



# Cities and territories in the developing world facing the challenges of ecological and digital transitions

## A South-North perspective

28-29 April 2023

Hammamet-Tunisia

<https://conferencetunisia.weebly.com/>



## Framework

The Regional Science Association International (RSAI) and the Faculty of Economics and Management of Sfax (University of Sfax) are organising the first international conference on sustainable regional development in cities and territories in the developing world. The conference aims to bring together leading scientists, researchers and academics to exchange and share their expertise and knowledge on all aspects of sustainable development at the scale of cities and territories. It also serves as an interdisciplinary platform to discuss existing trends and challenges and responses adapted to the context of developing countries.

## Call for papers

At the dawn of the 21st century, cities are at the forefront of the development race. They are home to more than half of the world's population. While urbanisation is a widespread phenomenon, it is in the developing world that cities are growing most rapidly<sup>1</sup> and sometimes abruptly. It is estimated that by 2030, around 5 billion people will be living in cities, over 80% of them in developing countries. Such urban dynamics can only produce strong interactions with the major changes affecting the world today, particularly with regard to environmental and social transitions. These interactions bring with them new challenges for socio-economic development policies and territorial planning, which are called upon to be renewed in depth in both the North and the South, regardless of the specific situations that may be encountered on either side<sup>2</sup>.

Given that urbanisation goes hand in hand with economic growth<sup>3</sup>, it is legitimate to ask whether or not this urban transformation offers the countries of the South a new development opportunity and the promise of a better quality of life. In reality, it can be assumed that this will depend on how the South conceives, governs and manages its cities and territories.

In the South, the particularly rapid growth of cities - which is accompanied by a massive flow of goods, people and information, both tangible and intangible - poses major challenges related to global health, economic, social, ecological and climate issues, especially for city dwellers who live mainly in informal settlements and for people who have migrated from rural areas.

The growth of cities is not just a demographic phenomenon. It is also a fundamental transformation in the nature and scale of economic production, social structures, patterns of interaction and land use, city-nature relationships<sup>4</sup>, etc. Such a transformation has profound impacts on resource, capacity and governance requirements. The densification of cities increases the need for complex systems for water and energy supply, natural environment protection, health, safety, waste management and related infrastructure.

In response to these environmental and societal challenges, cities and territories must reinvent themselves to seize the opportunities that arise. These challenges are expressed in terms of economic development, well-being<sup>5</sup> and social and institutional change. As a result, new narratives and new specific and contextualised solutions are being expressed in both the North and the South. New ways are emerging to define 'imagined' cities that are more functional, more attractive, more inclusive,

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<sup>1</sup> Pugh C (2013), *Sustainable Cities in Developing Countries*. London, Routledge

<sup>2</sup> Lejardins X (2021), *l'aménagement du territoire*. Armand Collin.

<sup>3</sup> Banque mondiale (2008)

<sup>4</sup> Carrière et al. (2021), *Faire nature en ville*. L'Harmattan.

<sup>5</sup> Bourdeau-Lepage (2022), *Révéler les aspirations des citoyens pour des villes amènes*. L'outil Tell\_Me, in *Urbanisme du bien-être*. Des initiatives à partager.

more cooperative, more respectful of their environment, less selective and less enclave. The question then arises as to how to reconcile the functioning of an "ordinary" economy (capable of meeting basic social and local needs) with the rise of an "extraordinary" economy (technological, innovative, competitive, etc.).

Thinking about sustainability in the cities and territories of developing countries implies broadening our field of investigation and reflection. It is a question of trying to produce development models and alternatives adapted to the socio-economic and environmental epistemology of the cities of the South by relying on their potentialities and their resilience capacities. Fortunately, the economic literature and public policies on innovation have abandoned a restricted vision centred on the technical dimension alone, which is well suited to the countries of the North. Considering innovation and the policies dedicated to it under a broader prism is a promising path for the sustainable development of cities and territories in the South. Whether technological, organisational, societal or institutional, in the North as in the South<sup>6</sup>, innovation becomes the major element that 'forges the territory', fuels local socio-economic development and makes it possible to overcome traditional disciplinary modes, which produce massive nuisances and individual and collective malaise. This suggests - as Pugh (2013)<sup>7</sup>, Barthel and Monkid (2011)<sup>8</sup> and many others point out - that, against the tide of supposed global convergence, the countries of the South need to invent their own sustainable development systems while drawing on the models, policies and tools of the pioneering sustainability cities.

The aim of this conference is to understand the trends that affect the strong urbanisation of cities in the developing world and to identify the appropriate responses to invent the sustainable city of tomorrow. The various dimensions of transition (economic, social, ecological, digital, institutional, spatial, cultural) will be studied through the prism of innovation in order to understand how it can reorient territorial development trajectories in a context of increased uncertainty and acute inter-territorial competition<sup>9</sup>. While the primary objective of this conference is to better understand the challenges of urban transition in the South, it is also expected that contributions will address the dynamics of transition in the cities of the North and the responses to global challenges (environmental, climatic and societal) that are being made there.

This general theme can be approached from many angles, including but not limited to :

1. Ecological and digital transitions, innovations and the city of the future
2. Entrepreneurship and sustainable urban development
3. Sustainable transport and logistics
4. Local policies, social economy and social innovation
5. Institutional innovations and urban governance
6. Transformation of city-nature relations
7. Industrial and territorial ecology
8. Finance and regional development
9. Climate change and resilience

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<sup>6</sup> wd Barthel P-A et Zaki L (2011), *Expérimenter la ville durable au sud de la Méditerranée*. Chercheurs et professionnels en dialogue, Coll. Villes et Territoires, Edition de l'Aube, La Tour-d'Aigues.

<sup>7</sup> Pugh C (2013), *Sustainable Cities in Developing Countries*. London, Routledge

<sup>8</sup> Barthel P.A et Monqid S. (2011), *Introduction*. Cairo and sustainability: a provocative issue? Égypte/Monde arabe, 8/2011, document 8, Online since 01 September 2012.

<sup>9</sup> Hamdouch A., Depret M.-H. et Tanguy C. (Eds.), *Mondialisation et résilience des territoires. Trajectoires, dynamiques d'acteurs et expériences*, Presses de l'Université du Québec, Québec, 2012, 292 p.

10. Migration and development of cities in the South
11. Econometric and spatial modelling and city growth
12. Health, education, food security and urban growth

## **Writing guidelines**

Authors are asked to provide the following:

1. Contact details of the author(s) (surname, first name, title, affiliation, e-mail).
2. The title of the proposal
3. An 800 word abstract describing the purpose of the paper, the context, the method used and the expected results.
4. A list of 5 key words
5. Ten or so bibliographical references

Proposals for papers should be submitted by email: [rsai.tunisia@gmail.com](mailto:rsai.tunisia@gmail.com)

For more information, please visit the conference website: <https://conferencetunisia.weebly.com/>

## **Key date**

- 28 February 2023 - Deadline for submission of abstracts
- 15 March 2023 - Notification of acceptance of paper proposals
- 31 March 2023 - Registration deadline
- 28-29 April 2023 - Conference dates

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