



Senses and Society

THEMATIC GROUP NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 24. AESTHETIC PRACTICES AND POLITICAL ACTORS



Vitalii Puzankov, Russia, July 2022.

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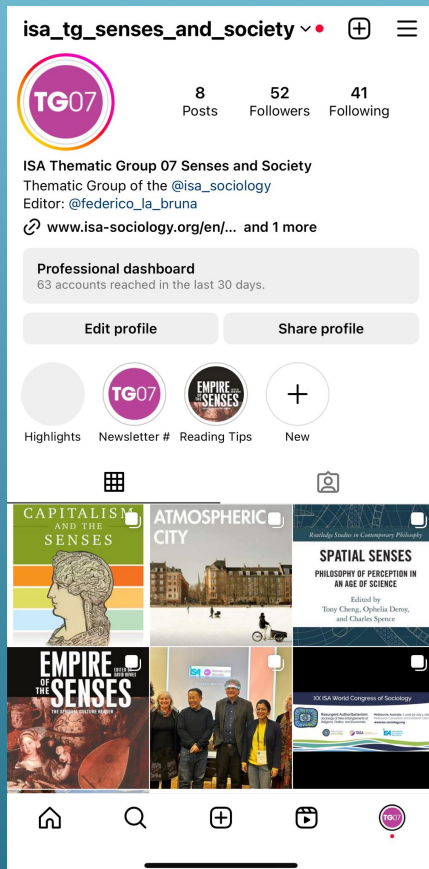
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Editorial Note

Welcome back to the TGO7 Senses and Society Newsletter. I wish to briefly address a discourse that is inevitable. The recent atrocities in Israel and Palestine, and more broadly, the suffering and destruction arising from the latest conflicts, are not unprecedented in history, but their significance and horror remain undiminished. What distinguishes the current situation is the global spreading of news, images, stories, and accounts of these conflicts. As a researcher, I believe it is incumbent upon me to delve into the core of such issues, not only to understand them but also to contribute to preventing their perpetuation or recurrence in the future. While it may be disheartening to confront such events, it is crucial not to falter during these challenging times. Our research community is dedicated to the study of bodies, senses, and emotions, and I encounter powerful images of bodies, desensitization, torture, and emotions on a daily basis. Amidst these emotions, I firmly believe in the pivotal role we play, especially in the current context. In times like these, it is easy to feel helpless, yet it is vital not to shy away. I express my deep pain for the innocent victims of the wars perpetrated by the powerful; actions that are annihilating humanity. Although I believe I can speak on behalf of all members of this group, I acknowledge the gravity of the situation and the importance of our collective commitment to understanding, documenting, and addressing the human toll of such conflicts.

Let us now move on to other topics. As you may have observed, this edition introduces several innovations. Firstly, there has been a change in the method of newsletter distribution. For reasons pertaining to the security and privacy of our members, we no longer send emails to an extensive contact list. Instead, personalised emails are dispatched through a dedicated server specialised in such services. These emails contain direct links to the PDF uploaded on the ISA webpage. Regarding the newsletter, two additional changes are noteworthy. One concerns the frequency of publication: transitioning from biannual to triannual issues. This winter edition (although more fittingly described as late autumn) appears more concise compared to the May and September releases. However, releasing an update before the winter breaks is believed to facilitate group communication and the circulation of ideas. The final change is related to the content of the newsletter: beginning with issue 24, newsletters will feature a title. The intent is simply to suggest a common theme or a reading line without imposing a particular viewpoint but aiming to stimulate dialogue.

There is also an update regarding the communication channels of our Thematic Group. This autumn, official Facebook and Instagram pages for TGO7 were established. You can find the



Instagram Profile of the
TGo7

links to these pages in the email you received (and in the preceding sentence by clicking on the words Facebook and Instagram). What can you expect to find on these pages? Partial reading highlights from the newsletter, more frequently updated events, and links to the newsletters themselves.

