Research Network 07, Sociology of Culture

European Sociological Association

10th mid-term conference

Cultural Vulnerabilities and Planetary Problems

Creating New Sociological Studies of Culture Between Fragility and Fortitude

21-23 January 2026, Sapienza University of Rome

programme

DIPARTIMENTO DI ECCELLENZA
SARAS STORIA ANTROPOLOGIA RELIGIONI ARTE SPETTACOLO

ESA European Sociological Association

Wednesday 21st January

09.00 – Registration

09.00 – 10.00 Morning coffee and refreshments. **Aula Toesca**.

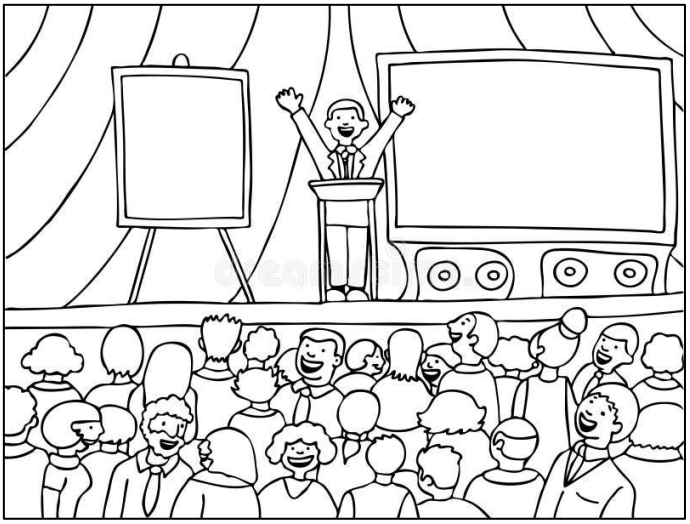
10.00 – 10.40 Conference starts: Welcome addresses. SARAS Head of Department Alessandro Saggioro, Sapienza Foundation President Eugenio Gaudio, RN07 Coordinator David Inglis. Chair: Anna-Mari Almila, Sapienza University of Rome. **Aula Chabod**.

10.40 – 11.50 Keynote: Ulf Bohmann, Technische Universität Chemnitz. Chair: David Inglis, University of Helsinki. **Aula Chabod**.

A Vulnerable Capital? Addressing Right-Wing Extremism in a European Capital of Culture: The Chemnitz Case

In late summer 2018, a fatal knife attack by asylum seekers in Chemnitz led to the largest right-wing extremist riots in German post-war history. Subsequent political debates led to a government crisis and ultimately to the dismissal of the president of the Office for the Protection of the Constitution. ”Chemnitz” became synonymous with the resurgence of right-wing extremist forces. In an ethnography spanning more than two years, the question of how risky politicisation processes manifest themselves in the urban public sphere was investigated (Brichzin/ Laux/ Bohmann 2022). It can be shown that, on the one hand, ”the incidents” (as they were called locally) of 2018 were by no means an isolated case and, on the other hand, how and with what effect the interplay of politicization and depoliticisation also and especially functions in everyday culture. The analysis is made even more relevant by the fact that Chemnitz was named European Capital of Culture 2025 not despite, but because of its challenging circumstances (Laux/ Bohmann 2025). The task was therefore to use cultural means to strengthen democracy and contribute significantly to the social transformation of the city. The anniversary year took on particular significance due to the fact that right-wing extremist forces publicly announced their intention to make 2025 a “second 2018.” The threat was plausible and the strategic constellation favourable for the enemies of democracy. In this respect, it may be plausible to assume that the Capital of Culture is “vulnerable” in some sense. The concept of vulnerability here is distinctively different from that commonly used in social and cultural studies (Nungesser/ Schirgi 2024). The keynote outlines and analyses the aforementioned aspects of this interesting case.

11.50 – 12.00 Break



12.00 – 13.30 First parallel panels

Aula Chabod

Life course and transition

Chair: Louis Volont

Željka Zdravković

Gender inequalities in youth transitions to adulthood in Croatia.

Juho Hänninen

Post-traditional shift and life course change: Punk rockers' transition to adulthood.

