



Senses and Society

THEMATIC GROUP NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 29. TOUCH, BODIES, AND PRACTICES OF CARE



Satirical Portrait of Four Ascetics. Harvard Art Museums, MA, USA. Mughal period, South Asia, India .

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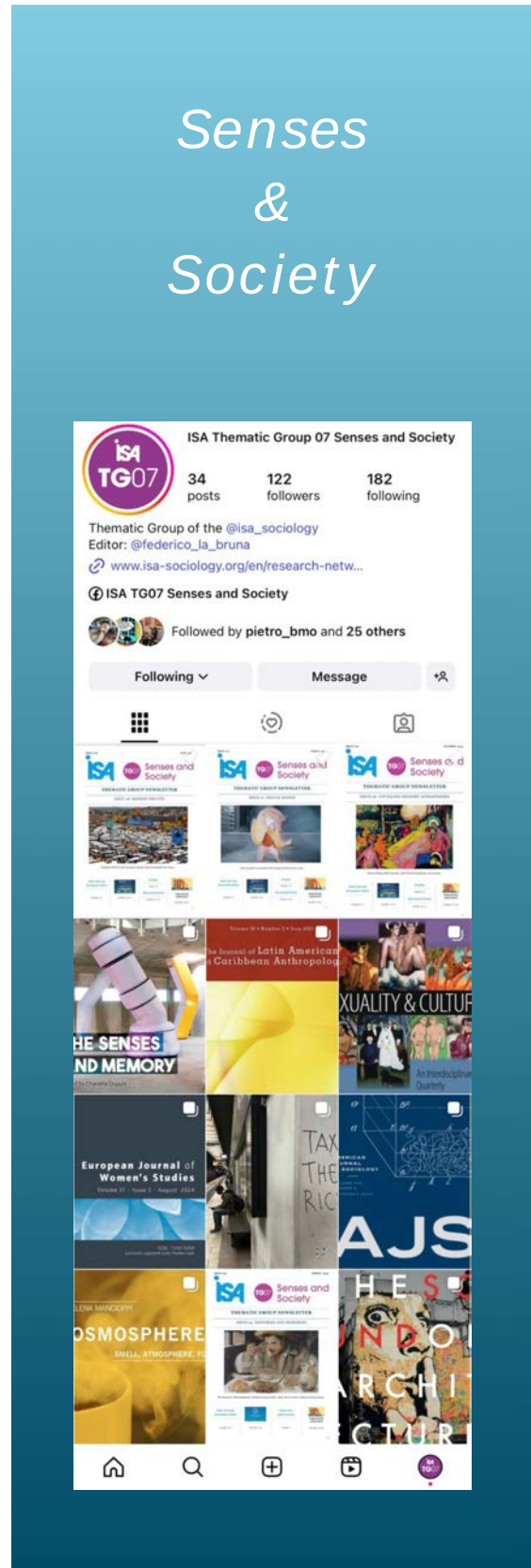
Welcome to the TG07 Senses and Society Newsletter. I would also like to welcome the many new members who joined our group on the occasion of the ISA Forum and are receiving this newsletter for the first time.

The ISA Forum surely was the event of the summer for many of us. The Forum was an important occasion to share our latest research and findings, but also a convivial moment to meet again after so much remote work. In this issue i will go though the presentations and panels we held in Rabat.

I would also like to take this opportunity to recommend the Seven Senses newsletter. Founded by Sabrina Y. Smith, a writer and creative director based in Los Angeles, Seven Senses is a sensorial studio that promotes a mindful and creative approach to living. Launched in 2022 as a newsletter exploring creative and spiritual themes through sensory experience, Seven Senses has since expanded to include immersive events, audio meditations, and analog collectibles. I believe this reading can inspire new reflections on our relationship with the senses. It is available on Substack.com either for free or through a paid subscription offering additional content.

A quick reminder: since autumn 2023, the official TG07 [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) pages have been active. Follow us to stay informed about TG07 activities.

Please note that since the beginning of the year, all communications should be directed to our institutional address: isa-tg07@isa-sociology.org. Kindly update your records accordingly.



In this issue

This edition shares the highlights of our summer in Rabat during the Sociology Forum, but as you will see, it also focuses on upcoming events and on the work we are carrying forward as a group. In particular, we are working hard to take a step forward and change our status from Thematic Group to Working Group. However, our effort alone is not enough — we also need your support. We therefore take this opportunity to remind all members about the new registration procedures for research groups, which now require an active ISA membership. If your [membership](#) has expired, please make sure to renew it before attempting to rejoin TG07 or any other thematic group. In addition, the News and Opportunities section features a call for proposal. As always, the Profiles section returns with new contribution that introduce the research interests and trajectories of TG07 members, helping to nurture the sense of community that has defined the group since its foundation; this issue features the profile of Professor [Victoria D'hers](#). [We warmly encourage new members, early career scholars, and anyone interested to submit a short description of their academic background, current projects, and research interests](#) by writing to: isa-tg07@isa-sociology.org. Finally, the issue concludes with a consistent selection of upcoming events and publications highlights.