Aesthetic practices and political actors

Investigating sensory experiences means facing the intricate relationship between senses, emotions, cultural expressions, and political dimensions in the diverse contexts. The 24th issue of the TGo7 Newsletter is focused on the critique and the investigation of aesthetic and political practices. In this number, you will find a call for abstract that asks for more research on the actors and political roles of senses and reading suggestions that underline the importance of the aesthetic dimension in experiencing senses.

Don't forget, there are some active links (clickable URLs) on this Newsletter, especially useful for the 'Publication Highlights' section ([page 6](#)).

Please feel free to email me (tgo7.sensesandsociety@gmail.com) with any relevant news, publications, or calls for papers that fellow Group members could benefit from.

Federico La Bruna

Newsletter Editor of TGo7

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University of Milan; Department of
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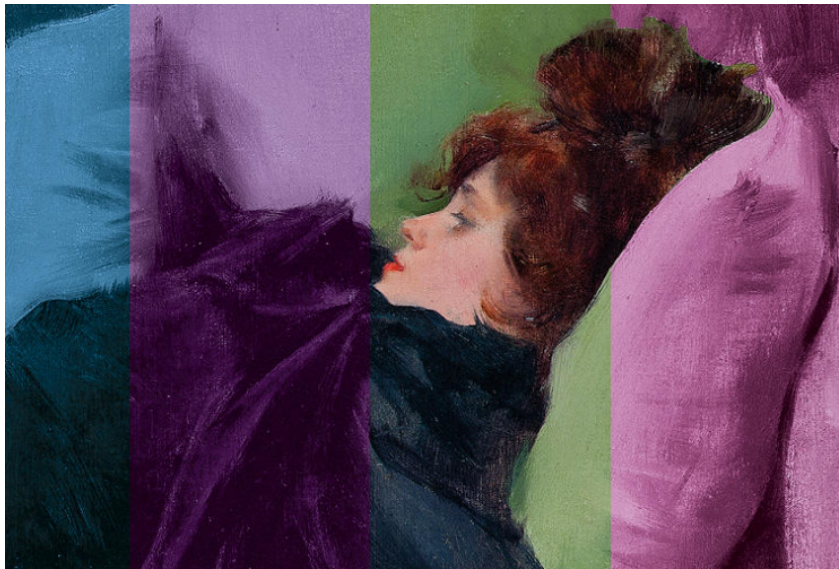
Upcoming Events

Course "Sensory Tourism and Night Tourism" • 15/01/24 – 25/01/24 • Lisbon, Portugal

Course of 28 hours offered by the International Night Study Network with scheduled visits: at Bairro Alto and Cais do Sodré. Teachers: Jordi Nofre, Inigo Sanchez, Manuel Garcia-Ruiz, and Joao Carlos Martins. "The expansion of urban tourism, both in the country's largest cities and in low-density areas in the interior, has resulted in strong spatial, social, economic and cultural transformations in these territories, as well as the cultural and sensory restructuring of touristified urban spaces. This course takes the 'night' as an object of investigation and analytical lens to explore the multiple dimensions that characterize tourist environments and territories in Portugal, taking Lisbon and the Algarve as case studies."

Exhibition "Colour Revolution: Victorian Art, Fashion & Design" • 21/10/23 – 18/02/24 • Ashmolean Museum Oxford, United Kingdom

"Step into a revolution of colour and dispel our monochrome idea of Victorian Britain. Rediscover Victorian society as a vibrant colour-filled era – from dazzling dyes used in chic corsets, bold experiments by avant-garde painters, and the flamboyant use of nature's beauty in jewellery. As Britain's industrial revolution gained pace, new scientific



breakthroughs allowed the Victorians to become increasingly revolutionary in their use of colour, with new hues greeted with both excitement and suspicion. This explosion of colour was embraced by artists, designers and many others in all walks of 19th-century life. The exhibition includes fashion pieces – from Queen Victoria's monotone mourning dress to the most daringly vivid clothing and accessories – and works by artists including Millais, Ruskin,

Rossetti, Turner and Whistler, as well as objects from around the world and some of the earliest colour 'photograms'. It reveals the vital role that colour has played in shaping our art and culture and offers a rare opportunity to see some of these objects on public display. Please note, the second room of the exhibition includes one object which discusses transatlantic slavery, which some visitors may find upsetting."