Zekiye Gürün-Üçem

Between fragility and fortitude: How older generations shape the cultural imaginaries of migration among Turkish youth

Aula Romeo

Literature and culture

Chair: Predrag Cvetičanin

Damianos Tzoupis

The resilience of textual monuments: Reading a classic as active reflection on socio-political crises in contemporary Greece

Jan Váňa

Can literature save the world? The epistemological and mobilizing potential of award-winning fiction

Marina Iaroslavtseva

Salted corpses and ungrievable death: *Kadavry* as necropolitical allegory in post-2024 Russia

13.30 – 14.15 Lunch. **Aula Toesca**.

14.15 – 15.45 Second parallel panels

Aula Chabod

Sustainability and environment

Chair: Lia Luchetti

Jörn Ahrens

What is sustainability? Reflections about the agenda of an oxymoron

Svetlana Hristova

Bringing culture into UN SDGs: Sustaining the world or reforming the capitalism?

Rita Albuquerque, Julien Audemard, Aurélien Djakouane, Emmanuel Négrier, Marie-Laure Poulot

Festivals facing the ecological transition: An analysis of two eco-conditionality schemes in Nouvelle Aquitaine and Occitanie

Aula Romeo

Democracy and risk

Chair: Guido Nicolosi

Manuela Farinosi, Claudio Melchior, Alessandro Meneghini

Rethinking risk communication: Cultural vulnerabilities and the limits of a one-size fits-all approach

Dominik Zelinsky

Antipopulist charisma: Personalized leadership in antipopulist discourse and the case of Slovakia's 2024 presidential elections

Iveta Ķešāne, Liene Ozoliņa, Maija Spuriņa

The shifting and contradictory symbolic codes in legitimizing militarization in Latvia: The discourse surrounding the introduction of mandatory conscription and military education programs in general education

15.45 – 16.00 Break

16.00 – 18.00 Third parallel panels

Aula Chabod

Art, science, careers

Chair: Simon Stewart

Monika Larini

Precarity and persistence: Artistic careers between symbolic value and structural insecurity

Henk Roose, Julia Peters

Art words: How justifications in grant proposals of visual artists affect the chance of getting government support.

Erin Maussen, Henk Roose, Kris Rutten

From art's "insufficient quality" to artists' "financial need": governmental logics of selection and justification in the visual arts (1965-2015).

Niklas Pernhaupt

Joint imagination of emergent futures of work among junior scientists working in Vienna

Aula Romeo

Culture and politics

Chair: Joost van Loon

Nemanja Krstić, Miloš Jovanović, Marija Stefanović

Divisions in the cultural field of Serbia

Mirko Petrić, Inga Tomić-Koludrović , Predrag Cvetičanin, Adrian Leguina

Socio-digital inequalities in the cultural consumption of the students of three Croatian universities

Predrag Cvetičanin, Mirko Petrić, Inga Tomić-Koludrović, Adrian Leguina

Is there a homology between political and aesthetic preferences?

Danijela Gavrilovic, Marija Stefanović

Strategies and tactics of vulnerable ethnic and religious minorities in Serbia amid the turmoil of civic protests

18.15 – 19.00 Welcome drinks. **Aula Toesca**

Thursday 22nd January

09.00 – 09.30 Morning coffee and refreshments. **Aula Toesca**.

09.30 – 11.30 Special participatory workshop. Organiser: Otto Segersven, University of Helsinki. **Aula Chabod**.

Sociologists of Culture or AI? Playing the Competence Imitation Game

This interactive workshop invites participants to play the Competence Imitation Game, a tool for exploring human–AI differences. Inspired by the Turing Test and sociological Imitation Game methodology, the format invites participants to distinguish between peers and AI models imitating them. How, and how accurately can sociologists of culture distinguish each other from an AI model imitating them in typed conversation? What follows is a collegial exploration on the competences, and forms of knowledge that are shared by sociologists of culture that cannot be replicated by AI. Together with post-game conversations, the aim of the workshop is to establish a space for collective reflection on the impact of AI technologies in our daily work and our field.

Participants are encouraged to bring a charged laptop with them, but this is not compulsory.