Touch, bodies, and practices of care

This issue explores how contemporary approaches to health and wellbeing are reconfiguring the body as both a site and an agent of care. Across studies of therapeutic touch, tactile deprivation, somatic learning, outdoor embodiment, and yoga (see also [Publication Highlights](#)), the body emerges not as a passive object of intervention but as an active participant in healing and meaning-making. Touch and multisensory perception do not simply accompany medical knowledge; they shape it, defining how care is communicated, learned, and evaluated. Touch is a key tool for communication and care: it builds trust and reassurance but is rarely taught systematically (Kelly et al., 2018). Research calls for recognising it as a skilled and ethical practice rather than an instinctive act. Settings also matter. Research adopting a five-senses approach shows how sound, light, temperature, and texture co-produce patient experience and staff wellbeing (Ugolini, Rossato, & Baccarani, 2014). Multisensory design is not ornament but infrastructure for humane care. Meanwhile, technological mediation complicates touch: neurobiological and technological analyses of affective touch show how devices detect or simulate haptic signals (Paterson, 2025), opening possibilities for tele-care and rehabilitation but raising ethical concerns about authenticity, consent, and access. Beyond clinics, somatic learning in outdoor environments and slow sport expands the meaning of care. These are not escapes from society but pedagogies of sensing that help manage stress and mood through collective practice. Across these strands,

a shared thesis emerges: health is best understood as an embodied and relational process rather than the management of a biological organism. Touching, sensing, and moving are acts of learning that reshape how symptoms and risks are perceived. This redefinition carries practical consequences. Education should cultivate tactile literacy and ethical awareness; evaluation should account for multisensory environments; policy should value somatic and community-based programmes; and innovation in haptics should follow participatory ethics ensuring consent and equity. This agenda is not anti-technical but integrative. By aligning evidence on touch, sensory learning, and environmental design with theories of the bodily senses and polysensoriality (Ritchie & Carruthers, 2015; Howes, 2011), these contributions show how bodies know and how care operates when sensing is taken seriously. The body is not only what is cared for—it is how care becomes thinkable and practicable.

If you miss the Newsletter issue #28 on "Sensing the city": don't worry! You can investigate what sensory atmospheres are and how they can be a tool for understanding society through our senses [here](#).

Don't forget there are some active links (clickable URLs) in this Newsletter, especially useful for the 'Publication Highlights' section ([page 15](#)).

Please feel free to email me (isa-tg07@isa-sociology.org) with any relevant news, publications, or calls for papers that fellow Group members could benefit from.

Federico La Bruna

Newsletter Editor of TG07

Department of Social and Political Sciences, University of Milan; Department of Cultures, Politics and Society, University of Turin.

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V ISA Forum of Sociology

The ISA Forum of Sociology in Rabat gathered nearly five thousand participants, confirming the vitality and diversity of our discipline. It was an extraordinary occasion to meet new colleagues, reconnect with long-standing collaborators, and, quite literally, shorten the distances within sociology. The city of Rabat offered a magnificent setting, and even if many of us spent long hours working, I hope everyone had the chance to enjoy it fully.



TG07 Opening session on July 7

The conference opened with our first TG07 session, *Feeling Fieldwork: Senses, Emotions, and the Body in Ethnographic Research*, organised by Sneha Annavarapu, the treasurer of our group. The room was filled to capacity, and the high level of attendance continued throughout the following sessions. In this session, papers were presented by Federico La Bruna (myself, University of Milano, Italy), Gowri Vijayakumar (Brandeis University, USA), and Danielle Chevalier (Leiden Law School, Leiden University, Netherlands), each contributing original reflections on the embodied, affective, and sensory dimensions of fieldwork.

In the afternoon, we hosted *The Contours of Sensory Governance, Law, and Urban Encounters*, organised by our former president Kelvin Low, who also presented his latest

work on human–animal relations (an abstract of one of his recent publications can be found at the end of this issue.) The session chaired by Clara Cirdan (London School of Economics) also featured papers by Cecilia Brazioli (University of Milan, Italy) and Alex Diamond (Oklahoma State University, USA), who both offered insightful analyses of sensory experience and regulation in urban contexts.



From left to right, Clara Cirdan (London School of Economics); Kelvin Low (National University of Singapore); Alex Diamond (Oklahoma State University, USA); Cecilia Brazioli (University of Milan, Italy)

That same evening we concluded the day with the TG07 Business Meeting, where all current officers were reconfirmed until the end of the mandate—namely, the next World Congress of Sociology in South Korea in 2027, when new board elections will take place. During the meeting, we reflected on the objectives set at the beginning of the term and on the progress achieved so far. Our group continues to grow steadily, and the major step we aim to accomplish by 2027 is the transition from a Thematic Group to a Working Group. This change would not only represent a symbolic milestone but also a practical one, granting TG07 greater recognition within the ISA, as well as access to additional funding to support members, organise events, and foster new opportunities for research and collaboration in the sociology of the senses. To reach this goal, we emphasised the importance of renewing memberships and attracting new members by the end of 2026. Another key point of discussion was the planning of our first mid-term event, which will take place in 2026. Initially envisioned as an online gathering, it will now be held in hybrid format to encourage wider participation and stronger exchange. Further details and updates will be shared in the coming months.

The following day opened with the session *Sensory Excursions in the City: Deliberations on Teaching Practices and Interventions*, organised by Noorman Abdullah (National University of Singapore, Singapore), Vice-President of our group, together with Catherine Earl (RMIT Vietnam, Vietnam). The session was vibrant and well attended. Noorman Abdullah presented both his own paper and that of Catherine Earl, who was unable to attend in person. Olga Alejandra Sabido Ramos (Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana – Azcapotzalco, Mexico) and Paula Soto (Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana – Iztapalapa, Mexico) also shared an insightful presentation titled *Senses, Emotions and Gender Violence in Public Spaces*. Their contribution combined rich ethnographic material with creative methodologies, including a series of fanzines developed during the workshops that inspired their research, offering a vivid and accessible way to engage with their findings.

On July 9, two particularly engaging sessions took place. The first was a joint session that brought together our TG07 with Working Group 08, marking another successful collaboration between scholars of the senses and emotions. This partnership, now well established, once again generated productive synergies and intellectual resonance, resulting in a lively and well-attended discussion.



