

ISA Mid-Term Conference

The Modern Dream of Control: Uncertainty, Risk, and the Incalculable in Contemporary Society

Santiago, Chile / 20 - 22 January 2027 / PUC - Lo Contador Campus

KeyNotes



Jens O. Zinn



Sarah Moore



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Call for Papers

The promise of modernity was, above all, a promise of control and manageability: the conviction that the world could be measured, predicted, and governed by reason, science, and technique. Risk itself emerged as a modern instrument for taming the future, a means of rendering uncertainty calculable and thus manageable. Yet the contemporary moment confronts us with the limits of that aspiration. Cascading crises (climatic, ecological, technological, and epidemiological, among others) reveal a world that persistently exceeds our capacity to anticipate and command it. Uncertainty appears today not as a temporary gap in knowledge soon to be closed, but as a permanent condition of human life.

This conference invites reflection on the tension between the modern dream of mastery and the limited manageability of the present. How do individuals, communities, and institutions live, act, and make decisions when the future cannot be fully calculated and remains largely unknown? What happens to expertise, trust, hope, and authority when the instruments designed to control uncertainty falter? What alternative ways of inhabiting uncertainty emerge from contexts long familiar with precariousness, including those of the Global South?

We welcome theoretical, empirical, and methodological contributions addressing, though not limited to, the following topics: disasters, climate change, and socio-environmental crises; infectious diseases and epidemics; nuclear threats and wars; AI and social digitization and aging societies, among others. We will discuss how the erosion of institutional certainty and trust in expertise has influenced everyday practices for coping with uncertainty and emerging frameworks for thinking about risk beyond the modern paradigm of control.

Chile offers an unusually apt setting for interrogating these questions of uncertainty, control, and expertise, because it condenses within a single territory the very crises the conference seeks to address. Sitting on the Pacific Ring of Fire, it has recorded the strongest earthquake in history, faces recurrent tsunamis along its coastline, and hosts two of the most active volcanoes on the planet, a geological exposure matched by few other countries. This seismic vulnerability is compounded by a climatic one: Chile is widely recognized as one of the territories most affected by climate change, marked by a megadrought now in its second decade and by wildfires of increasing scale and intensity.

Layered onto these pressures, an evolving landscape of emerging infectious disease continues to strain health systems and reconfigure everyday life. Chile is not simply a site where multiple risks happen to coexist, but a laboratory in which the modern promise of mastery has repeatedly confronted its own limits, forcing institutions, experts, and communities to improvise forms of knowledge and action beyond calculation and control. Holding this conference in Chile, then, is not incidental: it is an invitation to think about risk and uncertainty from a Global South perspective long accustomed to precarity, and to ask whether the paradigm of control that shaped modernity can, or should, be rethought altogether.

Abstracts of up to 300 words should be submitted through the conference's online submission form, available at: <https://forms.gle/k4hhCbsDTfYkQjAQ7>

Submission of abstracts: September 20th, 2026

Notification of acceptance by October 1st, 2026.

Conference fee:

- Participants from Category A countries 200 USD
- Participants from Category B countries 150 USD
- Participants from Category C countries 100 USD
- PhD students 100 USD

[Link to list of countries](#)

Graduate School Risk & Uncertainty

18-19 January 2027 / Escuela de Gobierno UC, San Joaquín Campus, Santiago



Jens O. Zinn



Magdalena Gil



Aiste Balžekienė

In the days preceding the conference, a Graduate School will take place for doctoral students and early-career researchers. The session is designed to give participants sustained feedback on their research projects on risk and uncertainty, with particular attention to the conceptual and methodological frameworks underpinning each proposal.

Send a 1000-word extended abstract (excluding references) which outlines your research project (Research problem, Aim/Hypothesis, conceptual framework, methodology/methods, research design, expected outcomes, key references) plus full name, institution, and the author(s) contacts to Magdalena Gil, mogil@uc.cl by **20 September 2026**. You will be notified of acceptance by **20 October 2026**.

Please visit <https://www.wg04-santiago2027.com/> for more information

✉ If you have any doubts, please write to this email: isaconference@cigiden.cl ✉

Organizers:



Sociology of Risk
and Uncertainty



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