V ISA Forum of Sociology • 07/07/25 – 11/07/25 • Rabat, Morocco



The V ISA Forum of Sociology is been finally announced and it will be held in Rabat, Morocco. With ten (10) sessions in the III Forum of Sociology and seven (7) sessions in the IV Forum of Sociology we hope for a great participation also in 2025. Next year we will have the opportunity to organize the sessions for the forthcoming event.

Call for Abstract, RC21 Conference, Panel 40 "(Dis)encounters around noise" • 24/07/24 – 26/07/24 • Santiago, Chile.

In the frame of the Research Committee 21 "Urban and Regional Development" Annual Conference there is a panel that meet our interests. The panel 40. titled "(Dis)encounters around noise: how does noise influence conflict, cohesion and the (re)production of inequalities in urban spaces of the Global North and South?" organised by Caroline Stamm (Instituto de Estudios Urbanos y Territoriales, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile) and Ricardo Fuentealba (Instituto de Ciencias Sociales, Universidad de O'Higgins) opens up the floor for the discussion about noise and soundscapes. Deadline for applications is 31 December.



Publication Highlights

Jacquelyn Allen-Collinson, Dona L. Hall, and Patricia C. Jackman. Intercorporeality in visually impaired running-together: Auditory attunement and somatic empathy. *The Sociological Review*, 2023.

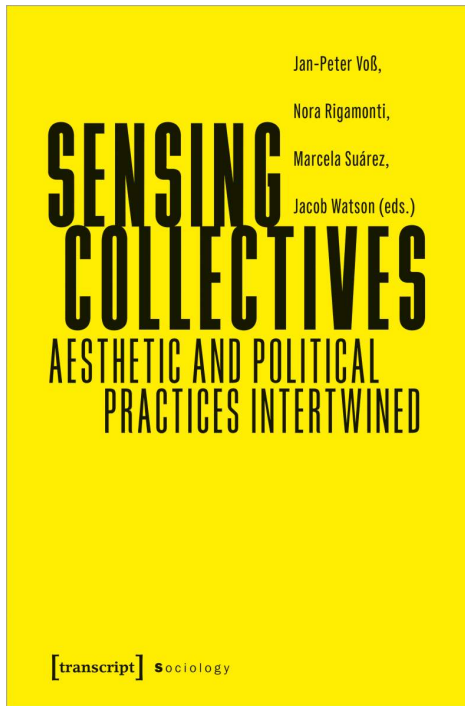
Publication Highlights reopen with an article published this year in *The Sociological Review* addressing and exploring the concept of intercorporeality. This perspective offers a fresh and original contribution to the field, enriching the sociological understanding of embodied partnerships and the conceptualisation of “sensing together”. The emphasis on the auditory dimension and non-linguistic sounds deepens the discourse on non-verbal and sensory experiences. Below, I provide the abstract of the article.



"Given their salience in many sports and physical cultures, it is surprising that the practices, processes and production of intercorporeality and ‘doing together’ remain under-explored from a sociological perspective. The ongoing achievement of ‘togethering’ can be particularly important for the embodied partnership between a visually impaired (VI) runner and a sighted guide (SG) runner: a specific sporting dyad whose experiences are currently under-researched. To address this lacuna and contribute original insights to sensory sociological studies, here we explore the accomplishment of running-together by VI runners and sighted guides, focusing on the auditory dimension. To illustrate how these runners put the sense of hearing ‘to work’ in achieving finely attuned intercorporeality, often at considerable speed, we draw on qualitative data from a research project on VI running in the UK, involving five VI runners and five SGs. Here, we focus on auditory attunement in two domains identified as highly salient in the running-partners’ intercorporeal experiences: (1) Listening out – auditory attention to non-linguistic sounds; and (2) Tuning in – the importance of attending to team-talk between VI runners and SG runners."