Ania Malinowska (University of Silesia, Poland) presenting in front of the audience

The session, organised by TG07 President Mark Paterson (University of Pittsburgh, USA) and Nicolas Arenas (London School of Economics, UK), representative of WG08, featured contributions from Vito Giannini (University of Bergamo, Italy), Ania Malinowska (University of Silesia, Poland), Lorenzo Sabetta (Sapienza University of Rome, Italy), and

Ferruh Yilmaz (Tulane University, New Orleans, USA). Each presentation offered distinct yet interconnected perspectives on sensory and affective experience, showing the value of cross-group dialogue within the ISA community.

The second session of the day was an Authors Speak event, featuring three of our members whose recent books have significantly contributed to the sociology of the senses. Mark Paterson (University of Pittsburgh, USA) discussed his latest work *Affective Touching*—also featured in the Publication Highlights of this issue—offering reflections on the intersections between neurobiology, technology, and the ethics of touch. Kelvin Low (National University of Singapore, Singapore) presented his book *Sensory Anthropology*, which revisits two decades of research on the sensory dimensions of everyday life and their analytical implications for contemporary sociology. Finally, Sarah Maslen (RMIT University, Australia) introduced *Learning to Hear*, a fascinating study on the auditory bases of expertise and excellence, illustrating how listening practices shape professional and social competence.



Kelvin Low presenting his book *Sensory Anthropology*

Thursday, 10 July, marked the final day of TG07 presentations, with two sessions that closed the Forum on a high note: *Exploring Sensory Temporal Landscapes through Everyday Practices* in the morning, and *Sensing Climate Change – the Anthropocene through the Sociology of the Senses* in the afternoon. The first session, organised by Clara Cirdan, featured contributions from the organiser herself, Felipe Acevedo Riquelme (Universidad de Concepción, Chile), and Dilek Üstünelan (Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, Turkey), who has recently joined our group. Their presentations explored how temporalities, memories, and everyday practices shape and are shaped by sensory experience.

The afternoon session, organised by Natalia Canto-Mila (Open University of Catalonia, Spain) and Olga Alejandra Sabido Ramos (Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana –

Azcapotzalco, Mexico), brought together a diverse set of perspectives on how climate change is perceived, embodied, and sensed. Anna Clot Garrell (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain) presented *Lost and Sensation: Embodied Encounters with Industrial Ruins in the Anthropocene*; Zofia Bienkowska (University of Warsaw, Poland) discussed *Aging in a Changing Climate: Sensory Experiences of Older Adults*; and Mark Paterson (University of Pittsburgh, USA) closed the session with *'More-Than' Human Senses and Sensations in a Time of Climate Change*, offering a broader reflection on sensory perception, environmental change, and the Anthropocene.



View on Rabat from the entrance of the Kasbah

These final sessions captured the breadth and vitality of the sociology of the senses, highlighting how sensory approaches continue to illuminate the affective, environmental, and temporal dimensions of contemporary life. Overall, the Forum was a great success for our group. Thanks to the collective effort of its members, TG07 managed to organise a rich and diverse programme, bringing together numerous sessions and attracting an impressive range of high-quality presentations. The strong participation throughout the week confirmed the growing relevance of the sociology of the senses within the ISA community and the vitality of our network as it continues to expand.

News and Opportunities

New Book Series

We are pleased to share that a [Call for Proposals](#) is now open for the new book series Environment, Senses and Emotions, published by [University of Exeter Press](#) and edited by Tatiana Konrad (University of Vienna). Below you can find the full description of the call.

"Environment, Senses and Emotions aims to provide a comprehensive exploration of how environmental crises are represented, perceived and understood through the senses and emotions and the human impulse to make sense of the world. Books in this series enhance understandings of environmental crises, engaging with these crises' sensory and emotional dimensions, highlighting this emerging area as important to a number of research disciplines. The series also promotes more-than-human perspectives and analyzes how stories narrated by plants, animals and other more-than-human or multisensory accounts of ecological interactions shape and convey environmental knowledge. The series welcomes edited collections and monographs written by scholars, practitioners, activists and thinkers who address environmental crises, broadly understood from natural disasters and local problems to global issues, and who explore these crises' sensory and emotional dimensions, including eco-anxiety, eco-guilt, eco-shame and solastalgia, among others. The series welcomes contributions from the Global South and prioritizes decolonial perspectives, examining structures of power and subjugation related to activism, justice and ecological well-being."

To become a member of TG07

You're interested in sensory scholarship. You read this Newsletter. So why not become a member of our thematic group?

What are the benefits? You are already on a mailing list and receive a triannual Newsletter. But becoming a member means you get to shape an agenda in sensory scholarship, propose international events, and get to pitch ideas for conference sessions at ISA. We need your ideas and your energy. The bigger we become as a TG, the more we can do, and we can then help younger scholars attend future conferences and events. With membership of TG07 you can also join our Board and help steer our activities and priorities.

Interested in joining?

It is no longer possible to become a member of TG07 without paying ISA registration fees. Being part of a RC/WG/TG now is possible only for ISA members. Below, you can find how to become a member of TG07 with a minimal contribution.

- 1) Log in at <https://members.isa-sociology.org/login>.
- 2) If you do not have an ISA membership account, you need to register (free) here: <https://members.isa-sociology.org/register>. Enter your biographical information.
- 3) If you do not have an ISA membership, you need become a member by following the instruction at: <https://members.isa-sociology.org/my-affiliations>. Within the same process you will be able to join also the RC/WG/TG you are interested in.
- 4) In case you already have an ISA membership, on the same page (<https://members.isa-sociology.org/my-affiliations>), will appear the button for 'Affiliate to RC/WG/TG'.
- 5) This will bring up invoicing details for 'Update affiliation'. Scroll down for the list of research councils, with TG07 towards the bottom. Check that box.
- 6) You can then enter payment data (credit card). The standard option is \$20 for 4 years, but if you need a discount, e.g. because of student status, and that option does not come up on the form, do contact the ISA team (isa@isa-sociology.org)

Call for Book Reviewers

International Sociology Reviews (ISR), an official journal of the ISA, is considering proposals for book reviews and review essays. Reviewers must have a Ph.D., or at least be advanced graduate students already writing their doctoral dissertations. They must have sufficient expertise in the field of the book they propose to review. It is essential that they have good writing skills. ISA membership is not required.

