



6TH WORLD PLANNING SCHOOLS CONGRESS
FINLAND : HELSINKI / ESPOO / TAMPERE

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SPECIAL SESSION 1: ACTIVISM IN PERIPHERAL CITIES

Popular Planning in peripheral cities

Convenors:

Clarissa Freitas, Federal University of Ceara (UFC), Brazil

Jose Ricardo Faria, Federal University of Parana (UFPR), Associação Nacional de Pós-graduação e Pesquisa em Planejamento Urbano e Regional (ANPUR), Brazil

Fabricio Oliveira, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Keywords:

popular planning, grassroot-based planning, peripheral cities, democracy, planning theory, planning agents

Description:

Insurgent, popular and grassroot-based planning practices have increasingly influenced public policies and state-driven planning processes, particularly in peripheral cities. These practices have not only been able to inform state planning but also to strengthen democratic development decision making processes. When looking at young democracies and rapidly growing cities, the potential of formal participatory planning and government promoted in the last decades becomes both promising and limited. That's why reflections on case studies of popular planning have the potential to foster a broader and more inclusive perspective. They also have the ability to challenge current theoretical debates in advocacy, radical or transformative planning, which are often centered in Western and Global North urban contexts. It is particularly important to understand the agents, contexts, processes, and outcomes of these practices.



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SPECIAL SESSION 2: AI AND PLANNING PRACTICE

AI and the Future of Planning: Outlook for the Profession

Convenors:

Thomas W. Sanchez, Texas A&M University, USA

Zhong-Ren Peng, University of Florida, USA

Thorsten Wiechmann, TU Dortmund, Germany

Keywords:

planning education, artificial intelligence, planning profession, pedagogy, AESOP, ACSP

Description:

The ACSP and AESOP Task Forces on AI and Planning propose a joint session at WPSC 2026 exploring the strategic adaptation of urban planning, planning education, and the profession in the era of rapidly evolving AI. As AI technologies increasingly influence city governance, design, data analysis, and public engagement, planners will need to consider what it takes to be a professional planner. This session will feature perspectives from academics, educators, and practitioners, highlighting how AI-enhanced planning is and will impact the profession. Themes will focus on labor and skill requirements for future planners, organizational governance and equity implications, and the ethical and social responsibilities of deploying AI tools in urban environments. By bringing together the ACSP and AESOP communities, the session aims to identify key strategic pathways for planning schools and practitioners to proactively shape AI integration.



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SPECIAL SESSION 3: ARCTIC

Just Green Transition in the Arctic

Convenors:

Dorothee Cambou, University of Helsinki, Finland

Tero Kivinen, University of Helsinki, Finland

Berfin Nur Osso, University of Helsinki, Finland

Sade Mäntylä, University of Helsinki, Finland

Keywords:

Green transition, just transition, indigenous rights, minority rights, rights of nature, animal rights, multispecies justice, Arctic

Description:

How does the green transition impact local communities, Indigenous Sámi, workers, and other subaltern groups? What role does the law play in ensuring a just transition?

We invite participants to share their research and insights on the effects of the green transition in the Arctic. We will explore how legal and policy frameworks shape the transition, either by supporting marginalized groups or by excluding them from its potential benefits. A key focus will be on how legal processes account for the rights and interests of both human and non-human actors. Presentations will address the experiences of Sámi communities, migrant workers, and the broader recognition of animal rights as well as the rights of nature in the context of the green transition.

The session convenors represent 'REBOUND (Reconceptualizing Boundaries Together Towards Resilient and Just Arctic Future(s))', a consortium project led by the Arctic Centre at the University of Lapland and funded by the Finnish Strategic Research Council. REBOUND examines how legal, political, and business processes designed to facilitate the green transition affect the rights of marginalized, misrecognized, or unrecognized groups, including migrants, Indigenous populations, and non-human animals.



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SPECIAL SESSION 4: CITY-UNIVERSITY COLLABORATION

Evolving forms of city-university collaboration and their significance for the discipline of planning

Convenors:

Hanna Mattila, University of Turku, Finland

Sampo Ruoppila, University of Vaasa, Finland

Keywords:

cities, universities, partnerships, collaboration, agreements, planning

Description:

Universities and the cities they are located in have had important synergies throughout the history: Universities have attracted talent and produced knowledge and technical, social and cultural innovations benefitting cities, while cities have provided environments that invite talented people to co-create, platforms where innovations can be tested, and data that is needed in the academic knowledge production.

Recently, the collaboration between cities and universities has taken institutionalized forms as both have sought to benefit more from this synergy. Cooperation in research, education and societal outreach has been systematically developed through various kinds of formal partnership agreements or memoranda of understanding as well as related organizational arrangements supporting transdisciplinary initiatives. Partnerships between cities and universities have also been developed through networks bringing together numerous cities and universities around the world.

This special session invites presentations addressing best practices and novel forms in systematizing and institutionalizing city-university collaboration and reflecting its significance for planning. The focus will be especially – but not only – on the opportunities that city-university co-operation provides for the field of planning, a discipline that can provide new knowledge for cities that currently seek for ways to improve urban resilience and sustainability and also a discipline that needs cities as a testbed for novel approaches.



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SPECIAL SESSION 5: COASTAL PLANNING

Coastal Planning - beyond protection

Convenors:

Clare Melhuish, University College London, UK

Francesca Paola Mondelli, Roma Tre University, Italy

Marta Rabazo Martin, Roma Tre University, Italy

Keywords:

Coastal cities; cultural heritage; climate change; bottom-up adaptation; coastal erosion; sea level rise; coastal communities

Description:

Coastal territories are key sites to explore how planning integrates environmental, cultural, and social dimensions. Historically arenas of exchange, migration and conflict, today they stand at the frontline of climate change, experiencing sea-level rise, erosion and flooding, while also hosting diverse communities and competing economic pressures such as mass tourism or port development.

In this context, planning for coasts is frequently treated as a technical matter of defence or risk management, marginal to wider policy debates. Yet coastal heritage—tangible and intangible—offers a powerful entry point for rethinking the role of planning. Heritage practices can mobilize local communities, foster attachment and belonging across diverse groups, and generate place-based knowledge that complements or challenges top-down policies.

This session invites contributions that investigate coastal territories, the ways they are inhabited and perceived, and their resilience, with the aim of exploring how cultural heritage can transform climate adaptation from a narrowly technical exercise into a socially and culturally embedded planning practice.

By focusing on coastal contexts, the special session aims to bridge existing debates on environment, governance, heritage and crises, and to demonstrate how planning can reclaim relevance by integrating local histories, identities and practices into strategies for global resilience.



