



ISCAR | International Society
for Cultural-historical
Activity Research



Call for Papers – ISCAR 2026 Central Europe

Development, acceleration and alienation.

Cultural-historical Activity Research on Temporality and Intersubjectivity

October 1-2, 2026 – Humboldt University of Berlin

Development is movement and therefore takes time. It unfolds both individually and socially, at different speeds and against different temporal horizons. Lev S. Vygotsky's theory of development and his concept of the zone of proximal development emphasize the importance of intersubjectivity, learning and education as a “motor” for human development. Cultural and social developments – from the early forms of shared affects, through the emergence of spoken language and written symbols, to networked communication with digital media and AI – contribute to the acceleration of the activity systems in which we think, feel and act.

At the same time, as sociologist Hartmut Rosa has pointed out, modern subjects increasingly experience the growing acceleration of social life driven by new technologies, the economy, and social change as forms of alienation and isolation. If, however, human development is to succeed as a prerequisite for a good life, it requires experiences of intersubjectivity as meaningful spaces of resonance. In view of a highly automated social world in which countless interactions take place simultaneously, communication and decisions are optimized by algorithms, and everyone and everything appears constantly accessible and available, several questions arise: How much acceleration can development tolerate? What is the current relationship between individual and social development processes? How can the counterforces of deceleration and resonance be strengthened?

Against this background, the conference will examine the relationship between temporality and intersubjectivity. **Possible topics and questions** regarding current research on Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT), include:

- **Temporality and intersubjectivity** in individual and social development
- Development of and through **social participation**
- **Development and intersubjectivity** in cultural-historical contexts
- **Learning and development** in accelerated activity systems
- Development under **alienated and alienating conditions**
- CHAT perspectives on **social acceleration and alienation**
- The **significance of AI** for cognitive and emotional development

This conference is primarily intended to promote exchange between researchers in Central Europe whose work and publications deal with the approach of cultural-historical and activity-theoretical research. However, interested people and colleagues with other research interests and from other regions are also welcome! The first question when submitting contributions should therefore be: **What would you like to discuss with your audience?**

ISCAR – International Society for Cultural-historical Activity Research is a global organization that brings together scholars and practitioners across disciplines and walks of life, engaged in just transitions to sustain life on the planet. It fosters the century-old tradition of cultural-historical and activity-theoretical research in diverse settings, work and communities (<https://iscar.org>).

Guidelines for submitting a proposal

We invite researchers and practitioners from all disciplines who are engaged with cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT), the cultural-historical school, critical psychology, critical theory, critical pedagogy, and other social sciences to submit their work in the form of **presentations** (30 min.), **workshops** (30 min.), **symposia** (90 min.) and **poster presentations** – with a particular focus on theory-led reflection and innovation in practice.

Contributions on the conference theme are preferred, but other topics in the field of cultural-historical, critical, and social theory-informed research are also expressly welcome. In addition, **workshop topics** and **presentations** can be proposed for the planned **pre-conference for doctoral and postdoctoral students** (see below).

Submission formats:

a. Posters	Discuss your ongoing research project or study in the Poster Session. Each presenter will be offered a maximum of 5 minutes to present their poster. Afterwards the posters could be discussed during the world café. <i>Proposal:</i> Tell us the title and type of your project (theoretical, empirical) and give us a brief description of the topic, including its relationship to the conference theme. Name other authors if they are submitting jointly. The abstract should not exceed 2.500 characters.
b. Presentations	Share the results of a project (theoretical, empirical, methodological) with the conference participants. In 30 Minutes there is time for your presentation (20 Minutes) and discussion (10 Minutes). <i>Proposal:</i> Tell us the title and type of your project (theoretical, empirical, methodological) and give us a brief description of the topic, including its relationship to the conference theme. Name other authors if they are submitting jointly. The abstract should not exceed 5.000 characters.
c. Workshops	Interact with your colleagues and work together on the results of a project. You have a total of 30 minutes, including 5 minutes of a brief introduction followed by a 25-minute collaboration phase. <i>Proposal:</i> Tell us the topic and of the workshop and briefly explain what the content of the workshop will be (topic, method, focus/ tasks for participants). Name other authors. Name other authors if they are submitting jointly. The abstract should not exceed 5.000 characters.
d. Symposia	A symposium consists of up to 3 presentations on a common topic, presented by researchers from at least two different institutions (within the same or from different countries). A total of 90 minutes are available. <i>Proposal:</i> The symposium chair is responsible for submitting the cover text. Tell us the title of the planned symposium and describe aims and focus of the session in a short abstract including the relationship to the conference theme. Each presenter registers their contribution as a presentation (see above). The abstract for each presentation should not exceed 5.000 characters. <i>Attention:</i> When submitting papers that are to be presented as part of a symposium, please also indicate the name of the symposium chair and the title of the symposium.