In addition, we welcome proposals to review recent sociological knowledge produced in formats other than books, such as audio-visual materials, specialized workshops, special issues of other journals, electronic resources, debates in national or regional scholarly societies, and other formats and venues.

All reviewers must follow our guidelines and familiarize themselves with the skills required to do a good review, both of which are available through the link above.

Proposals to review books not listed on our site are considered, provided that they are relevant to ISR's mission.

Proposals to write reviews of material not available in English are particularly encouraged.

More info at isa.org

All inquiries or proposals to: internationalsociologyreviews@gmail.com

Profiles

My name is Victoria D'hers (victoriadhers@gmail.com) - Live and work in Buenos Aires, where I was born on April 25th 1980.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0202-3092>

I am a Teacher and CONICET Researcher at IIGG, UBA (Instituto de Investigaciones Gino Germani, Universidad de Buenos Aires). I am a Professor at the University of Buenos Aires (UBA, Sociology degree), the National University of La Plata (UNLP) and the University of San Martin (UNSAM).

Also part of RedISS network, and CIES.

I studied Sociology and finished my PhD in Social Sciences (University of Buenos Aires, Faculty of Social Sciences) in 2011.

My Thesis was about sensibilities, bodies and emotions in polluted poor settlements.

My postdoctoral research was about creative methodologies and somatic practices.

Now, I coordinate a Research group on environment and sensibilities, in IIGGermani. The current project deals with ecofeminisms and creative methodologies in waste management cooperatives.

I practice yoga and dance, since 1999. I am a Certified Iyengar Yoga Teacher and Mentor - www.bksiyengar.com; and a Contemporary dancer. So my other issue now regards the ways artistic and somatic practices may enrich social sciences approaches, in environmental studies and in general. In short, how yoga, somatic practices, and dance may become social research tools.

Recent publications: D´Hers, Victoria. The role of women in introducing yoga in Latin America. A preliminary analysis of the history of postural yoga in Argentina. The Journal of Yoga Studies. IN PRESS.



Upcoming Events

The Odorous Object: On the Materiality of Scent • 27/02/26 - 28/02/26 • Brown University, Rhode Island, USA.

We would also like to draw your attention to the event *The Odorous Object: On the Materiality of Scent / L'objet et son sillage : penser la matérialité des odeurs*, which will take place at Brown University (Providence, Rhode Island, USA) on February 27–28, 2026. Although the submission deadline for the Call for Papers has already passed (mid-September), it remains a fascinating event to follow — especially for the strong emphasis it places on creative and multisensorial approaches to research. [For updates on similar opportunities, make sure to follow us on Instagram.](#) Details from the official call can be found below:

"Perfumed letters, colorful flasks, scented ceramics, fragrant glass vases, scented jewelry, fragrant wooden boxes, vaporizers, scratch and sniff stickers, soaps, bio-noses, imaginary smell devices ; all of these are examples of odorous objects. From the intricate textures and shapes of perfume flasks to the aromatic clays and glass containers of past eras, the materials used to hold scent have changed over time and acquired various cultural and social significance. [...] To reflect the vastness and complexity of this topic, we invite propositions focused on any time period and any geographic location. While the focus of this conference is research in the humanities and social sciences, we welcome presentations from science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) researchers in order to foster interdisciplinary conversations on the topic. Research on smell has been shaped by a variety of disciplines and necessitates a variety of perspectives. Likewise, olfactory aids (perfumes, scented objects, etc.) are welcome at the conference: we encourage presenters to not only talk about smell but also bring scents to be smelled when possible"

The Historical Ear: What is Auditory History? • 20/03/26 - 21/03/26 • The University of Chicago John W. Boyer Center in Paris, France.

We would also like to highlight the Call for Papers for the upcoming conference *The Historical Ear: What is Auditory History?*, the 1st International Conference of the IMS Study Group Auditory History, which will take place at The University of Chicago John W. Boyer Center in Paris, France, on 20–21 March 2026. The deadline for submissions is expired. This event promises to be an essential meeting point for scholars working at the intersection of sound studies, history, and sensory research. Even if you are not submitting, it will be well

worth following for its focus on listening practices, auditory memory, and multisensorial theory. Details from the official call can be found below:

"The inaugural conference of the International Musicological Society Study Group Auditory History seeks to contribute to this momentum by asking how can we access and interpret auditory experiences in varied historical contexts? Additionally, do we treat them as direct remnants of sonic experiences or as traces of "auditory imagination" (Eliot 1933, Schmicking 2019). Building on foundational work (Schäfer 1977, Truax 1974/2001) and more recent contributions (Rice 2015, Mansell 2021), the conference is particularly interested in the hearing-listening dichotomy and the diversity of listening practices—including those shaped by marginalised voices, non-elite actors, and sources that are difficult to grasp. While auditory history remains interdisciplinary by nature, we also ask how might we more critically engage with theories emerging from sensory studies? How can multisensorial thinking more meaningfully inform our approaches to sound history? At the same time, we welcome diverse disciplinary perspectives and methodological approaches that offer new insights into how people have made sense of their sonic worlds in the past."

3rd RedISS International Congress // 3er Congreso Internacional de RedISS • 27/10/25 - 31/10/25 •

The third RedISS International Congress, Politics of Sensibilities and Poverty. Between Criticism and Utopias, is now just around the corner. Many of our members will be taking part—see the poster attached for details.