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SPECIAL SESSION 6: CROSS-SECTORAL CO-CREATION

Transdisciplinarity and digital collaboration in cross-sectoral co-creation

Convenors:

Tiina Merikoski, Lunden Architectural Institute, Finland

Pilvi Nummi, Aalto University, Finland

Keywords:

transdisciplinarity, knowledge co-creation, collaboration, digitalisation, digital planning, complex problem solving

Description:

The climate crisis has created a need to transform cities towards a sustainable path (e.g. IPCC 2023). This shift needs urgent attention and actions, and its complexity calls for effective collaboration and knowledge integration (e.g. Korhonen-Kurki et al. 2022; Albrechts 2012; Staffans et al. 2020). Otherwise, the systemic relations and impacts of planning solutions will not be studied and understood. A concern is that even if the multidisciplinary nature of planning is well-recognised, knowledge production remains siloed (e.g. Merikoski 2020). Multidisciplinarity is not enough to provide for knowledge integration; instead, transdisciplinarity (TD) is needed. Furthermore, it needs to be rooted within the practice, expanding the approach beyond the research-led environments.

Digitalization holds the promise of facilitating the resolution of complex problems but achieving this is not self-evident. The same siloed nature common in planning practice characterises the development of digital planning tools, hence there is a need for more user-centred development that brings together different sectors to promote the development of tools that facilitate collaboration (see e.g. Lin et al. 2025; Nummi et al. 2023).

In this session, we call for presentations on examples, studies and projects experimenting with tools and practices to facilitate TD knowledge creation and integration.

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SPECIAL SESSION 7: DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS

Local Implications of Overlapping Demographic Shifts

Convenors:

Maxwell Hartt, Queen's University, Canada

Beatriz Fernandez, École des hautes études en sciences sociales, France

Manuel Wolff, Humboldt Universität zu Berlin, Germany

Keywords:

demographic shifts; urban transformation; planning across lifecourse; population change

Description:

The globe's demographic landscape is changing rapidly. Cultural shifts, advances (and regressions) in healthcare, armed conflicts, climate crisis, and pandemics have contributed to global patterns of falling birth rates, expanding longevity, shifting migratory patterns, and the emergence of widespread depopulation. Research and discourse at the global and national levels mask the intensely uneven spatial distribution of demographic change. These changes are, and will continue to be, felt most directly and acutely at the local level. Planners will play a key role in reshaping and reimagining cities for changing populations in changing times. Unfortunately, many have argued that planners, planning systems, and planning cultures are not equipped to effectively manage one major demographic shift, let alone a plethora of intertwined, overlapping ones. This special session will focus on the local implications of overlapping global demographic shifts, urban transformations, and the changing role of planning for the entire life course in a new era of demographic urbanism.



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SPECIAL SESSION 8: EC(H)OTONING URBAN FUTURES

Ec(h)otoning Urban Futures

Convenors:

Wiwandari Handayani, Diponegoro University, Indonesia

Ines Martina Lersch, Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil

Kundani Makakavhule, University of Pretoria, South Africa

Angela Million, Technical University Berlin, Germany

Keywords:

urban ec(h)otones; spatial refiguration; socio-ecological entanglements; wicked problems; transdisciplinary methodologies; methodological experimentation; urban and regional planning; participatory processes

Description:

This session invites contributions that explore and extend the concept of ec(h)otoning across diverse urban contexts. Building on the ecological notion of ecotones - zones of transition between distinct systems - ec(h)otoning emphasizes ongoing boundary negotiations, and spatial tuning across ecological, social, material, and technological domains and how urban processes unfold in feedback loops - often indirectly, across time, and with unexpected effects. Rather than treating cities as systems with clear problems and straightforward solution, ec(h)otoning draws attention to the ongoing, relational adjustments between ecological, social, and infrastructural dynamics. The concept helps us attend to ambiguous, transitional spaces and to the way cities respond - not always predictably - to layered crises and interventions.

We seek empirical, speculative and conceptual work that traces how cities deal with wicked problems such as climate disruption, infrastructure breakdown, migration, urban financialization and governance, advanced neoliberalism and socio-ecological fragmentation through practices of continuous adjustment and plural resonance. The session is especially interested in contributions that highlight transitional zones (urban fringes, contested sites, hybrid infrastructures), methodological experimentation (e.g., sensory mapping, co-creation, speculation, art-based and innovative mixed method research), and more-than-human perspectives on urban transformation. The aim is to make visible the frictions and fine-tunings that shape cities-in-refiguration and to reflect on how planning research and practice can better engage with fluid, uncertain, and relational spatialities, rather than defaulting to technocratic certainty.



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SPECIAL SESSION 9: EMPTY(ING) SPACES

Free, vacant and obsolete: reimagining empty spaces

Convenors:

Laura Berger, Aalto University, Finland

Niklas Jensen-Eriksen, University of Helsinki, Finland

Katja Tikka, University of Helsinki, Finland

Keywords:

empty(ing), free, vacant, obsolete, demolishing, poly-crisis, migration, material flows

Description:

In recent years, there has been raising interest in themes that address empty(ing) spaces, ranging from shrinking cities to (temporarily) vacant spaces, and to questions concerning material movements and unbuilding. (e.g. Hutton 2019) The topicality of the theme is indeed attested by range of terms used both in today's and the historical context. These include, but are not limited to free, vacant, underutilized, emptying, abandoned, obsolete, unbuilding, demolishing and wasteland. (e.g. Labban 2019, Abramson 2016)

This session proposes that the used expressions highlight two angles, from which to approach this large and abstract theme. On one hand the terms are telling of the different scales, ranging from entire cities to specific plots or even the level of smaller structures. On the other hand, they are revealing of the types of processes and tangible acts that take place, such as free, negligence, takeover, demolishing and recycling and re-use of materials. A noteworthy aspect is the legislative framework, whose interpretation varies by region and time. Legislation does not always align with spatial needs and may lead to situations where these needs, the nature of the space, and the legislation create a new, uncontrolled entity.

In time of poly-crisis, small places play a vital role in large issues, as forced migration but also of materials has become increasingly critical. Instead of only selected minerals, all material extraction used for the built environment contributes to the ecological crisis, thus making it unprecedentedly relevant to consider new uses for existing spaces and building materials.

This special session will provide a space for defining, conceptualising and debating

- Notions and processes associated with empty(ing) spaces.
- The processes behind flows of people and materials.
- Incidents where legislation and spatial needs are misaligned.
- The role of spatial planners and need for a new planning agenda.



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SPECIAL SESSION 10: ENERGY TRANSITIONS

Planning for Just Energy Transitions: Which Knowledges for Socio-spatial Embedding?