11.30 – 11.45 Break

11.45 – 13.15 Fourth parallel panels

Aula Chabod

Cultures and institutions

Chair: Dominik Zelinsky

Aurélie Van de Peer

"It's just too pedagogical": Keeping the door closed on sustainability in artistic fashion education

Luuc Brans

Keeping fashion's sustainable transition exclusive: How sustainable-cultural entrepreneurs in cultural industries risk climate polarization

Mario de Benedittis

Sportification, mediatization, transnationalization: Crossfit between crisis and institutionalization

Aula Romeo

Marginality and resistance

Chair: Lia Luchetti

Sarah Markgraf, Laura Dominique Pesliak, Claudia Hornberg

Gendered environmental (in-)justice: The impact of flooding on women's health and vulnerability in Bangladesh

Amir Zucalla

Existential marginality and epistemic resistance: Deaf cultural practices in crisis

Simon Stewart, Marianela Barrios Aquino

"Stranger views": Marginality, migrant homelessness and life the UK

13.15 – 14.00 Lunch. **Aula Toesca**.

14.00 – 14.30 Sociological campus walk. Meeting point in front of the Faculty, bottom of the stairs.

This short walk covers some of the socio-political history of this exceptional campus area.

14.30 – 16.30 Fifth parallel panels

Aula Chabod

Futures and solidarities

Chair: Mirko Petrić

Sören Altstaedt

Future-cultures against fatalism: Re-politicizing the "loss of future"

Joost van Loon

Alienation, decreation and kenotic solidarity: Dialectical historical materialism for a post-apocalyptic world

Anna-Mari Almila

Where people are indigenous, grapes are not: Wine, cultural vulnerabilities, and indigenous resilience

David Inglis

What has Ibn Khaldun ever done for us? On the challenges of de-colonial re-formations of sociological 'classics'

Aula Romeo

Beauty, appearance, morality

Chair: Anna Garbaruk

Giselinde Kuipers

Ugly beautiful world: Theorizing contemporary beauty culture – and its negative consequences – as a self-reinforcing socio-cultural regime

Rabasa Rucki, Carolina Belen

Looking powerful yet relatable: Argentine politician's looks around the tension between distinction and identification

Sanne Pieters

"Remember: This is where we grow!" Boutique fitness studios as schools of morality

Rabasa Rucki, Carolina Belen

Graying out: Sexy, wise or old? Beauty and gender (double) standards in Argentine politician's looks

16.30 – 16.45 Break

16.45 – 18.45 Sixth parallel panels

Aula Chabod

Music and Culture

Chair: Anna-Mari Almila

Ian Woodward, Jo Haynes, Emilia Bárna

Crafting mediations: Reframing intermediary practices, values and negotiation in music production.

Chun-Ming Huang

Cultural memories or propaganda? Making a common past through music

Anna Schwenck

Song as a resource to imagine and experience community

Motti Regev

Musicking and non-declarative personal culture

Aula Romeo

Digital media and technology

Chair: Pedro Menezes

Guido Nicolosi

The sacralization of digital media

Otto Segersven

The Competence Imitation Game: Exploring the human-machine boundary across cultural worlds

Semi Purhonen, Ella Miller, Ossi Sirkka

Cultures of disconnectivity: The changing status of digital disconnection as a practice and as a social imaginary

Ronja Trischler

Digital cultures of repair

19.30 – Conference dinner. **Casa Dell'Avviatore**.

Friday 23rd January

08.30 – 09.00 Morning coffee and refreshments. **Aula Toesca**.

09.00 – 10.30 Seventh parallel panels

Aula Chabod

Digital appearances and applications

Chair: Chun-Ming Huang

Emmanuel Narh, Giselinde Kuipers, Outi Sarpila

Digital distinctions: LinkedIn portrait analysis of self-representation of looking good and right among online elites of Accra, Ghana

Zhaoying Gou

Performative authenticity and digital simulacra: A study on the identity practices of TikTok virtual streamers

Wanying Zhou

Performing and negotiating masculinity through appearance: Comparison between straight and gay men's dating app profile construction in Hong Kong

Aula Romeo

Fields and communities

Chair: Jörn Ahrens

Rachel Tomás dos Santos Abrão

Argentine cinema and the legacy of dictatorship during democratic reconstruction

Anna Garbaruk

The role of art institutions in shaping inequality in the street art field

Anna Verbeeck, Sarah Murru

"What happened with Reuzegom was a ticking time bomb": A critical examination of elite student club culture in belgium.

10.30 – 10.40 Break

10.40 – 11.50 Plenary session: Elena Borin, Pegaso Digital University. Chair: Domink Zelinsky, Slovak Academy of Science. **Aula Chabod**.