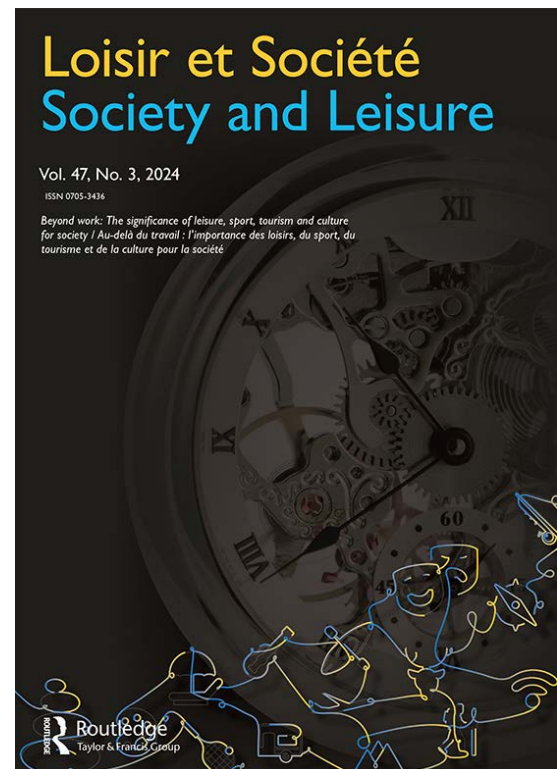
"Since the creation of RedISS three meetings have taken place, with the participation of more than 50 panelists from Latin America, Canada, China and Europe. During 2020, as a consequence of the global pandemic and health emergency related to Coronavirus (COVID-19), the annual meeting of the International Network of Sociology of Sensibilities (RedISS) that had been planned in Perugia did not take place. In that framework, we have been organizing an international congress, entirely virtual and free of charge, every two years. In 2021, with the support of the University of Palermo, Argentina, the 1st Congress of the International Network of Sociology of Sensibilities "Trust, Crisis and Social Sciences" was held. Then, in 2023, we held

the 2nd Congress of the International Network of Sociology of Sensibilities “Love, Hope and Trust: A Look at the current crisis from Sensibilities”. On this occasion, with the 3rd Congress of the International Network of Sociology of Sensibilities “Politics of Sensibilities and Poverty. Between criticism and utopias”, scheduled from October 27 to 31, 2025, we open a space for discussion around poverty criticisms and utopias, as a contribution from those who study emotions and sensibilities. Organized into 20 Working Groups, the Congress hopes to contribute to developing renewed horizons to put academic production in contact with the links between sensibilities and poverty in today's society."

Publication Highlights

Lebreton, Florian, and Jacquelyn Allen-Collinson. 'I'm here for the water': sensory dimensions of slow sporting embodiment through seascapes in northern France. *Loisir et Société/Society and Leisure*, 2024.

Florian Lebreton and Jacquelyn Allen-Collinson's 'I'm here for the water': *Sensory Dimensions of Slow Sporting Embodiment through Seascapes in Northern France* offers a nuanced exploration of how the sea mediates bodily awareness, emotion, and rhythm in outdoor sports. The article examines slow sporting practices—such as sea swimming and coastal running—as forms of sensory engagement that reconfigure the relationship between health, environment, and care. Through detailed phenomenological analysis, it shows how immersion, temperature, and movement intertwine to produce distinctive forms of somatic learning and well-being. In line with this issue's theme Touch, Bodies, and Practices of Care, the authors reveal how sensory attunement to natural elements fosters both personal resilience and ecological sensitivity, positioning the sea as a multisensory space of connection and repair. Below, I provide the abstract of the article.



"In this article, we explore the interconnections of aquatic embodiment and seascapes, drawing on phenomenological perspectives and the emergent concept of 'slow' sports and physical cultures. Whilst many traditional aquatic sports and activities have sought the

maximisation of speed, strength or skill, in recent times, the concept of 'slow' has been taken up by those participating in recreational seabased activities. This perspective valorizes 'slowing down' in order to appreciate different kinds of aquatic embodiment and the sensory pleasures of deep engagement with the seascape. Drawing on a research project combining ethnographic and autoethnographic elements, here we investigate slow aquatic 'immersion' and some of the deep sensuosities of the mind-body-water connection, anchored in the seascapes of northern France. Our specific focus is on two slow sports: paddleboard yoga/ yoga-paddle and aquatic hiking."

D´Hers, Victoria. Estrés y Pandemia. Aproximaciones a los cuerpos/emociones y las sensaciones de la practica de yoga en Argentina. Scripta Ethnologica Nueva Epoca, 2023.



Victoria D'hers's article *Estrés y Pandemia. Aproximaciones desde las Sensibilidades y la Práctica de Yoga* (in Spanish) offers a rigorous and timely sociological analysis of how yoga practice shaped emotional life, embodiment, and resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic in Argentina. Drawing on phenomenology and sensory sociology, D'hers explores yoga as both an individual and collective practice of care that allowed practitioners to navigate isolation, anxiety, and economic uncertainty through embodied attention, breathing, and community ties. The study combines qualitative reflections from open-ended survey responses with contextual evidence from medical and psychological research, showing how yoga was experienced not simply as a wellness routine but as a social and affective infrastructure of support. In resonance with this issue's focus on Touch, Bodies, and

Practices of Care, D'hers's work reveals how bodily awareness, emotion, and spirituality intertwine to produce forms of endurance and connection amid chronic crisis. Below, I provide the abstract of the article.

"Fear, worries and stress are cited as recurring effects of the recent pandemic situation, and the uncertainty associated with it. Parting from a definition of our analysis perspective of bodies/emotions, in dialogue with other authors who problematize the emotions and practices related to "self-help", as part of capitalism, in the following pages we observe

perception, auto perception of residents in Argentina, about pandemics, confinement and yoga practice, in a preliminary way. Observing the results of the online survey applied in Argentina during June and July 2020 referring to yoga and confinement, we wonder about the potency of self-perception linked to this practice and a state of health, and its links to a new way of religiosity. Key Words: pandemics - yoga - stress - bodies/emotions."