Convenors:

Enza Lissandrello, Aalborg University, Denmark

Johannes Suitner, TU Wien, Austria

Laura Grassini, Politecnico di Bari, Italy

Lucas Barning, University of Vienna, Austria

Meike Levin-Keitel, University of Vienna, Austria

Keywords:

Just energy transitions, spatial planning, knowledge and power, peripheral perspectives, societal embedding, planetary governance

Description:

Spatial planning is increasingly called upon to address urgent decarbonisation goals and engage directly with energy transitions. However, too often energy planning and policy overlook the social and political dimensions of energy systems—the conflicts, governance practices, and power struggles that shape how transitions are negotiated, contested, and put into practice.

This limitation becomes especially visible in the neglect of peripheral perspectives. Climate-neutrality agendas and city-centred transition frameworks frequently privilege metropolitan areas as the primary sites of innovation, while displacing many of the costs and consequences onto peripheral territories, disadvantaged neighbourhoods, and fragile governance contexts. Such centre-focused framings also marginalise *peripheral imaginaries* of energy futures: whose visions are articulated, whose voices are amplified, and whose remain silenced. These imaginaries are not merely symbolic; they actively shape the directions of policy, planning, and everyday practice, reinforcing asymmetries of power and legitimacy in the energy transition.

Recent approaches to integrate energy concerns into planning have focused on renewable energy siting, settlement patterns, and mobility infrastructures. Examples include frameworks such as Spatial Energy Planning (SEP), Integrated Energy Planning (IEP), and Positive Energy Districts (PEDs), which have sought to align energy concerns with spatial development. Similar initiatives can be found worldwide, though often under different institutional labels and involving diverse multilevel governance spheres. While these approaches have generated sophisticated tools for energy accounting and spatial modelling, they remain dominated by quantitative metrics and techno-economic logics.

This session invites theoretical, empirical, and conceptual contributions that place energy planning in its wider societal and political contexts, and examine how planning might resist the peripheralisation of people, places, and knowledges in order to foster plural, situated, and just



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energy futures. We particularly welcome work that moves beyond distributional and procedural notions of justice to interrogate how knowledges are constructed, how publics are included or excluded, and how power relations are negotiated and redistributed in transition processes. Special attention is given to the global interdependencies of local planning, where renewable infrastructures, energy poverty, local resources, and climate geopolitics intersect to produce new challenges of planetary governance. We also encourage contributions that map existing approaches and propose strategies for embedding these perspectives into planning practices and instruments, thereby advancing the theoretical and methodological repertoire for just energy transitions across diverse contexts worldwide.



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SPECIAL SESSION 11: EXTRACTIVISM

Planning in the face of extractivist speculations: Localising green transitions in Europe's peripheries

Convenors:

Nina Gribat, BTU Cottbus-Senftenberg, Germany

Hannes Langguth, HafenCity University, Germany

Hélène Roth, Université de Clermont Auvergne, France

Keywords:

Green transition, urban extractivism, left-behind places, urban and regional planning, peripheralisation, political polarisation

Description:

Recent efforts in the EU's shift towards climate neutrality and diversified supply chains have sparked a major investment surge in peripheral and 'left-behind' regions across Europe. In this context, numerous green transition projects have been launched with the aim to strengthen the EU's strategic autonomy in the extraction, production, and recycling of critical resources and technologies, thereby reducing reliance on key suppliers such as China and the US. Backed by EU-policies, prominent examples of this development include large-scale semiconductor and electric vehicle battery factories, extensive infrastructure landscapes for the production and storage of sustainable energy such as wind, solar, and hydrogen, as well as new mining projects focused on the extraction of critical raw materials like copper and lithium. In the towns and regions concerned, these projects are accompanied by highly speculative dynamics. While they produce new growth narratives and promises, they are equally marked by conflicting (geo)political, ecological, and societal tensions. This special session takes these ambivalent developments in Europe's peripheries (including EU member states and European non-EU members) as a starting point to critically interrogate the role of planners and urban and regional policymakers in the context of new extractivist speculations.



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SPECIAL SESSION 12: FEMINISM AND INTERSECTIONALITY

Feminism and Intersectionality

Convenors:

Phâmela Alves, Pontifical Catholic University of Paraná (PUCPR), Brazil & Aalto University, Finland

Geisa Bugs, Pontifical Catholic University of Paraná (PUCPR), Brazil

Liisa Horelli, Aalto University, Finland

Keywords:

Feminism; gender perspective; intersectionality; everyday life; decoloniality; commons; equity; right to the city

Description:

Feminist and intersectional perspectives challenge the persistent assumption that urban planning can be neutral. Planning decisions determine whose bodies feel safe in public space, whose mobility needs are prioritised, who can access secure and affordable housing, whose voices shape collective decisions, and so on. Intersectionality, rooted in feminist theory, examines how gender operates together with race, class, sexuality, disability, age, migration status and other social positions to produce overlapping systems of privilege and oppression.

This session invites contributions that critically analyse how planning reproduces or disrupts inequalities, and ones that propose new approaches grounded in diverse experiences. Topics may include gendered experiences of safety; policies align with care responsibilities; co-governance models and strategies to increase representation and redistribution of decision-making power; and how planning affects everyday life, from commuting and care responsibilities to participation in local decision-making.

We also welcome work that draws on related perspectives, including decolonial approaches, to situate inequalities within broader historical and structural contexts; as well as contributions that employ commons-oriented frameworks, highlighting alternative ways of organizing, sharing, and sustaining urban everyday life. The aim is to foster debate, share methodological and theoretical innovations, and build cross-context insights to advance plural epistemologies.



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SPECIAL SESSION 13: FOOD

Food Futures and Farmland Preservation

Convenors:

Andrew Butt, RMIT University, Australia

Bambang Hari Wibisono, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia

Coline Perrin, French National Research Institute for Agriculture (INRAE), France

Ladan Seyed Mahdizadeh, Istanbul Technical University, Türkiye

Mark Scott, University College Dublin, Ireland

Seda Kundak, Istanbul Technical University, Türkiye

Sri Tuntung Pandangwati, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia

Keywords: urban agriculture; peri-urban agriculture; food urbanism; farmland preservation; agroecological urbanism; regional food system; food sensitive planning and urban design; resilient food system; food justice; nutrition; adaptive food systems

Description: As a result of major global challenges such as uncontrolled urbanization, climate change and economic shocks, food security has become an increasingly critical concern worldwide. These interlinked challenges have already intensified chronic hunger, acute food insecurity, and malnutrition. Spatial planning has a critical role in addressing these issues by designing sustainable food systems. Today, we are standing in a critical position, where integration of innovative and sustainable agriculture, harvesting, packaging, processing, transporting, marketing and consuming are unavoidable to confront the multiple obstacles on food and nutrition.