Where are we going, and how and why? Some reflection on ecosystem approaches to address the cultural sector's vulnerabilities

Over the last two decades, the cultural sector has been recurrently impacted by a series of overlapping crises – economic (e.g. the 2008 global financial downturn; Moldoveanu & Ioan-Franc, 2011), health-related (e.g. the COVID-19 pandemic; Escalona-Orcao *et al.*, 2020), geopolitical (e.g. related to wars and armed conflicts), or environmental (e.g. climate crisis; Oakley & Banks, 2020). While often framed as contingent shocks, these crises have exposed structural vulnerabilities in the cultural field: rigid financial structures, siloed organizational structures, weak lobbying power, and a persistent struggle between cultural and economic value.

In response, multiple strategies have emerged, ranging from competitive logics (Hasselbach *et al.*, 2012), to cooperative models of governance and development strategies (Bonet & Donato, 2011; Borin, 2017). Among them, ecosystem approaches have gained increasing attention from both academics and professionals. Initially

rooted in the natural sciences but later developed in entrepreneurship, management, and innovation studies, ecosystem thinking offers a compelling framework to re-conceptualize the cultural sector as a complex, adaptive system composed of interdependent actors embedded in broader socio-economic environments.

This keynote aims to stimulate reflections on the potential of ecosystem approaches to not only enhance the resilience of cultural and creative organizations, but also to reframe culture as a central driver of systemic sustainability transitions. Emphasizing relationality, co-evolution, and institutional interdependence, this perspective allows us to move beyond sectoral logics and recognize cultural production as part of a dynamic ecology of meanings, practices, and resources. Yet this transition is neither automatic nor unproblematic. It requires new governance models, rethinking impact metrics, and renegotiating the role of cultural actors in relations to institutions, communities, and markets. Most importantly, it calls for a shared vision of culture as a foundational infrastructure. The question is not only where we are going, but how we get there, and with whom.

11.50 – 12.00 Break

12.00 – 13.30 Eighth parallel panels

Aula Chabod

Migration and marginality

Chair: David Inglis

Anna Lisa Tota

Resources of hope and human rights: Forced migration across the Mediterranean

Lia Luchetti

Lives in transit: Gender, intersectionality and vulnerability in the migratory experience

Iveta Ķešāne, Maija Spuriņa

Moral economies of worth and symbolic boundaries in the construction of racial hierarchies in the platform economy: An example of Latvian food delivery gig workers

Aula Romeo

Bodies and minds

Chair: Otto Segersven

Letteria G. Fassari, Laura Di Passio, Gioia Pompili

Authenticity as situated practice: Epistemic uses of mental distress and the politics of subjectivation

Pedro Menezes

Knowing through the body: Tactility, intellect, and bisexuality in Susan Sontag

Narges Pirhayati, Giselinde Kuipers

Classifying clothing, controlling bodies: Gendered dress practices and moral regulation in contemporary Tehran, Iran

13.30 – 14.15 Lunch. **Aula Toesca**.

14.15 – 14.45 RN07 Business meeting. **Aula Chabod**.

14.45 – 16.45 Nineth parallel panels

Aula Chabod

Urban and public spaces

Chair: Svetlana Hristova

Hannah Weytjens

Gentrification through the perspective of diverse inhabitants: Good intentions, exclusionary results

Mai Louati, Ian Woodward

"You gotta' fight, for your right": The evolving and contested notions of public space, civility, and celebration at Distortion festival in Copenhagen

Louis Volont

The skyscraper as secular totem? On the social performance of iconic consciousness

Sevim Musaoğlu

From the Bosphorus to the Maghreb: A comparative analysis of Henri Prost's urban planning projects

Aula Romeo

Human and non-human relations

Chair: Mirko Petrić

Laura Rogalski

Aesthetic experimentation with alternative futures: Collaboration in the transdisciplinary, immersive performance OderHive.

Ludovica Malknecht

Non-human animal vulnerability and oppression: Pathways to cultural change in the public discourse

Laura Dixon

Amicus Mort: Examining the role of end-of-life doulas within a person-centred framework for social wellbeing

Simone Schneider

Singularity and ordinariness in times of crisis: A cultural sociological analysis of infidelity

16.45 – 17.00 Break

17.00 – 17.45 Final reflections: roundtable with RN07 coordinators 2016–2026 (Joost van Loon, Anna-Mari Almila, Simon Stewart, David Inglis). **Aula Chabod**.

17.45 Conference ends