Sohail, Amjad, and Salma Naz Khattak. Touch deprivation in female adolescents: implications for semantic processing and cognition. Frontiers in Psychology, 2025.

Given this issue's focus on touch, bodies, and practices of care, it is pertinent to include *Touch Deprivation in Female Adolescents: Implications for Semantic Processing and Cognition* by Amjad Sohail and Salma Naz Khattak. The article advances our theme by linking tactile scarcity not only to affect and sociality but to language meaning-making and cognition, showing how embodied experience underwrites semantic processing. Centred on female adolescents in Pakistan, it situates touch within sociocultural and religious constraints, bridging sensory sociology, embodied cognition, and public health. It also offers actionable pathways—school-based movement, arts, and culturally attuned interventions—reframing touch as an ethical and educational priority rather than a private comfort. Below, I provide the abstract of the article.



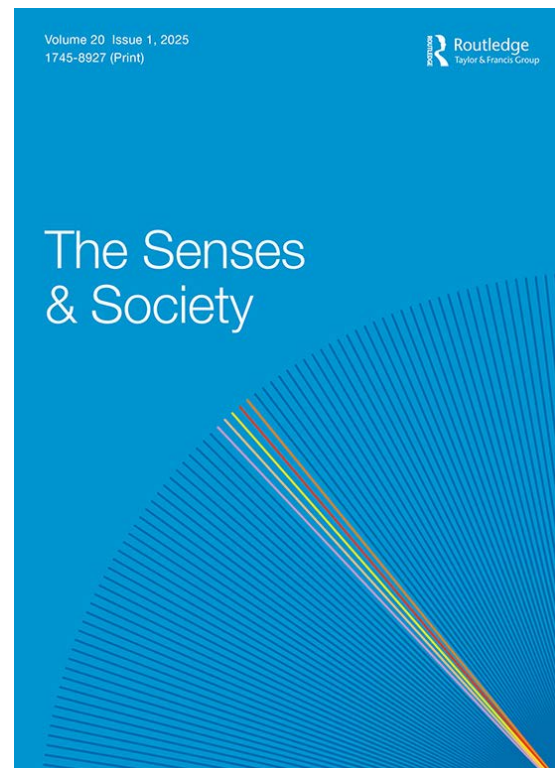
"This study builds the foundation and explores the impact of touch on semantic processing as well as on cognitive functioning because absence of touch can lead to deprivation of touch, which affects poorly on social and emotional growth. Children raised in institutions are at higher risk of developing an insecure attachment style due to the lack of contact (touch) with a primary caregiver. In pandemic, reduction in physical touch was associated with increased anxiety, depression, and stress, with notable declines in mood and heightened loneliness. So, touch is not only physiologically beneficial, psychologically it fosters a sense of safety, community engagement, and emotional support. Moreover, understanding and use of touch among individuals are profoundly shaped by sociocultural practices, and deeply rooted religious ideologies. Khattak et al. further explore that patriarchal society also limits the access of female adolescents to physical gatherings to fulfill their touch needs or express them openly hampering their semantic processing, which contributes to cognitive and

emotional behaviors. Therefore, it is critical to assess how these limitations impact female adolescents' semantic processing and cognitive development in conservative societies."

Allen-Collinson, Jacquelyn, Joanna Blackwell, and Hannah Henderson. Sensory pleasures and displeasures of the outdoors: somatic learning and the senses. Senses and Society, 2025.

In exploring how bodies learn, sense, and care, this issue also includes *Sensory Pleasures and Displeasures of the Outdoors: Somatic Learning and the Senses* by Dawn Lyon and Thomas MacKrell. The article investigates how sensory pleasure and discomfort shape somatic learning in outdoor education, showing how weather, terrain, and bodily effort become agents of perception and reflection. Rather than treating nature as a neutral setting, the authors highlight its sensory contingencies—heat, cold, fatigue, exhilaration—as formative experiences that cultivate awareness, endurance, and ethical relations with environments and others. The study's careful attention to bodily perception and pedagogy resonates with this issue's discussion of Touch, Bodies, and Practices of Care, suggesting that the outdoors operates as a site of both vulnerability and transformation. Through embodied exposure and sensory negotiation, care emerges as an active process of attunement—to one's body, to others, and to the world. Below, I provide the abstract of the article.

"Globally, there are calls to increase physical activity levels in relatively sedentary populations, including via physical activity programs, often targeted at those body-selves deemed at risk of "sedentariness." Despite the salience of sensory pleasures and displeasures in engagement with (and abandonment of) these programs, the sensory, embodied experiences of participation remain under-researched. Here, we draw on findings from a two-year ethnographic study of a national program in Wales, which used the aesthetic attractions of "natural" outdoor environments to encourage and sustain physical activity. Employing insights from phenomenological sociology, we explore the program participants' (n = 146) lived experiences, analyzed via a phenomenological lens, cohering around a panoply of sensory pleasures and displeasures, and somatic learning that is shaped and reshaped by weather encounters."



Buono, Raffaele Andrea, Minna Nygren, and Nadia Bianchi-Berthouze. Touch, communication and affect: a systematic review on the use of touch in healthcare professions. Systematic Reviews, 2025.

In line with this issue's focus on embodied care, *Touch, Communication and Affect: A Systematic Review on the Use of Touch in Healthcare Professions* by Raffaele Andrea Buono, Minna Nygren, and Nadia Bianchi-Berthouze examines how touch functions as both a communicative and therapeutic act in healthcare. The review highlights its ethical, relational, and procedural significance across professions. Below, I provide the abstract of the article.