Food system is also a powerful lens to reveal and address spatial and social inequalities within urban areas, as it encompasses multiple dimensions of urban life like health, economics, culture, and the environment. Food-related challenges contain concerns related to accessibility, affordability, spatial equality. This perspective asserts the important role of food not only as a basic need and necessity, but as a critical pillar for rethinking and reshaping the broader dynamics of urban justice, resilience, and sustainability.

This special session focuses on exploring the roles of spatial planning to create a more resilient and sustainable food system. Key themes include (but not limited to) planning for farmland preservation, food urbanism, agroecological urbanism, and innovative models for food sensitive planning and urban design. We seek these in a variety of settings in the Global North and South. By examining how sustainable food systems could be embedded in today's urban context, researchers and planners can uncover the invisible patterns, highlight the interconnections among people, environment, institutions, infrastructure and services in which inequalities are produced or emerged across different levels and communities.



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SPECIAL SESSION 14: FOUNDATIONAL ECONOMY

Foundational Economy, Degrowth, and Consumption/Production Corridors: Challenges for Planning and Planners

Convenors:

Michael Getzner, TU Wien, Austria

Astrid Krisch, University of Oxford, UK

Emma Dowling, University of Vienna, Austria

Keywords:

Foundational economy, planning, infrastructure, common good, not-for-profit, degrowth

Description:

Planning in its various forms (e.g., infrastructure, land use, development) faces enormous challenges in regard to observing planetary boundaries in contrast to the current socio-economic systems. The foundational economy (economy of everyday life) comprises sectors of the economy that provide basic goods and services both in non-market (reproductive), public/government, not-for-profit, and private areas of the economy. This needs-based approach considers the economy as a system of provisioning.

The foundational economy is not only an alternative socio-economic model, but goes far beyond economic reasoning. As the concept considers economic decisions and activities of everyday life, it inherently accounts for social, justice and equity perspectives, ecological/environmental limitations, and economic resilience. The thinking about the functioning of the foundational economy is necessarily different from the (neo-) classical economic decision-making. Planners have for a long time acknowledged that this decision-making model ignores real-life circumstances, such as altruism, heuristics, incomplete information, and irrationalities. As such, planning especially in regard to the foundational economy provides different approaches to rational economic decision-making and to the design of environmental, social and economic frameworks.

The foundational economy potentially provides the key links between the needs-based provision of basic goods and services, the reduction of land/resource consumption, carbon neutrality and biodiversity conservation and restoration – issues central to planning.



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SPECIAL SESSION 15: GOOD CITY

Rethinking the 'good city'

Convenors:

Simin Davoudi, Newcastle University, UK

Mari Vaattovaara, University of Helsinki, Finland

Keywords:

Good city, ideal city, planning, Global North, Global South, wellbeing

Description:

As urbanisation around the globe gathers pace, so does our search for what makes a city 'good'. As far back as Plato's description of the ideal city-state, urban scholars, policy makers, and professionals from diverse fields of expertise have put forward ideas, criteria and indicators to define the 'good' city. Numerous epithets have been produced to capture what constitutes a 'good' city. Some foreground cities' economic attributes (e.g. competitive cities, global / world cities, innovative cities, and entrepreneurial cities). Others highlight cities' social characteristics (e.g. just / equitable cities, caring cities, and cohesive cities). A third group focuses on cities' physical features (e.g. compact cities, walkable cities, and 15-minutes cities), while a fourth group emphasizes cities' environmental and health credentials (e.g. garden cities, eco cities and healthy cities). A fifth group puts the emphasis on urban governance (e.g. democratic cities, participative cities, and inclusive cities). Finally, a few monikers have come to claim a catch-all definition of good cities such as, sustainable cities, resilient cities, liveable cities, and smart cities. Despite this history, a definitive answer to the 'good city' question has remained elusive, partly because both 'city' and 'good' are contested concepts on multiple analytical, ontological and normative grounds. Such difficulties, however, should not mean that we abandon asking the question and searching for ways of improving cities.

The aim of this special session is not to invent a new label or a new set of universally applicable principles for good city, but rather to invite contributions that reengage with the question anew and stimulate dialogues. We particularly welcome contributions that provide a Global South perspective and those that challenge the taken-for-granted assumptions about what constitutes a 'good city'. Contributions can include overviews as well as specific themes, such as: economic prosperity, social equity, inclusion and cohesion, democratic participation, civic spirit and activism, environmental sustainability, health and wellbeing, as well as physical and infrastructural design and functionality.



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SPECIAL SESSION 16: LAND AND SOIL

Urbanised grounds – plural perspectives on land and soil

Convenors:

Anke Hagemann, TU Berlin, Germany

Natacha Quintero González, TU Berlin, Germany

Johanna Hoerning, TU Berlin, Germany

Antoine Vialle, TU Berlin, Germany

Eva Paton, TU Berlin, Germany

Keywords:

land use, soil sciences, climate change mitigation, extraction, rainfall management, interdisciplinarity, territorial justice, regenerative approaches

Description:

Urban(ised) grounds – as collective term for land, territory, earth, soil (...) – are embedded in multiple contestations resulting from their treatment as resources that can be owned, exploited, and managed. At the same time, they embody living systems and materialities that are the basis for hope, futuring, and collective possibilities. Ideas that challenge the view of urban land as a resource for extraction and commodification have emerged from different political, cultural, philosophical and engineering traditions, including critical urban studies, postcolonial and decolonial perspectives, land reclamation movements, housing activists and environmental adaptation studies. In engaging with the materiality of the *ground*, fields such as soil sciences, urban ecology, urban hydrology, environmental sciences, agroecology, and regenerative architecture and urban design have been laying foundations for rethinking its critical role in enabling alternatives to climate (and urban) crises.

This special session underlines the need to join forces, disciplinary and otherwise, to rethink planning with and through urban(ised) grounds. It explores perspectives that challenge the bird's-eye view embodied in dominant planning and land management approaches, the commodifying gaze upon urban land that favours profit over justice or equity, and the anthropocentric vision that drive extractive practices on urban(ised) grounds.

