research project that seeks to inspire adolescents to become first-generation university students. I am also leading an inquiry that examines the multiple meanings and roles of intergenerational storytelling in different Black communities.

#### **5. Key publication or idea**

Is there a publication or idea from your work that you would particularly recommend to RC03 members?

First, I would recommend an article that I co-authored that encourages a broadening of our understanding of ethics' principles when we conduct research with underserved and marginalized communities. Although this article draws from lessons learned while conducting research with Black communities, its content is certainly relevant for researchers who engage in community studies. It was published in *Ethics & Human Research*, "[Broadening core research ethics principles: Insights from research conducted with Black communities](#)".

Second, I would recommend a recent article that received the 2026 *Canadian Association for Curriculum Studies (CACS) Outstanding Publication Award*: "[Overlooked and underserved: How inclusive education oversights exclude Black students](#)" published in the *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*.

#### **6. Community studies today**

In your view, what are some of the most important questions or challenges for community studies today?

Scholars who engage in research with various communities can face institutional barriers that inhibit the creation and maintenance of long-term collaboration with community organizations and groups. Time is essential to listen and understand, to identify the pressing social issues on the ground, and to help a group or an organization articulate their research priorities. Contemporary academic environments often pressure scholars to "publish or perish". Relationship-building with communities is not valued as much as a peer-reviewed publications during tenure, promotion or other career advancement processes. This makes developing long-term relationships with community partners especially challenging.

#### **7. Beyond academia**

What do you enjoy doing outside of your academic work?

I profoundly enjoy traveling and spending time with friends. Traveling facilitates resting, exploration, and making new friends.

## ***Interview with:***

***Jane Ku,***

*Associate Professor of Women's and Gender Studies in Interdisciplinary and Critical Studies,  
University of Windsor (Windsor, Canada)*

### ***1. Academic trajectory***

During my PhD, I worked closely with newcomers and immigrants and was involved in several community-based projects that promoted collaboration among immigrant-serving and community organizations in advocacy, planning, and service provision. My early research focused on anti-racist education, but through my community work I became increasingly interested in immigrant women's activism. Many of the individuals leading community initiatives were highly educated and professionally accomplished immigrant women who, unable to access their original professions because of persistent barriers such as the requirement for "Canadian work experience," turned their expertise toward supporting their own communities. Their experiences inspired me to shift my focus from anti-racist education to examining immigrant women's activism and political organizing, which became the foundation of my doctoral research.

After entering academia, my research evolved in response to the policy and funding environment. While my dissertation centered on activism and collective political engagement, much of the available research support was directed toward questions of immigrant settlement and integration. As a result, my work increasingly engaged with settlement-related issues. At the same time, I became more aware of how immigrants are often framed within public discourse and policy as problems to be solved or populations in need of assistance. This deficit-oriented perspective has shaped my critical approach to research. My research interests also continue to be refined by ongoing work with different communities so that the research questions and projects are often supplied and developed through working with different community groups.

Consequently, my scholarship remains grounded in a transnational postcolonial feminist framework that emphasizes the agency, resilience, and knowledge of immigrant communities and other racialized groups. Rather than focusing solely on the challenges immigrants face, I seek to highlight their contributions, strategies of resistance, and community-building practices. My research also critically examines the nation-state systems, policies, and institutions that construct immigrants as outsiders and perpetuate inequalities. These theoretical commitments continue to inform my work and have guided the development of my research program on migration, community engagement, social justice, and belonging.

## 2. Research interests

What are the main themes or questions that guide your research?

My research focuses on understanding how inequalities and systems of oppression are produced and reproduced, as well as how individuals and communities respond to them through resilience, resistance, and collective action. I am particularly interested in the ways marginalized communities build solidarity and create spaces of belonging under challenging conditions. My work also examines how local experiences are shaped by national, international, and transnational processes. For example, immigrant integration in Canada cannot be understood solely as a domestic issue; it is also shaped by global power relations, histories of colonialism, and racialized and gendered constructions of citizenship. Grounded in transnational and Third World feminist perspectives, my research continues to explore how solidarity, community-building, and collective resistance can challenge hegemonic structures such as neoliberal capitalism, imperialism, heteropatriarchy, and other forms of exclusion and domination.

## 3. Community in research

What role does the concept of community play in your research?