The following systematic review explores the uses and understandings of physical, human-to-human touch engagements in healthcare professions. Given its central importance as both a diagnostic tool and a form of non-verbal communication, this review sought to understand the communicative, social and affective dimensions of touches a part of healthcare, medical or nursing interventions. We attempt to understand how touch communication seems to be structured in the literature, and what tends to be communicated via touch, but also to highlight how the dogmatic distinction between 'instrumental' and 'expressive' touches might have obscured a socio-affective matrix within all touches. The synthesis produced was informed by 36 empirical studies involving either direct observation of touch practices, or recollection and discussion with healthcare professionals. The studies were selected

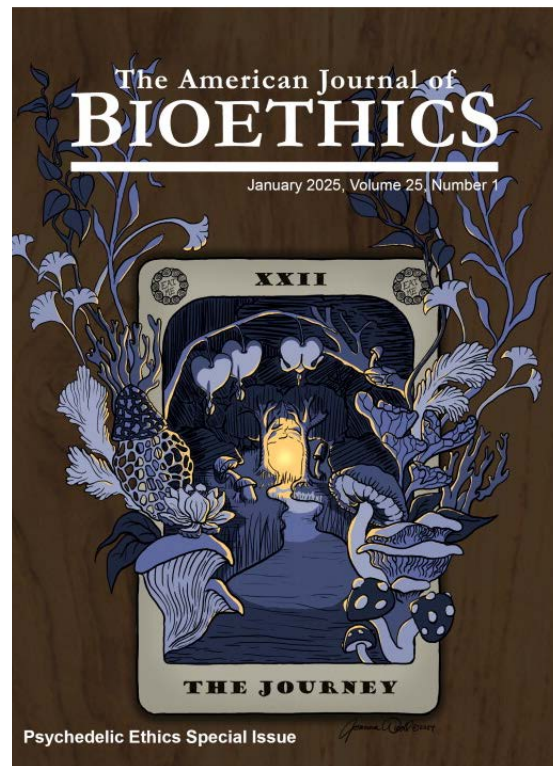
from five databases in March 2022. In order to minimise risks of bias, the corpus was screened by two independent reviewers and underwent quality appraisal through the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool. The final dataset was then analysed, synthesised and presented according to the principles of thematic synthesis. We outline how medical touch has been mostly categorised as either 'instrumental' or 'expressive', with only the latter usually described as serving a communicative purpose, despite its lower incidence. We further highlight how touch seems to be operating across a fragile boundary between 'reassuring presence' and 'control', and thus requires carefulness by practitioners, and an understanding of boundaries. Then, we describe how the literature presented gender, cultural background

and personal preference as elements influencing the use and perception of touch. Lastly, touch-mediated communication has been presented in some of the literature as a co-produced practice based on bodily, affective and contextual mutual attunement. Such an understanding radically reconfigures the patient as an active co-participant, as well as pushing against the conceptual boundary between instrumental and expressive touch, recognising how to affect cuts across human-made dichotomies.

Neitzke-Spruill, Logan, Caroline Beit, Lynnette A. Averill, and Amy L. McGuire. Supportive touch in psychedelic assisted therapy. The American Journal of Bioethics, 2025.

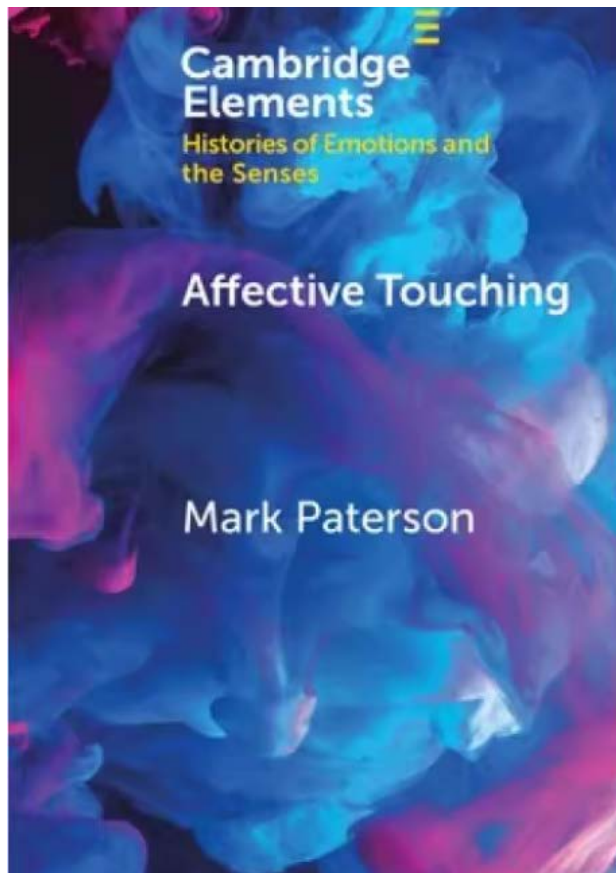
Aligned with this issue's focus on touch, bodies, and care, *Supportive Touch in Psychedelic-Assisted Therapy* by Logan Neitzke-Spruill, Caroline Beit, Lynnette A. Averill, and Amy L. McGuire examines the ethical and therapeutic dilemmas surrounding physical contact in psychedelic-assisted therapy. In light of recent controversies and regulatory debates, the authors review evidence from clinical contexts to assess when and how supportive touch may aid or endanger vulnerable participants. Their analysis foregrounds the tension between touch as a grounding, compassionate act and its potential for misuse in altered states of consciousness. By advocating a precautionary, harm-reduction approach rather than a total prohibition, the article contributes to ongoing discussions on consent, safety, and embodied ethics in emerging psychotherapeutic practices. Below, I provide the abstract of the article.