Contributions may cover one or more of the following areas:



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- Understandings of urban ground/land/soil from multiple spatial and material perspectives, which may include soil-sensitive and water-wise approaches to planning and urban design
- The role of urban land/soils in the territorialisation of planning approaches
- Links between urban(ised) grounds and territorial democracy
- Urban grounds not only as ecological resources and places for blue-green infrastructure for urban climate adaptation, but as co-constitutive in more-than-human infrastructural relations
- Urban soils as tellers/signifiers of extractive translocal relations. This may include linking extractive practices across contexts, following translocal relations through soil research, and exploring care-based regenerative relations as alternatives



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SPECIAL SESSION 17: NORDIC PLANNING

Innovative planning in northern towns – meeting big challenges in ‘small places’

Convenors:

Carsten Jahn Hansen, Aalborg University, Denmark

Knut Bjørn Stokke, Norwegian University of Life Sciences, Norway

Kristina L. Nilsson, Luleå University of Technology, Sweden

Harpa Stefánsdóttir, Agricultural University of Iceland, Iceland

Keywords:

innovative planning, grand challenges, small places, co-creation, legitimacy

Description:

Northern planning is often portrayed as being strategic, comprehensive and well-organised with decentralised and democratic planning powers and trust in institutions and local-regional competencies. However, many towns and communities in northern areas are struggling in dealing with greater challenges in their planning activities, e.g. climate change adaption, depopulation, ageing, long distances, pressure on public services, etc. In addition, some ‘small places’ are experiencing counterforces of development due to their attraction as areas for tourism, large environmentally threatening renewable energy production facilities, mining, etc. This results in increased pressure on smaller local-regional authorities with reduced economic and skilled personnel resources, causing difficulties to live up to their planning responsibilities.

This session invites abstracts that discuss how northern planning embraces bigger challenges in smaller places. Climate change adaptation, green transition projects, demographic challenges, overtourism, mining, etc. creates a need for more and renewed planning in many seemingly outskirts areas. A particular focus will be on innovations in planning activities, e.g. co-creative approaches and new mixtures of collaboration where planning becomes more interactive, inclusive, flexible and learning-oriented. Also, the session will discuss new challenges concerning such innovations in planning, e.g. legitimacy, coordination, and relations to existing planning.



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SPECIAL SESSION 18: OPEN CITY

The Open City: Utopia or Reality?

Convenors:

Anita De Franco, Politecnico di Milano, Italy

Kang Cao, Zhejiang University, China

Paulo Nascimento Neto, Pontifical Catholic University of Paraná, Brazil

Keywords:

Applied ethics; just city; moral principles; openness; open city; pluralism; social values; tolerance

Description:

This special session investigates the idea of the ‘open city’ as both an urban ideal and a contested reality. The notion of ‘openness’, when applied to society and cities, has historically been framed as a promise of greater accessibility and inclusion. Yet these very promises can trigger countervailing forces that produce retreat and closure. In contemporary cities, openness is manifested spatially, culturally, and politically—yet always in tension with tangible boundaries, defensive regulative approaches, and fear of diversity. This session seeks contributions that critically engage with these tensions by asking: how can planning practices, policies, and interventions foster urban openness while acknowledging its risks and limits? What values underpin the concept of the open city, and how can they be translated into planning and design strategies that remain sensitive to social complexity and systemic uncertainty? By inviting both theoretical perspectives and empirical case studies, the session will explore planning ethics, governance, and design strategies that move beyond rhetorical invocations of openness, offering instead grounded pathways for making the open city a practical and operational principle in urban planning.



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SPECIAL SESSION 19: PERIPHERAL CENTRALITIES

Reimagining the Periphery: Urban Planning Beyond the Core

Convenors:

Paul J. Maginn, University of Western Australia (UWA), Australia

Nicholas Phelps, University of Melbourne, Australia

Roger Keil, York University, Canada

Keywords:

Peripheral centralities; global suburbanisms; urban theory; planning theory; planning practice; governance; symbiosis; relationality

Description:

Urban peripheries have often been dismissed as marginal, secondary, or subordinate spaces within urban studies which has tended to privilege the urban core. Recent research analysing both the historical and contemporaneous, character, function and value of the periphery has demonstrated it to be a space comprised of a complex array of innovation, contestation, and transformation manifest via the presence and emergence of critical land-uses (Phelps et al, 2025a; 2025b). Moreover, the urban core and urban periphery are deeply entwined in a symbiotic relationship. There can be no core without the periphery and vice versa. As such there is a need for planning scholars and practitioners to reimagine the significance of the periphery (Phelps et al, 2022).

This special session invites scholars, early career researchers, and PhD students to critically engage with the concept of "peripheral centralities", the seemingly paradoxical spaces that lie outside traditional urban cores yet play central roles in (re)shaping and (re)defining metropolitan regions and their planning futures. We welcome abstracts that critically explore the theoretical, methodological, empirical and/or policy dimensions of peripherality in metropolitan contexts.

Themes for exploration include, but are by no means limited to the following:

- Governance, regulation and policy in peripheral (sub)urban areas
- Infrastructures and mobilities at the (sub)urban and peri-(sub)urban edge
- Productive and consumptive land uses that define the centrality of the periphery in metropolitan regions
- Socio-spatial inequalities and opportunities of peripheral (sub)urbanisms
- Socio-cultural production and identity in peripheral spaces and places
- Informality, resilience, and adaptation in peripheral (sub)urban areas
- Peripheral economies and alternative urban development models
- Planning theory and epistemologies of the periphery
- Comparative and global perspectives on peripheral (sub)urbanisation

We especially encourage contributions that challenge dominant narratives of centrality and offer fresh insights into the planning and lived realities of (in)formal peripheral (sub)urban spaces around the world.



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SPECIAL SESSION 20: PLANETARY BOUNDARIES

Transformations within Planetary Boundaries: towards a planning after progress – Making Sense of the Peripheral

Convenors:

Kaisa Schmidt-Thomé, Demos Helsinki & Tampere University, Finland

Oya Duman, Demos Helsinki, Finland

Timo von Wirth, Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences, Germany & Erasmus University Rotterdam, Netherlands

Keywords:

Transition, transformation, planetary boundaries, planning after progress

Description:

This special session challenges planning to confront transformation not as an incremental adjustment, but as a radical rethinking of the very foundations of urbanisation and planning practice. This session invites planning scholars and practitioners to engage with the notion of transformation within planetary boundaries. The premise is that much of today's construction, urbanisation and economic growth exceeds the ecological limits of our planet, and that a profound shift in planning thinking and practice is required. In line with the WPSC 2026 theme of Peripheral Visions, we seek to explore issues that remain outside the mainstream of planning debates, appearing in our peripheral vision but not yet fully understood or addressed within planning within planetary boundaries. The session will provide a space to collectively make sense of these overlooked signals, drawing on global perspectives that go beyond the European planning discourse. We propose the X-curve as an entry point to explore what needs to be destabilised and phased out, and what is quietly emerging in its place.