Community is central to my research because it is where belonging is cultivated and where resistance, solidarity, and collective action become possible. It is also the space through which research can remain relevant and accountable beyond academia. I view community not simply as a shared identity, but as a form of transformative solidarity that can emerge from common interests, goals, and struggles.

Too often, multicultural politics defines community in narrow ethnoracial terms, overlooking the possibility of more inclusive and creative forms of association built around confronting exclusion and injustice. Communities can, at times, reproduce the same divisions and inequalities found in the broader society. Yet they can also serve as sites for imagining and practicing more equitable social relations.

This perspective shapes my research approach. Many of my projects originate from concerns raised by community organizations, which are then translated into academic research questions and funding opportunities. While this process is not without its tensions, it can create meaningful benefits for community partners by supporting their research capacity, strengthening their programs, and providing access to resources. Ultimately, I see community as a visionary space—one that enables alternative practices, relationships, and possibilities for social change.

## 4. Current research

What project or topic are you currently working on?

I am currently leading a three-year Partnership Development Grant that examines experiences of racism among African, Caribbean, and Black (ACB) women in Windsor-Essex. Building on longstanding collaborations with African community organizations, anti-racism initiatives, and interdisciplinary partnerships within the university, the project aims to develop a sustainable research partnership that advances knowledge and generates tangible benefits for ACB communities. It also reflects a broader commitment to strengthening the university's engagement with and accountability to racialized communities.



In addition, I am developing a project that uses Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) to engage migrant youth in identifying and mobilizing the strengths they contribute to their communities. This work challenges deficit-based narratives that portray migrant youth as risky, needy, or passive subjects, instead highlighting their agency, knowledge, and capacity to contribute meaningfully to community life and social change.

### **5. Key publication or idea**

Is there a publication or idea from your work that you would particularly recommend to RC03 members?

Ethnic activism and the politics of immigrant settlement, *Social Identities*, 2011, 17(2): 271-289. -- explores the limitations of immigrant services and immigrant women's activism with their communities. Multicultural politics and the paradox of being special: immigrant women's activism and the voice of difference. *International Journal of Women's Studies*, 2013 <https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol10/iss4/5/>. -- explores how immigrant women navigate through discourses of difference to advocate for their communities.

Towards pluriversality: reading migrant youth resilience. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 2025, 52(9)<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/1369183X.2025.2548320> -- This article helped me work with the notion of pluriversality or an alternative relationality that is the basis of a transformative solidarity and community building.

### **6. Community studies today**

In your view, what are some of the most important questions or challenges for community studies today?

With neoliberalism, community has become a celebrated concept that is easily mobilized by institutions and state to co-opt the community and even download all the accountability, risk and work to the "community". Thus we have to continue to be vigilant about the way community is taken up.

### **7. Beyond academia**

What do you enjoy doing outside of your academic work?

Travelling if I have time. Reading books or watching movies/series that are about supernatural experience that feels more removed from my work.

## *Interview with:*

**Marina Pera,**

*Post-doctoral Researcher,*

*Open University of Catalonia, (Barcelona, Spain)*

### **1. Academic trajectory**

I studied Sociology at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB). After several years working in the social sector with young people and vulnerable groups, I had the opportunity to pursue a Master's degree in Sociology at Columbia University. Living in New York City sparked my interest in the study of community and community processes in urban contexts. My PhD at UAB examined the community management of neighbourhood facilities in Barcelona by local grassroots organisations and their impact on the neighbourhoods in which they are located. I am currently a Juan de la Cierva postdoctoral researcher at Turba Lab, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya. My research continues to focus on urban meeting spaces, such as community facilities and urban gardens, and on the role they play in fostering encounters among residents, strengthening attachment to place, and developing collective organising skills. I also explore collaboration between state and civil society actors in the design and implementation of innovative public policies. Throughout my research career, I have been a visiting scholar at the CUNY Graduate Center, INLOGOV at the University of Birmingham, and DIST at Politecnico di Torino.

### **2. Research interests**

What are the main themes or questions that guide your research?

My research is mainly guided by two interconnected themes. First, I am interested in how citizens organise at the neighbourhood or city level to respond collectively to social needs, and in their relationship with local public administrations. I explore this phenomenon from an urban commons perspective. I analyse how these initiatives contribute to prefigure alternative forms of social organization and whether they contribute to public policy innovation. At the same time, I examine the opportunities and tensions that emerge when grassroots organisations interact with the local state. Public support can provide important financial and material resources to urban commons, but it can also introduce different institutional logics and rhythms, creating risks of co-optation.

