

Special Session on:
City Development under
Uncertainty: Urban Futures,
Strategic Planning and
Adaptive Pathways



Organizer

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Purpose and Scope

This special session aims to examine how **city development processes** can be strategically guided under conditions of **deep uncertainty**, arising from climate change, economic transitions, demographic shifts and geopolitical instability. It seeks to advance discussions on how urban futures thinking, scenario-based planning and adaptive pathways can inform long-term urban development strategies that enhance sustainability, resilience and urban wellbeing. The scope of the session focuses on **city development as a dynamic, multi-scalar and path-dependent process**, shaped by uncertainty and complexity. It brings together contributions that explore how cities plan, grow and transform when future conditions cannot be reliably predicted. The session welcomes theoretical, methodological and empirical studies addressing **urban futures, strategic urban planning and adaptive decision-making**.

A strong emphasis is placed on **comparative and global perspectives**, including cities in Europe, the Global South and Asia, recognising that uncertainty manifests differently across governance systems, planning cultures and development trajectories. The session encourages analyses that connect urban development strategies with regional dynamics, institutional capacity, and socio-spatial inequalities, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of sustainable and inclusive city development in uncertain times.

Key Topics

- City development strategies under conditions of deep uncertainty
- Urban futures and scenario-based approaches in city planning
- Strategic urban planning and long-term city development pathways
- Adaptive planning, flexibility and path dependency in urban development
- City–region relationships in uncertain development contexts
- Climate risk, economic transitions and urban development strategies
- Governance, institutions and decision-making in uncertain urban environments
- Comparative perspectives on city development across global contexts

Key words: City Development; Urban Futures; Planning under Uncertainty; Strategic Urban Planning; Adaptive Pathways; Sustainable Cities.

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