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SPECIAL SESSION 21: PUBLIC INTEREST

Fundamental? Or best forgotten? Contemporary perspectives on the public interest

Convenors:

Michael Lennon, University College Dublin, Ireland

Christopher Maidment, University of Reading, UK

Keywords:

Public interest, planning theory, planning practice, legitimacy

Description:

The concept of the public interest has long been bound up in debates about the purpose of, and justification for, planning activities. It is simultaneously a carrier of many meanings and of no meaning; its inherent lack of content beyond the vague notion of serving the public leaves it open to being appropriated for less than normative purposes and its practical application remains contested. On the other hand, it remains a justification for action that the planning discipline clings onto; without a remit to serve the public what reason is there for spatial planning to exist?

The aim of this special session is to bring together a range of contemporary perspectives about the concept's continued relevance. Contributors will be asked to address the following questions:

- Does/should the public interest remain a relevant as a conceptual basis for spatial planning?
- How should the public interest be theorised or conceptualised?
- Is the public interest a relevant concept for practitioners?
- To what extent is a consensus needed around who or what constitutes the public?

Specifically, we want to draw out the contrasts and dissensus between viewpoints and generate debate about whether the public interest remains an important foundation for planning theory and practice.



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SPECIAL SESSION 22: REGIONAL DESIGN

Designing Regional Futures: Futuring, Visioning, and Imagination in Times of Polycrisis

Convenors:

Valeria Lingua, University of Florence, Italy

Cristina Cavaco, University of Lisbon, Portugal

Verena Balz, Delft University of Technology, Netherlands

Keywords:

Regional design, imagination, futuring, regional governance, co-creation, sustainability transitions

Description:

This Special Session explores practices of futuring, visioning, and imagination in shaping the development of cities and regions in the context of today's polycrisis, highlighting a need for fresh conceptions and models of development and planning in sustainability transitions. We welcome discussions on

- **The roles and impacts of visioning, imagination, and futuring** in times of crises, where robust yet flexible guidance is a necessity for meeting complex transformation and governance challenges. Current discourses on the development of cities and regions are often dominated by corporate technocratic agendas that privilege infrastructure and economic development over development emphasizing social life and lived experiences. We specifically invite contributions critically discussing these discourses by embracing inclusion and equity.
- **Collaboration** in visioning, imagination, and futuring, integrating environmental, social, and economic perspectives and various time horizons (past, short and long term). We specifically invite contributions critically discussing **co-creation and community participation** in shaping regional futures, including anticipation and imagination methods and formats (e.g. workshops, mapping, voting, games) and communicative approaches (e.g. maps, imagery, narratives).
- **The contributions of universities** to visioning, imagination, and futuring practices via their educational programs and societal missions, serving as laboratories for eliciting futures and civic platforms for deliberating these.



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SPECIAL SESSION 23: SMALL TOWNS

Small towns – they matter!

Convenors:

Silke Weidner, BTU Cottbus-Senftenberg, Germany

Agnes Förster, RWTH Aachen, Germany

Mina Di Marino, NMBU, Norway

Keywords:

Small towns, planning culture, integrated development, resilience, planning strategies, metropolitan and decentralized regions

Description:

Integrated planning for and in small towns needs to take into account ongoing spatial dynamics, ranging from neighborhoods and city centers to regional and national perspectives. These dynamics are closely linked to political debates and planning strategies in the respective countries. Small towns are not only geographically and mentally peripheral, but also represent strategic springboards for large-scale spatial issues and future development challenges. This applies, among other things, to the quality of services in regions undergoing demographic change, as well as to the supply of housing in both metropolitan areas and decentralized regions. Small towns therefore face the same issues of adaptability and renewal in existing settlement areas, as well as issues of innovation – but they offer a different context. This requires the adoption of a more flexible and resilient approach, without copying the city-centric models of large cities. And this against the backdrop of numerous additional challenges – such as severely limited financial and technical resources, weak institutional capacities and increasingly endangered cultural identities. In addition, scalable solutions and community contributions are needed. Interesting is how current and future planning cultures can be inspired by small towns and what lessons can be learnt from various towns and states.



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SPECIAL SESSION 24: TEMPORALITY

Planning Temporalities and Infrastructural Time

Convenors:

Lisette van Beek, Lund University, Sweden

Janet Merkel, TU Berlin, Germany

Angela Million, TU Berlin, Germany

Evan Evan Mwathunga, University of Malawi, Malawi

Peter Pelzer, Delft University of Technology, Netherlands

Keywords:

planning temporality; infrastructure studies; temporal governance; temporal justice; maintenance and decay; deep time; pathways; rhythms; natural cycles; temporal imaginations

Description:

Urban and regional planning has always engaged with questions of time, from cycles of development and transformation to the shaping and imagining alternative spatial futures (e.g. Davoudi, 2023; Savini, 2024). Infrastructures make these temporalities tangible: they embody lifecycles, rhythms, and conflicts, and they mediate between short-term demands and long-term resilience. These imaginations come with fundamentally different understandings of time, unsettling many of the temporal logics on which planning practices are based. Recent scholarship, has begun to reconceptualise time itself as a fundamental dimension of planning, moving beyond absolute and linear framings (Beauregard, 2015; Besedovsky et al., 2019; Hutter & Wiechmann, 2022; Jensen et al., 2025; Laurian & Inch, 2019; Lennon & Tubridy, 2023; Wiig et al., 2023). This turn has been shaped by work on everyday rhythms, temporal inequalities, the material processes of maintenance, wear and decay (Abram, 2014; Mattern, 2018). Building on this work, the session foregrounds **planning temporality and infrastructural times**, while also opening space to explore diverse 'temporal imaginations' (Facer, 2023) and experimental practices that expand how planning might engage with natural cycles, artistic interventions, or adaptation pathways. Our central question: how can planning better address and integrate the multiple temporalities embodied in infrastructures and imagined futures?

We welcome papers with different perspectives, for example related to:

- Infrastructural studies of/with time, ranging from the slow violence of infrastructural neglect to the deep time of climate adaptation, and spanning infrastructures such as transport, utilities, digital, social and care systems
- Temporal imaginations in planning, exploring how alternative futures unsettle existing temporal logics and open new pathways for practice
- Planning instruments with long time horizons or that keep options open
- Adaptation pathways and similar policy instruments aiming to prevent undesirable lock-ins



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- Planning approaches that aim to develop an alignment natural cycles
- Experimental practices, artistic and design interventions that challenge dominant temporalities in planning and engage with time in planning, such as the [Chronoberg initiative](#).

This session invites diverse contributions and aims to stimulate cross-disciplinary dialogue between planning theory, infrastructure studies, future studies, political ecology and urban studies and design, as well as scholars and practitioners engaged with urban planning instruments, procedures and infrastructure planning.

We are planning a Special Issue in *Urban Planning* on “Infrastructural Times in Planning: Rethinking Temporality through Infrastructure” and warmly encourage contributors to consider publishing their work in this issue. A detailed Call for Papers will be circulated soon, with abstracts due by March 1, 2026.



