

ICA Pre-conference

Disrupting and Consolidating Communication Research to Address Emerging Urban Challenges

Call for Abstracts
Submission deadline 15 January 2025

Organizers:

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Co-sponsoring ICA Divisions

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Additional sponsors

Center for Information and Communication Studies, Fudan University
Center for Digital Communication Studies, Zhejiang University
London School of Economics
Rutgers University
University of Denver
University of Michigan

Location: Hyatt Regency Denver at Colorado Convention Center

Date: 12 June 2025, 9 am - 4 pm (local time in Colorado)

Call for Extended Abstracts:

Considering the U.N.'s prediction that two-thirds of the world's population will be living in cities in 2050, it is now more critical than ever for us as a field to *first* reflect on how communication research has contributed to how cities' diverse stakeholders understand and address enduring and emerging challenges. And *second*, it is important to reimagine how urban communication scholars can continue to intervene in pressing debates about power and inequality amid multiple convergent crises, including but not limited to affordable housing shortages, increasing

poverty and socio-economic inequities, privatization of public spaces, persistent health inequities, forced migration and refugee crises, climate change, and potential harms posed by artificial intelligence (AI) and emerging surveillance technologies.

On ICA's 75th anniversary, we aim to convene communication scholars to reflect on urban communication's past, present, and future and to consider how Communication can disrupt and facilitate the integration of research to help address emerging and persistent challenges of urban communities. This pre-conference aims to create an open and collaborative environment to discuss themes and challenges related to urban communication and opportunities to advance ethical and equitable futures for and through urban communication, technology design, policy, artistic and archival practices, scholarship, and activism.

The pre-conference's agenda is driven by several key questions. We invite extended abstracts that address these questions (in part or combination) from a variety of perspectives and methodologies:

- What is urban communication? Where does it fit in communication research relative to other subfields? How might urban communication evolve further to shape the future of communication research and/or to allow communication research to shape neighboring fields and academia more broadly?
- What novel/robust urban communication theories and methodologies exist to address new/persistent social, political, and economic challenges within local, transnational, and global urban contexts?
- What are the connections between communication, smart cities, algorithms, and the datafication of urban life? How do these connections enable understanding the persistence and potential alleviation of "wicked problems" (e.g., poverty, homelessness, climate change)? How do they allow for new forms of connection and community-building among diverse populations?
- Are cities today more or less capable of dealing with diversity and promoting social integration than cities of the past? What's technology's role in this? What is the role of the media as community stakeholders and as institutions? What is the role of journalists?
- How does place impact our health and health inequities? What is the role of communication as a process (mediated or not) in this relationship? What is the role of communication technologies (from smartphones and wearables to apps that support the gig economy) more specifically?
- How do media technologies and practices encourage new sensory experiences, artistic practices, and social interactions within urban environments? How can these technologies be used to understand embodied urban experiences, collective memory, situated knowledge, and placemaking?
- What are the ethical and practical considerations for engaging with diverse stakeholders including marginalized groups and communities around urban communication? How are (urban and digital) policy and design implicated in these issues?

Work foregrounding questions of power and inequality from local, global, and/or transnational lenses, underrepresented regions and communities is strongly encouraged.

The pre-conference will unfold over four consecutive sessions. Participants with accepted abstracts will begin the conversation in the first three sessions with short presentations. In the day's final session, organizers and participants will work together to develop an urban communication agenda to inform research for the next decade and discuss plans leading to a collaborative publishing project and bolstering a network of urban communication scholars. As it is crucial to identify mechanisms to sustain and grow a community of scholars whose work can help shape the future of cities and facilitate the discipline's meaningful engagement with urban communities globally, in this closing session, participants will discuss models for achieving this goal within ICA and beyond.

Submission guidelines:

Abstracts should be approximately 1000-1500 words in length, excluding references. Participants with accepted abstracts will be expected to present their work as short presentations during the first half of the pre-conference.

Extended abstracts should be submitted at this form [\[include link to Google Form\]](#) by 15 January 2025

Registration fee:

There will be a \$50 registration fee to help offset the cost of food and refreshments during breaks and lunch.