Jan-Peter Voß, Nora Rigamonti, Marcela Suárez, and Jacob Watson. (Eds.) Sensing Collectives. Aesthetic and Political Practices Intertwined. Transcript publishing, 2023.

The second recommendation of this winter edition is “Sensing Collectives. Aesthetic and Political Practices Intertwined”. This book, edited by Jan-Peter Voß et al., explores the aesthetic and political practices between constructing and deconstructing sensorial



perceptions and collective subjectivities. An authentic view on how aesthetic practices disrupt collective ways of sensing and political practices mobilise or contest collective identities and interests is offered, enriching the dialogue between senses and collective (inter)action. Below, I provide the book description offered by the publisher.

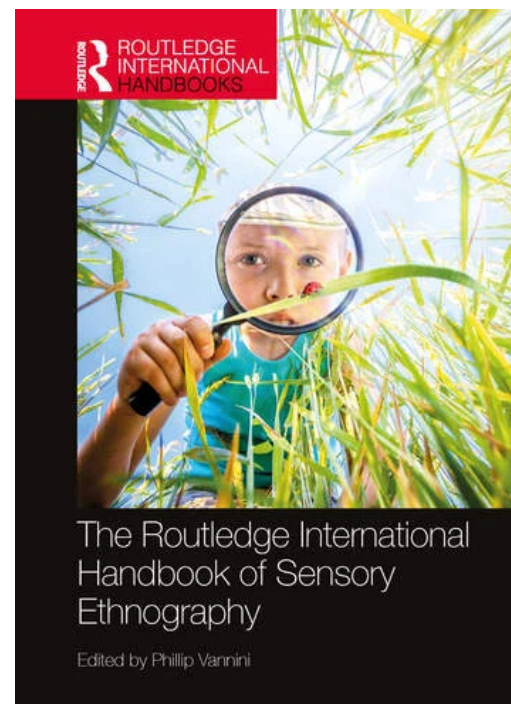
"Are aesthetics and politics really two different things? The book takes a new look at how they intertwine, by turning from theory to practice. Case studies trace how sensory experiences are created and how collective interests are shaped. They investigate how aesthetics and politics are entangled, both in building and disrupting collective orders, in governance and innovation. This ranges from populist rallies and artistic activism over alternative lifestyles and consumer culture to corporate

PR and governmental policies. Authors are academics and artists. The result is a new mapping of the intermingling and co-constitution of aesthetics and politics in engagements with collective orders."

Phillip Vannini (Ed). The Routledge International Handbook of Sensory Ethnography. Routledge, 2024.

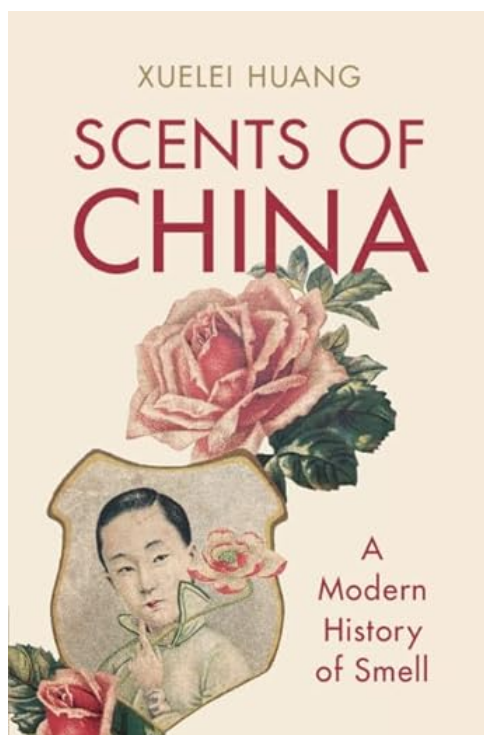
Hot off the press is the new Routledge Handbook exploring the wonders and challenges of sensory ethnography. I could spend thousands of words to describe such a significant contribution: almost forty (40) contributions covering the most actual and essential questions and issues of sensory ethnography. From the historical process of this discipline to sensory practices, from the atmospheric to the more-than-human, from non-representational to multi-modal strategies, this text will rapidly become a must-read in both the crossing worlds of sociology of senses and qualitative methods. Below, I provide the book description offered by the publisher.