Second, I study open-access physical spaces, such as community facilities and urban gardens, through the concept of social infrastructure. I am interested in how these spaces can enable collective organisation around shared needs, for example, mutual aid networks or ecological initiatives, while also fostering social ties and public familiarity among residents. From a critical perspective, I also examine how intersecting inequalities shape access to and experiences to these open spaces, and how they may limit their capacity to function as genuinely inclusive and accessible meeting places.

### **3. Community in research**

What role does the concept of community play in your research?

Community plays several roles in my research. First, I use the term community-based to describe initiatives that emerge from citizens organising within a particular geographical area, as distinct from state-led action. In my work on urban commons, community also refers to the delimited group of people collectively managing a resource or project. In urban contexts, however, these communities tend to have permeable and fluid boundaries.

I also approach the concept of community critically. In the transfer of public assets to local grassroots organisations, the community is sometimes framed as the actor that assumes responsibility for managing an asset and providing a service. Debates about whether communities should take on responsibilities previously assumed by the state raise important questions for my research: Who exactly constitutes “the community”? Can transferring service provision to communities become a strategy for retrenching the welfare state? And might it increase inequalities between neighbourhoods depending on their different capacities for collective organisation?

Finally, in research on social infrastructure, community is often used to refer broadly to neighbourhood residents. This can create an overly homogeneous image of the community, hiding socio-cultural diversity, inequalities, and unequal capacities to access and shape collective spaces.

### **4. Current research**

What project or topic are you currently working on?

I am currently working as co-PI on the WELLCOM project, together with Dr Sergio Villamayor and Laura Calvet-Mir, where we study collectively managed urban gardens and their impacts in Barcelona. We first examined how community gardens open to the neighbours are organised, who participates in them, and how they are governed. We are now exploring their individual-and neighbourhood-level impacts. From a community studies perspective, we approach urban gardens as more than spaces for contact with nature: they are also places where people can practise deliberation and collective organisation, meet other residents, and develop collective activities.

I am also exploring how social infrastructures operate in urban contexts characterised by diversity and intersecting inequalities. In particular, I am interested in identifying the dimensions that shape their capacity to become meeting places where social ties can be built in neighbourhoods affected by social displacement and increasing social fragmentation.

### **5. Key publication or idea**

Is there a publication or idea from your work that you would particularly recommend to RC03 members?

Pera, Marina. 2026. “A Relational Approach to Social Infrastructures for Socially Just Climate Adaptation.” *Sociology Compass*: e70245.

Drawing on a relational understanding of space, the paper develops an analytical framework for understanding social infrastructure and critically assessing its potential to support socially just climate adaptation.



Kirby, N., & Pera, M. (2026). Claimed spaces of participation and their role in strengthening community resilience and resistance. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 1–28.

This article shows how claimed spaces of participation can strengthen community resilience through collective action and resistance, highlighting the mutually reinforcing relationship between the two.

Pera, M. (2025). Social infrastructure in diverse and unequal cities: Examining Civic Management facilities in Barcelona. *City, Culture and Society*, 43.

Through the case of civic-cultural facilities in Barcelona, the paper explores the strategies used to foster diversity and accessibility in unequal urban contexts.

Pera, M., & Bianchi, I. (2022). Governmentality, the local state and the commons: An analysis of Civic Management facilities in Barcelona. *Social Inclusion*, 10(1).

From a governmentality perspective, we critically examine the risks and tensions associated with the community management of public resources, particularly when local governments transfer responsibilities for public services and facilities to grassroots organisations.

## **6. Community studies today**

In your view, what are some of the most important questions or challenges for community studies today?

The concept of community is increasingly present in contemporary political debates, particularly in the context of social, political, and environmental change. One of the key challenges for Community Studies is therefore to critically and rigorously examine what we mean by “community”, avoiding overly romanticised or homogeneous understandings of the term. Community Studies can also contribute valuable evidence and reflection on the role communities can play in addressing current social and climate challenges, while paying attention to inequalities and power relations.

## **7. Beyond academia**

What do you enjoy doing outside of your academic work?

I have two children, so when I am not working, I mainly spend my time with them and dealing with all the logistics and domestic work that comes with family life. However, when I have some time for myself, I enjoy meeting friends, reading novels, and hiking in the mountains.