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SPECIAL SESSION 25: TOURISM

Rethinking Tourism: Local Voices, Global Forces, and Planning Dilemmas

Convenors:

Alex Deffner, University of Thessaly, Greece

Ferhan Gezici, İstanbul Technical University, Türkiye

Flavia Giallorenzo, University of Florence, Italy

Emeline Hatt, Aix-en-Marseille University, France

Keywords:

Leisure, destinations, mass tourism and overtourism, special interest forms of tourism, regenerative and responsible tourism, place marketing and branding, quality of life, Arctic tourism

Description:

Tourism is one of the four main leisure categories, alongside culture, sport, and entertainment. There has been a growth in mass and special interest forms of tourism, while the various crises (including the climate crisis and the pandemic) have accelerated the problems of tourism destinations.

Global interdependencies between local policies and the branding of popular destinations, facilitated by leisure resources and events, create powerful attractions for visitors, thereby expanding tourism and, in several cases, leading to overtourism.

Instead of viewing mass tourism and overtourism solely as problems, we can also approach them as opportunities. Responsible tourism and regenerative tourism offer a hopeful perspective.

The context of WPSC 2026 also presents a unique opportunity for a debate on Northern and Arctic Tourism, while also communicating the work of the Nordic School of Tourism Studies to participants from around the world.

This special session aims to spark focused debate on theoretical contributions and case studies, emphasizing key dilemmas:

- local communities and/or global powers
- special interest forms of tourism and/or mass tourism
- local identity and/or competition in place branding in tourism
- bottom-up and/or top-down
- co-creation and/or passive consumption
- slow and/or 'fast' tourism
- authenticity of reimagined spaces and/or growing commodification of culture and heritage



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- climate crisis and tourism transition
- innovative approaches for resilience and environmental sustainability and/or negative impacts of tourism
- indigenous knowledge and/or algorithmic knowledge (also using generative AI)
- quality of life and/or priority of economic considerations



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SPECIAL SESSION 26: TRANSFORMING INDUSTRIAL REGIONS

Planning structural transformation of former mining / coal phase-out areas: justice, conflicts and collective agency

Convenors:

Julia Binder, Brandenburg University of Technology Cottbus – Senftenberg, Germany

Ludger Gailing, Brandenburg University of Technology Cottbus – Senftenberg, Germany

Nina Gribat, Brandenburg University of Technology Cottbus – Senftenberg, Germany

Silke Weidner, Brandenburg University of Technology Cottbus – Senftenberg, Germany

Keywords:

structural transformation, (coal-)mining regions, future imaginaries, justice, conflict, collective agency, socio-political polarization

Description:

Former coal-mining areas and in particular areas in the process of coal phaseout are often affected by dynamics of peripheralization (Fischer-Tahir/Naumann, 2013; Kühn, 2014), left-behindness (MacKinnon et al., 2024) and socio-political polarization (Mayer, 2021/2022; Grimm et al. 2023). At the same time, they are emblematic cases to analyze processes of structural transformation as diverse groups of actors develop different imaginaries for the future of these regions (Abram et al., 2023; Heer et al., 2021; Hines/Mayes, 2022). Yet, structural transformation is often contested and conflictual, not only in terms of extent or variant of spatial or economic restructuring or even socioecological justice. In this session, we aim to discuss the different agendas, strategies and practices of structural transformation as well as their diverse implications, particularly in the field of urban and regional planning. We invite contributions that focus on one or several of the following sets of questions:

- How do planners govern structural transformation processes? How do different spatial planning levels address structural transformation, which instruments are being used by planners and how?
- How are structural problems framed and possible solutions constructed? Which role do space and time play in such constructions? Which spatial imaginaries do they develop on the urban, regional or landscape level?
- Which conflicts emerge and how are they dealt with by whom? How do contestations and conflicts unfold and how are they negotiated?
- How can structural transformation be carried out in a participative and democratic way? How and for which aims does collective agency develop in different contexts?

Our call seeks to attract empirically rich case studies as well as innovative methodological and conceptual contributions.



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SPECIAL SESSION 27: UKRAINE

Ukraine: Post-war recovery, EU integration and new perspectives for (Central) European Spatial Planners

Convenors:

Oleksandr Anisimov, Aalto University, Finland

Swati Kulashri, Dresden University of Technology, Germany

Gyula Ocskay, LUPS-CESCI Research Group on Cross-Border Cooperation, Hungary

Kasia Piskorek, Wroclaw University of Science and Technology, Poland

Shanmathi Rajkumar, Dresden University of Technology, Germany

Martin Reents, BTU Cottbus-Senftenberg, Germany

Yegor Vlasenko, École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne, Switzerland

Maciej Zathey, IRT Lower Silesia/Wrocław University of Environmental and Life Sciences, Poland

Keywords:

Ukraine, Post-War Recovery, European Spatial Planning, EU Enlargement, Just Transition, Territorial Thinking, Landscape Planning, Resilience, Path Dependence, Planning Legacy

Description:

As a result of the Russian war of aggression, Ukraine faces a grave loss of human life and widespread disruption of production, infrastructure, and social processes on a scale unseen since WWII. The invasion has reshaped Europe's geopolitical, socio-economic, and environmental landscape, placing Ukraine at the centre of debates on resilience, EU-enlargement, and the future of European governance. Ukraine is no longer seen as a peripheral neighbour but as an essential partner whose recovery and integration could significantly influence the spatial, political, and ecological evolution of the European Union.

War has already transformed spatial processes, energy corridors, transport infrastructure, settlement patterns, and defence geographies – producing profound implications for Central and South-Eastern Europe and beyond, generating a need to rethink European spatial development perspectives (a new ESDP?).

Against this backdrop, discourse on post-war recovery has been dominated by external frameworks and immediate financial instruments, concealed by the “build back better” slogan, rather than by a coherent territorial vision integrating the prospective new members in a broader European spatial reality. Much of the focus has fallen on contractual agreements, funding mechanisms, and project pipelines, such as the EU-framed multi-billion Ukraine Facility.

At the same time, Ukraine's internal territorial and ecological challenges require urgent attention. This involves prioritising natural spaces and ecological continuity, but also recognising each territory as a result of a prolonged and gradual stratification, which should be understood on its



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own terms before engaging in planning. Ukraine cannot be viewed as a tabula rasa. Recovery must respect local needs, experiences, and capacities, recognising agency rather than imposing models from outside. City-to-city partnerships, cross-border and transnational cooperation, as well as knowledge transfer, can play a vital role here, ensuring that recovery strategies build on real, lived, and observed qualities of territories and communities while also connecting to broader European experiences. For planners and policymakers, Ukraine offers both a challenge and an opportunity: to re-address Pan-European planning visions, and to ensure that integration processes are at once inclusive and responsive to territorial realities.