"The Routledge International Handbook of Sensory



Ethnography reviews and expands the field and scope of sensory ethnography by fostering new links among sensory, affective, more-than-human, non-representational, and multimodal sensory research traditions and composition styles. From writing and film to performance and sonic documentation, the handbook reimagines the boundaries of sensory ethnography and posits new possibilities for scholarship conducted through the senses and for the senses. Sensory ethnography is a transdisciplinary research methodology focused on the significance of all the senses in perceiving, creating, and conveying meaning. Drawing from a wide variety of strategies that involve the senses as a means of inquiry, objects of study, and forms of expression, sensory ethnography has played a fundamental role in the contemporary evolution of ethnography writ large as a reflexive, embodied, situated, and multimodal form of scholarship. The handbook dwells on subjects like the genealogy of sensory ethnography, the implications of race in ethnographic inquiry, opening up ethnographic practice to simulate the future, using participatory sensory ethnography for disability studies, the untapped potential of digital touch, and much more. This is the most definitive reference text available on the market and is intended for advanced undergraduates, graduate students, and researchers in anthropology, sociology, and the social sciences, and will serve as a state-of-the-art resource for sensory ethnographers worldwide."

Xuelei Huang. Scents of China. A Modern History of Smell. Cambridge University Press, 2023.



In this issue, I decided to insert two case studies about China, very different from each other but both qualitatively significant. From the author of “Deodorizing China: Odour, Ordure, and Colonial (dis) Order in Shanghai”, which already appeared in this Newsletter (see Issue 10), the book “Scents of China” appears as a journey through archival materials and theories of the human sensorium offering an expression of the smellscapes of China. Below, I provide the book description offered by the publisher.

"In this vivid and highly original reading of recent Chinese history, Xuelei Huang documents the eclectic array of smells that permeated Chinese life from the High Qing through to the Mao period. Utilising interdisciplinary methodology and critically engaging with scholarship in the expanding fields of sensory and

smell studies, she shows how this period of tumultuous change in China was experienced through the body and the senses. Drawing on unexplored archival materials, readers are introduced to the 'smellscapes' of China from the eighteenth to mid-twentieth century via perfumes, food, body odours, public health projects, consumerism and cosmetics, travel literature, fiction and political language. This pioneering and evocative study takes the reader on a sensory journey through modern Chinese history, examining the ways in which the experience of scent and modernity have intertwined."

Huiqing Wang. Walking, the body, and the pandemic: the public value of walking art in China. *The Senses and Society*, 2023.

The other contribution about China is an article published on "The Senses and Society" by Huiqing Wang. In "Walking, the Body, and the Pandemic: The Public Value of Walking Art in China", we face the concept of aesthetic practices, this time expressed in a framed ecological context as the one of the COVID-19 pandemic. The article suggests once again how important it is to take the pandemic as a case study to reveal the "dark sides" (intended as not yet discovered) of our societies and how bodily practices are meaningful for the civil sphere. Below, I provide the abstract of the article.

"In December 2022, the dynamic zero-COVID control policy came to an end, marking the conclusion of a three-year pandemic that affected 1.4 billion Chinese people. The pandemic and related policies created a unique, temporary, and historic social ecosystem where walking became more crucial than ever before. The pandemic not only severely restricted people's movement in public spaces but also exposed the longstanding contradictions between human bodies, modern mobility, and urban space. Over the three years of the pandemic, walking became an aesthetic survival attempt by Chinese people to cope with their limited freedoms under the pandemic. As the pandemic stagnated and worsened over time, walking-dominant activities gradually became a widespread social phenomenon that encouraged urban residents to participate in rebuilding society across various fields such as politics, art, nature, etc. The development of walking as an artistic form during this period represents a new aesthetic strategy and political awakening while reflecting humans' need to reconnect with land, social space, and their own bodies. This paper reviews how walking art has evolved historically through three



periods – before, during, and after the pandemic – aiming to highlight both the public value of walking art and challenges within China’s social ecosystem.”