## Activities and news from the RC03 members:

### Book

Dolgon, Corey, ed. 2026. *Condemn and Resist: Sociologists Respond to the First Year of Trump 2.0*. London: Ingram Academic / Anthem Press.

### Journal Articles

Dalgon, Corey (2026). "In Search of Revolutionary Praxis: Decolonization, Participatory Action Research, and the Politics of Radical Commitment". *Action Learning and Action Research Journal* 32 (1). (forthcoming)

Donati, Francesca, and María-Jesús Rodríguez-García. 2026. "Towards the Democratisation of Care? Insights from Co-Governance in Local Welfare in Spain and Italy." *THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF SOCIOLOGY*: 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.70108>

Patterson, Matt, Henry Tsang, Bryan Kuk, Weiqi Li, and Mojtaba Rostami. 2026. "Living with Ghosts: How Physical Traces of the Past Shape Cultural Trauma in Chinatowns." *AMERICAN SOCIOLOGICAL REVIEW* 91(2): 286–312.

Tsang, Henry, Matt Patterson, and Chanel Vinet. 2026. "The Politics of Placemaking in Chinatown: A Study of Culture and Identity in the Architecture of North American Chinatowns." *JOURNAL OF THE SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF ARCHITECTURE IN CANADA* 50(1–2): 29–41.

### Book Chapters

Patterson, Matt. 2026. "Cultural Trauma, Collective Memory, and the Enduring Power of Chinatown during the COVID-19 Pandemic." Pp. 48–71 in *ANTI-ASIAN RACISM AND THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN CANADA*, edited by Chandrima Chakraborty, Sibor Chen, Muyang Li, Guida Man, and X. Alvin Yang. Vancouver: UBC Press.

Patterson, Matt. 2026. "Architecture as a Conduit to the Sacred: A Sociological Account." Pp. 156–163 in *HEALTH, HAPPINESS, DESIGN, AND THE CITY: EXPLORATIONS OF CRITICAL FORCES AND FACTORS BEYOND THE PRAGMATIC*, edited by Brian R. Sinclair and Nooshin Esmaeili. Calgary: Quality in Canada's Built Environment. ISBN 978-1-0674717-0-5.

Esmaeili, Nooshin, Belle Gutierrez Kellam, Taly-Dawn Salyn, Matt Patterson, Enrica Dall'Ara, Gavin R. McCormack, and Brian R. Sinclair. 2026. "Community, Inclusivity, and Wellbeing: An Interdisciplinary Critical Examination of the Calgary Central Library (CCL) as a Vehicle to Redefine Quality in Design." Pp. 849–858 in *ARCC 2025 CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS*, edited by Clare Robinson, Salvador Arellano, and Maritza Noriega. ISBN 979-8-234-04636-9.

## Book Reviews

Dolgon, Corey. 2026. Review of *Global Marxism: Decolonisation and Revolutionary Politics*, by Simin Fadaee. *Critical Sociology*. Advance online publication.

## Seminars

Jean Monnet Chair and RC03 Seminar: "Cultural Placemaking in the EU: Places, Scenes and Quality of Life." Universidad Pablo de Olavide. Convened by Cristina Mateos and Clemente Navarro. <https://www.upo.es/cspl/eurpol2/es/2026/05/18/jean-monnets-seminar-cultural-placemaking-in-eu-places-scenes-and-quality-of-life/>

Jean Monnet Chair and RC03 Seminar: "Southern European Care System: Quality of Life, Gender and Care." Universidad Pablo de Olavide. Convened by Francesca Donati and María-Jesús Rodríguez-García. <https://www.upo.es/cspl/eurpol2/es/2026/05/27/southern-european-care-system-quality-of-life-gender-and-care/>

## Summer School

"Análisis y evaluación de políticas de desarrollo socio-espacial sostenibles" (Analysis and Evaluation of Sustainable Socio-Spatial Development Policies). Online, Universidad Pablo de Olavide. IN SPANISH. <https://www.upo.es/formacionpermanente/microcredenciales/analisis-y-evaluacion-de-politicas-de-desarrollo-socio-espacial-sostenibles/>

## Board game on sustainable and significative ageing

Nazio, T., Donati, F., Voccia, M., Mele, G., Bufali, M. V., & Marzullo, M. (2026). La vita (non) è un gioco. Giocatela bene! (Version 1). Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22962812>

## 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/>

Please send future announcements to [francesca.donati@uniupo.it](mailto:francesca.donati@uniupo.it)