- **Proposals** can be submitted between **10 March and 15 April 2026** via the **Converia Conference Homepage** (<https://hi.converia.de/frontend/index.php?sub=142>).
- Each participant may submit up to two proposals.
- Each proposal must include: A **detailed abstract**, a **list of authors** with institutional affiliation(s) and **e-mail address(es)**, **three keywords/categories**. Abstracts must be written in English, as all presentations will be given in English.
- **Feedback and any revision instructions** will be provided by **15 May 2026**.
- Contributors will then have the opportunity to **revise** their submissions once more until **1 June 2026**.
- **Notification of acceptance or rejection** will be sent by **15 June 2026**.
- Payment of the conference fee is not required for submitting a proposal. However, in order to present an accepted contribution, at least one author must register for the conference and pay the fee. For symposia, at least one author of each paper included in the symposium must register for the conference.

Evaluation criteria for the review:

(1) Thematic relevance	The contribution should be related to the conference theme. However, contributions on other topics are also welcome.
(2) Practical relevance	The topic and research questions should be relevant to (intended) professional practice. In addition, the results must be recognisable and meaningful for this practice. The research objective and research question(s) must be clearly formulated.
(3) Theoretical relevance	The research should be based on existing knowledge on the topic. The proposal should also contain clear conceptualisations of the key terms. In return, the study should contribute to the further development of the theory.
(4) Methodological rigour (only for empirical studies)	The research methods must be suitable for answering the research question(s). The results, arguments and conclusions must be transparent and comprehensible.

Pre-conference (1 October 2026, 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.): Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) and Change Laboratories

Purpose and focus: The pre-conference offers an introductory and orienting space for participants who are new to Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT), including practitioners, doctoral candidates, early-career researchers, other scholars new to this perspective. Participants with more experience in CHAT are welcome to join us too to share their knowledge and experience. The aim is to create a shared conceptual and experiential foundation that enables participants to engage more confidently and meaningfully with the discussions of the main conference.

Content: The pre-conference introduces CHAT as a dialectical approach to development and human activity, emphasizing historical change, contradictions, and relational processes. Key topics include:

- Development as historically situated, relational, and contradictory
- Meanings, identities, and roles as socially and temporally constructed
- Intersubjectivity as a foundational concept in CHAT

Participants will also be introduced to the four generations of CHAT, focusing on how the theory has evolved and what this enables for research and practice. In addition, Change Laboratories are presented as an example of CHAT-informed, interventionist research, highlighting concepts such as contradictions, transformative agency, double stimulation, and expansive learning.

Format and link to the main conference: The pre-conference combines short interactive presentations with brief exercises that invite participants to engage with theory in action. It concludes with a short collective synthesis activity. The pre-conference is designed to support deeper engagement with the main conference's focus on temporality, intersubjectivity, development, acceleration, and resonance in contemporary activity systems.

Registration	10 March 2026 - 15 July 2026
Paper Submission	10 March 2026 - 15 April 2026
Feedback and Revision	15 May 2026 - 1 June 2026
Acceptance or Rejection	15 June 2026
Conference Homepage	https://hi.converia.de/frontend/index.php?sub=142
Conference Chair	Thomas Hoffmann (HU Berlin)
Organization Team ISCAR Central Europe	Stefanie Müller (HU Berlin), Kathy Wittenberg (Conference Office, HU Berlin), Marco Mazereeuw (NHL Stenden, University of Groningen), Vera Schuurmans (Firda), Loes Meijer (UMC Utrecht), Jan Steffens (Universität Bremen), Monique Verhoeven (Utrecht University).
Conference Office	Kathy Wittenberg, E-Mail: ISCAR2026@hu-berlin.de