Olga Sabido Ramos. Emotions and senses: experience, practice and sensory networks. *Emotion and Society* 5(2), 2023.



In this issue, where particular attention is put on practices, as you can see from the title, there is a specific spot for the illuminating article on emotions and senses by Olga Sabido Ramos. The author of “Los sentidos del cuerpo: un giro sensorial en la investigación social y los estudios de género” (see issue 20) offers a structured analysis of the relations between and within emotions and senses on three levels: experience, practice and sensory networks. Below, I provide the abstract of the article.

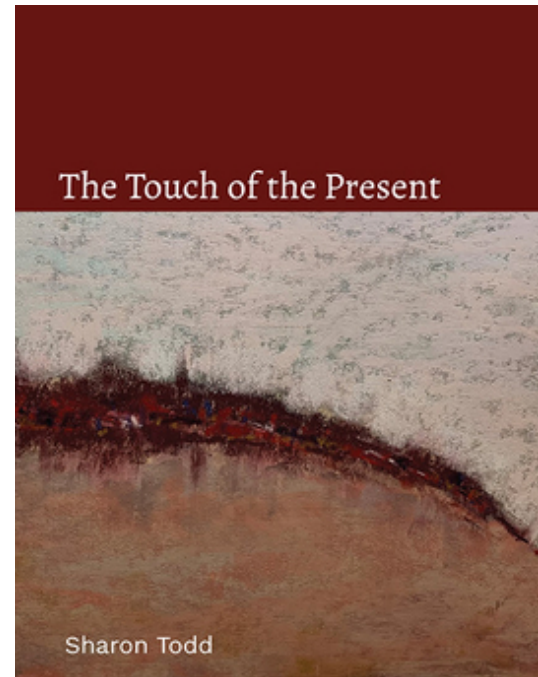
"In this article, I propose the articulation between emotions and senses from relational sociology in three levels of analysis: experience, practice and sensory networks. I will address the relationship between emotions and senses, considering theoretical, methodological and empirical dimensions. I outline the theoretical framework that distinguishes the sociology of the senses from other disciplines within the field of sensory studies. I will state theoretical problems that allow us to see the convergences and possible exchanges between the sociology of emotions and the sociology of the senses: (1) The type of actor of reference. (2) A particular image of the self. (3) The relationship between the self and reflexivity. (4) The type of relationship between senses and emotions. Finally, I will delve into three analytical levels to study the relationship between emotions and senses: experience, practice and sensory networks. At this point, I will highlight some main categories, methodological strategies (a sensory workshop) and research findings I have conducted on urban sensory experiences in my context, Mexico City."

Sharon Todd. The Touch of the Present. Educational Encounters, Aesthetics, and the Politics of the Senses. State University of New York Press, 2023.

Concluding this issue, I wanted to farewell with a suggestion that strongly recalls the theme of this issue. In “Educational Encounters, Aesthetics, and the Politics of Senses”, Sharon

Todd offers a brilliant investigation of educational practices through the frame of sensory aesthetics and politics. Below, I provide the book description offered by the publisher.

"How are educational encounters understood, experienced, and lived? How are they conceptualized? How do they shape our being in and of the world? In this time of apparent distance and disconnect, this volume emphasizes the role of contact and connectedness in education, above all by understanding education as encounters, as embodied, sensory experiences. Drawing on a range of theoretical positions that highlight our profound interconnection with things and other bodies—from feminism to Buddhism to new materialism and beyond—Sharon Todd argues that educational encounters are formations of "touching" and "being touched by." They are singular in their eventfulness and yet bring us into relation with our environment. Focusing particular attention on two key issues for teachers and students today—the climate emergency and online education—*The Touch of the Present* offers unique insights into the aesthetics and politics of educational practices, seeing them as embodied processes that not only contribute to how one is socialized into a given order but also carry the transformative potential for "becoming" beyond the cultural scripts we are given."



*Educational Encounters, Aesthetics
and the Politics of the Senses*