IGU COMMISSION ON GEOGRAPHY OF GOVERNANCE

2025 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Innovation and Participatory Governance in Urban planning:
New Challenges for Local Governments

Rome, Italy, 11-14 September 2025

The International Geographical Union Commission on Geography of Governance aims to advance knowledge of the geography of territorial governance at the urban, local and regional levels, mainly considering new urban planning models.

Cities today face unprecedented challenges and opportunities brought about by phenomena from climate and demographic change, economic and financial crises and technological innovation. The inherently urban dimension of these and other challenges place cities at the centre of the international political agenda: with the signing of the Amsterdam Pact for the European Urban Agenda, the UN Habitat III Conference held in Quito in October 2016 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the United Nations (UN) Summit in 2015.

In the Agenda, one of the Sustainable Development goals (SDG 11: "Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable") places the urban dimension at the centre of the international political agenda with calls for local governments to address the future- of cities as crucial to increasing both quality of life and economic and employment opportunities in cities. The urban community has largely adopted this 'urban goal in its own right' of Agenda 2030 in response to a growing awareness of the role cities play in achieving global development.

As well, new technologies require local governments to adopt new models of urban planning. From CAD software to generative AI, augmented reality, and blockchain, technology is making the urban planning process faster, more efficient, and more sustainable. As technology continues to evolve, we can expect to see even more innovative solutions emerge that will help create smarter, more liveable cities for the future.

Changing global expectations on local government as well as the technological changes they and their citizens face demand new ways of thinking about how localities are governed. The international agendas also call for local governments to adopt more participatory approaches when developing their responses to all these challenges. Together these pressures call for rethinking the governance of cities.

The IGU COMMISSION ON GEOGRAPHY OF GOVERNANCE 2025 ANNUAL CONFERENCE will address new forms of governance in urban planning and how the use of technology revolutionises the way cities are built. Attention will be given to environmentally-conscious urban planning and to the directions for sustainable development as indicated by Agenda 2030 and the new technologies provided by research.

It will discuss the actions taken by local government towards new technologies, and its outcomes and impacts and how technology is playing a major role in revolutionizing the way that cities are planned and built.

We invite abstracts that concern various aspects of the role of local government and IT in urban planning, as well as abstracts focusing on tools and methodologies for a smart evolution of participatory governance focused on the environmental sustainability of cities.

We welcome abstracts of those engaged in the activities of the IGU Commission on Geography of Governance, as well as from anyone with a relevant contribution in this field.

We are particularly interested in contributions that address:

- Which strategies, plans, policy measures, and actions have been adopted by local government for making the city more efficient than before?

- Which strategies, plans, policy measures, and actions have been adopted by local government to tackle the impact of the smart cities on society and on the local economy, and how technology is revolutionizing urban planning and its implications for the future of our cities?

- Which emerging technologies may be significant in the future of urban planning and block chain technology (for example, Internet of Things (IoT) and the new technology such as generative AI) that are starting to make their way into urban planning?

- How local government use artificial intelligence (AI) algorithms to generate designs? How much potential do the local governments have to revolutionize urban planning by allowing planners to quickly and easily generate designs that are optimized for sustainability, efficiency and liveability?

- At the level of participatory governance, will local researchers and practitioners (engineers, architects) have a role and expertise in entrusting a generative artificial intelligence algorithm with planning programs to generate designs for new housing developments that maximise green space, minimise energy consumption and provide easy access to public transport? Will local planners be able to rely on the algorithm to generate a set of designs that meet these criteria, allowing them to choose the best design for their specific project?

- Which future strategic plans for strategic city planning in a broader sense "make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable" and which socio-economic evolution scenarios will be developed by elaborating strategies in the economic, ecological and social perspectives?

- Which socio- economic scenarios will be developed by implementing alternatives in accordance with the Best Available Technologies (BATs) present in the 'Smart City' panorama?

- Which strategies, plans, policy measures, and actions are local governments employing to distribute financial resources to local populations for smart cities?

- Which changes tools and methodologies for a smart evolution have been introduced in central-local relations? What has been the role of inter-municipal cooperation and metropolitan government and what cross-border municipal and regional cooperation in this context?

- Which has been the role of tools and methodologies for a smart evolution in local mobility, on education an adoption of renewable energy sources in urban areas?

- Which local government strategies, policy measures, planning scenarios, and actions are being designed for environmental sustainability, urban regeneration and safety of suburbs, namely towards building resilient and smart communities?

Deadline for abstract submission: 20 March 2025