We invite contributions that interrogate the evolving relationship between Ukraine and the European Union:

- European perspectives: How does Ukraine's accession process, unfolding amidst war, compel a rethinking of European development debates? What institutional and governance reforms are necessary for the EU as it incorporates a country of Ukraine's scale and complexity? Shall the EU revise the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) published more than 25 years ago?
- Territorial perspectives: How can recovery address deeply embedded modernist and 1990s capitalist transformation legacies, while also responding to ecological ruptures? How can territorial-ecological thinking in planning enable a more conscious approach to recovery and offer viable alternatives to project-based reconstruction?
- Integrative perspectives: What role can city-to-city partnerships, cross-border and transnational cooperation, as well as knowledge transfer, play in ensuring that recovery strategies are not imposed but co-produced? How can the Ukrainian agency be safeguarded, while also aligning with European ambitions for resilience, cohesion, and sustainability?

The goal of the session is twofold. First, to critically evaluate whether the current instruments and discourses surrounding Ukraine's recovery are sufficient to address its territorial and ecological realities. Second, to place Ukraine's future within the broader debate on Europe's spatial futures, recognising that EU-enlargement and Ukraine's post-war recovery are interconnected processes.



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SPECIAL SESSION 28: URBAN EXPERIMENTATION

Varieties of urban experimentation: institutional drivers and planning cultures

Convenors:

Emilia Smeds, KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Sweden

Dalia Mukhtar-Landgren, Lund University, Sweden

Kelsey Oldbury, The Swedish National Road and Transport Research Institute, Sweden

Keywords:

experimentation; governance instruments; institutional drivers; planning cultures; projectification of planning; comparative research

Description:

This session explores varieties of urban experimentation, and their different intersections with planning. While socio-technical transitions have inspired extensive literature on experimentation with urban infrastructures, few connect these to planning theory and practice across approaches such as tactical/DIY urbanism and state-led pilot projects.

The literature on urban experimentation is rich in case studies, but offers limited cross-city or cross-country comparisons. Previous research has found tensions between the institutional logics of experimental governance and spatial planning in Nordic cities (Berglund-Snodgrass & Mukhtar-Landgren 2020), others show that the “project market” linked to EU funding and the confluence of urban entrepreneurialism and sustainability policy agendas have acted as institutional drivers of experimentation, for example in the UK (Smeds 2021). Although parallels between Nordic and UK contexts have been identified (Oldbury et al. 2022), there is a need for deeper analysis on how urban or national variations in institutional frameworks and planning cultures shape the policy agendas, governance modes, co-production approaches, and political dynamics and tensions of place-specific experimentation.

We welcome papers that seek to contribute to a comparative research agenda on urban experimentation. This includes multi-country case studies or single case studies that reflect on their findings considering research on experimentation from other contexts.

References:

Berglund-Snodgrass, L., & Mukhtar-Landgren, D. (2020). Conceptualizing Testbed Planning: Urban Planning in the Intersection between Experimental and Public Sector Logics. *Urban Planning*, 5(1), 96-106. <https://doi.org/10.17645/up.v5i1.2528>

Oldbury, K., Isaksson, K. & Marsden, G. (2022). *Experimentation for sustainable transport? Risks, strengths, and governance implication*. Linneförsd Förlag.

Smeds, E. (2021). *Urban Mobility Transitions: Governing through Experimentation in Bristol and New York City*. Thesis, University College London.



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SPECIAL SESSION 29: WATER FUTURES

Securing Water Futures: Resilient City-Regions through Innovative Planning and Integrated Governance

Convenors:

Patrícia Abrantes, Universidade de Lisboa, Portugal

Elisabetta Vitale Brovarone, Politecnico di Torino (POLITO), Italy

Lina Suleiman, KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Sweden

Keywords:

Water governance, spatial planning, metropolitan regions, circular water systems, nature-based solutions, intermunicipal cooperation, climate adaptation, inclusive planning

Description:

In an era of climate emergencies, societies face intensifying water challenges related to droughts, floods, and pollution, that cross physical and administrative boundaries. These environmental challenges intersect with economic activities and land-use systems, yet water is often addressed in isolation rather than as a systemic planning concern. From the Global North to the Global South, water challenges vary in scale and form, but all demand governance systems capable of coordinating across sectors, jurisdictions, and spatial levels.

This session aims to address new models of water governance and planning frameworks that transcend traditional administrative boundaries and sectoral silos, fostering inclusivity, flexibility, innovative solutions, and sustainable practices. It explores how intermunicipal and multilevel governance structures can support the implementation of nature-based solutions, circular water systems, and risk-adapted planning frameworks for resilient metropolitan regions. The focus is on peri-urban and metropolitan areas, where climate risk, population and housing growth, and infrastructure pressures converge, but where the potential for spatially integrated and socially inclusive and innovative transformation is also greatest.

We invite contributions addressing:

- Challenges and opportunities for Policy integration across water and other sectors, including, land, climate, housing, energy, food.
- Innovative governance models and planning framework and implementation;
- Regional and urban infrastructure strategies for retention, reuse, and circularity, including blue and green infrastructure innovations;
- Tools and instruments used for inclusive and integrated water planning and governance.

Overall, this session focuses on sustainable spatial planning strategies and frameworks for user-friendly, resilient, and adaptive water governance in city-regions, aligned with both global and local climate and urban policy priorities.



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SPECIAL SESSION 30: WATERFRONTS

Reimagining Waterfronts: Social Inclusion in Financialized Urban Landscapes

Convenors:

Johanna Lilius, Aalto University, Finland

Salla Jokela, Tampere University, Finland

Sampo Ruoppila, University of Vaasa, Finland

Keywords:

Waterfront Development, Urban Policy and Planning, Social Inclusion, Urban Growth Machine, Financialization, Public Space, Housing

Description:

Across cities, waterfront redevelopment projects have become pivotal in revitalizing deindustrialized areas and valorising local amenities. However, these projects, often framed as fostering public benefits and socially balanced development, are increasingly serving as catalysts for local real estate market stimulation and transnational investment. As the financialization of landscapes urban development projects, the session explores how these dynamics influence any co-existing social inclusion goals, processes, and outcomes. We aim to explore whether a new equilibrium between profit-seeking land policies and social inclusion ideals is emerging, using waterfront developments as a revealing context. We are particularly interested in case studies across different countries and cases addressing the following question: How are the goals of social inclusion in housing or public space negotiated and modified between public-sector policymakers and planners and their private-sector growth coalition partners? By examining these aspects, we hope to uncover new insights into balancing economic imperatives with social inclusion goals.