"In August 2024, The U.S. Food and Drug Administration rejected Lykos Therapeutics, Inc.'s new drug application for midomafetamine with psychological intervention (MDMA-AT) to treat post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Among the many issues raised during review was concern about a highly publicized case of alleged sexual misconduct by an unlicensed therapist during a Phase 2 study of MDMA and the potential risk of future abuse. This incident of misconduct, along with several other publicized cases of misconduct by guides, facilitators, and shaman offering psychedelic retreats, has raised the question of whether physical contact is ever appropriate during



psychedelic-assisted therapy (PAT). Drawing on research about supportive touch in other clinical contexts and taking into consideration features of psychedelics that exacerbate the potential for harm associated with supportive touch, we advocate for a precautionary approach to harm-reduction while arguing that supportive touch ought not be thrown out whole-cloth."

Paterson, Mark. *Affective Touching: Neurobiology and Technological Applications*. Cambridge University Press, 2025.



In keeping with this issue's focus on embodied care and sensory knowledge, *Affective Touching: Neurobiology and Technological Applications* by Mark Paterson, President of TG07, traces the scientific and technological evolution of affective touch. Published in the *Cambridge Elements in Histories of Emotions and the Senses* series, the book connects the discovery of C Tactile afferents—slow, affective touch nerves—with their implications for social interaction and human–machine interfaces. By situating these findings within both neuroscience and design, Paterson shows how touch operates as a key bridge between emotion, communication, and emerging technologies. Below, I provide the abstract of the book.

"At the end of the twentieth century the discovery of 'slow', affective touch nerves in humans known as C Tactile (CT) afferents,

which are entirely separate from the faster pathways for touching objects, had huge social implications. The Swedish neuroscientists responsible formulated an "affective touch hypothesis" or "social touch hypothesis" to consider their purpose. Part I offers a history of the science of social touch, from related discoveries in mammals by physiologists in the 1930s, to the recent rediscoveries of the CT nerves in humans. Part II considers how these findings are being intentionally folded into technologies for interaction. First, as mediated social touch, communicating at a distance through haptics. Second, with the increasing number of social and service robots in health care and domestic settings, the role of affective touch within human-robot interaction design."

Hot off the press

Tereza Stehlíková. Exiled From Our Bodies. How to Come Back to Our Senses. Routledge, 2025.

Featured in the Hot off the Press section, *Exiled from Our Bodies: How to Come Back to Our Senses* by Tereza Stehlíková is a remarkable addition to the *Sensory Studies* series edited by David Howes. The book offers a deeply reflective exploration of how digital technologies and screen-based mediation estrange us from embodied, multi-sensory ways of knowing. Blending autoethnography, artistic research, and philosophical inquiry, Stehlíková invites readers to rediscover sensory presence as a foundation for creativity, ethics, and ecological awareness. Insightful and beautifully written, this work reaffirms the arts as vital tools for reawakening our capacity to feel, perceive, and inhabit the world attentively. Below the description of the book.

"In an era where digital devices increasingly mediate our perception of reality, this book explores the tension between the richness of direct sensory experience and the allure of the screen. It examines how our growing dependence on virtual spaces and visually dominant media has led to a disconnect from our bodies and environment, contributing to a sense of alienation — both



personal and ecological. Drawing on an autoethnographic approach, artistic research methods and ethnographic interviews with experts across numerous disciplines, this book argues for the continuing importance of lived, embodied, multi-sensory experience. It considers how the arts, rather than merely reinforcing technological mediation, can actively subvert the passivity imposed on our subjectivity by the latter — offering creative strategies to re-engage with the world through all our senses. By using artistic processes to navigate the tension between the virtual and the real, the book explores how creative practices can generate new ways of seeing, feeling and understanding. At its core, this work suggests that to even begin to address the current environmental crisis, we must first return to our bodies

and come back to our senses — literally and figuratively. Through artistic experimentation, philosophical inquiry and sensory exploration, it proposes a reawakening to the reciprocity between body, technology and environment, offering a pathway towards a more conscious, engaged and aesth-ethical way of inhabiting the world."

Low, Kelvin. Fair or fowl: Human-animal relations, sensory boundaries and social control. International Sociology, 2025.

We close this issue of the newsletter with Fair or Fowl: Human–Animal Relations, Sensory Boundaries and Social Control by Kelvin E.Y. Low. Set in the dense urban fabric of Singapore, the article examines how sensory interactions between humans and animals—particularly through sound and smell—become sites of social tension and regulation. Low

International Sociology

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Special Thematic Section: How does moralization work? Exploring the operational logics of morality
Guest Editors: Boris Niesen, Manuel Dreierich and
Damian Omar Martinez

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reveals how complaints about noise, hygiene, and odour expose deeper struggles over the sensory rights to urban space, framing these encounters as questions of “sensory citizenship.” The piece offers a sharp and timely reflection on how multispecies coexistence challenges the sensory order of modern cities and the limits of urban tolerance. Below, I provide the abstract of the article.

"Urban living in densely populated cities such as Singapore requires a balance between polemic human-animal relations and the sensory boundaries of conduct and transgression. Noise and smell which emanate from animals serve as a source of disturbance that impels the authorities to intervene and resolve such transgressions. However, substantial numbers of residents rear animals in or around their public housing flats, thereby serving as a source of complaint by their neighbours. Transgressions

manifest as threats to hygiene, use of space, and an intrusion of one's residential rights. This scenario brings to the fore contested claims and rights over often-shared urban residential spaces and how the presence of animals has elicited such contestation through urban sensory interactions and ostracism. As sources of sonic and olfactory transgressions, these animals are perceived as not having the sensory and spatial rights to occupy what is deemed as urban residential spaces only to be taken up by human actors. Therefore, such contestations and negotiations unfold across a three-pronged analytical framework that considers human-animal relations in the city, sensory transgressions and contestations of sensory and physical spaces, and rights to such urban residential and living spaces as forming a part of sensory citizenship."