

**[SE15-HAB]**

## The Contemporary City in the North-South Debate: Innovation Trajectories in Research and Practice

**Name:** Jean-Claude Bolay and Marija Cvetinovic  
**Affiliation:** Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne

**Brief Bio**  
*Session Leader(s)*

Prof. **Jean-Claude Bolay**, director of Cooperation@EPFL (2001-2005) and CODEV-EPFL since 2005. A sociologist by training, he specialized in urban issues in Latin America, Asia, and West Africa. He prepared his PhD in Political Sciences at El Colegio de Mexico, then at UC Berkeley, USA. He has carried out many international research projects in urban societies, sustainable development, and poverty reduction in developing countries. He was a scientific advisor and evaluator for Swiss and European institutions. Since 2005, he is Adjunct Professor at LASUR-EPFL.

**Marija Cvetinovic** is a PhD candidate at EPFL, her research focuses on urban development, post-socialist urban planning and participatory processes and their potential to reduce the negative effects of globalization and urbanization in post-socialist cities. She obtained her Master degree in Architecture (University of Belgrade), has worked in architectural practices, and been involved in artistic and social activities in Belgrade which gave her a broader picture of current potentials and conflicts in transitional countries.

**Abstract**  
*Short description,  
including alignment with  
conference themes and  
objectives*

The city is dynamic, itinerant, multi-layered, contingent.

It is an arena of exchange among urban actors and stakeholders, built environment, technologies and infrastructures. This is accentuated in the modern globalised world where the rapid flow of people and information has profoundly transformed the perception of space and time, lifestyles and our sense of community and self. In these circumstances, the contemporary city becomes an interface of flattened reality in which the various disciplinary concepts are merely particular entry points from which to reflect on cities and to address the urban in its elusive complexity and dynamics. Meanwhile, the focus of these processes and their immediate effects has shifted to poorer and less developed regions. Although the urban conflicts faced by developing countries seem particularly serious and complex, the possible solutions are not radically different from those applied in developed countries.

Moreover, the principles and aims are the same: theoretical and empirical approaches to cities have underlined both the characteristic complexity and uncertainty of research and the goal-oriented and interest-based nature of practice. This situation has brought to the fore technological innovations that transcend disciplinary approaches in urban theory, practices, techniques, expertise and politics. At this point, we are interested in how technologies cut across the borders of disciplines and foster innovative methods, techniques, instruments and tools in urban planning, management and governance which endeavour to underpin the city and guide its development.

## **The Contemporary City in the North-South Debate: Innovation Trajectories in Research and Practice**

### **Description**

*Proposed discussion focus*

This session welcomes proposals that:

- Examine the relationship between technologies, knowledge and power in advanced technological, technical and methodological approaches in urban research and practice in the Global South, with an emphasis on developing, emerging and transitional countries;
- Discuss the interplay between the different power poles that deal with urban planning, governance and management. How can we resolve the problem of translating concepts and grafting inappropriate solutions from developed to developing environments? Can we find common ground where contextualized theory, practices, techniques, expertise and politics come together?
- Encourage a critical observation of several contemporary strategies of urban development or of urban planning that integrate social impact (smart cities, sustainability, resilience, urban renewal, green field, brownfield, developed and developing cities...);
- Establish, demonstrate and promote ICT as a tool for efficient urban planning, implementation and governance;
- Discuss new governance models, arrangements and mechanisms in the Global South to address issues of decision making, the rule of urban laws and institutional regulations, the evaluation of plans, policies and projects, and illegal and irregular land occupation and construction;
- Tackle strategies, approaches and tools to enhance the social impact of various urban decision making approaches (top-down and bottom-up) through the use of technological solutions and tools;
- Address the future of technological innovation within the framework of planning ideas, instruments and procedures to direct urban governance and management processes in cities.

### **Objectives**

*Justification and expected impact during and after the conference*

The session will concentrate on knowledge transfer and encourage the exchange of North-North, North-South, South-North, and South-South experience with regards to the various stages in the application of technological and methodological innovation in the academic, administrative, technical and practical domains in cities and in urban research. In terms of the topic, a multifaceted and unprejudiced attitude toward cities, urban research and practice provides opportunities to consider risks and examine challenges in promoting technological innovation for urban development and social change in a variety of cities, all of which are equally significant in their socio-spatial contextual particularity. In this respect, the prospective dissemination of endeavours, attempts and results among the scientific community (including students), policy makers, practitioners and the general public, brings us a step closer to formulating the path of innovation in urban research and practice. Therefore, the intended far-reaching goal is to empower the scientific community, local stakeholders, non-governmental and civil sectors dealing with these topics (urban development, governance, management and planning) and bring about trans-, multi- and pluri-disciplinary cooperation for technological and social innovation.

**[SE15-HAB]**

## **The Contemporary City in the North-South Debate: Innovation Trajectories in Research and Practice**

### **Target Audience**

Both Global North and South professionals from:

- Scientific community (academics, PhD students in urban studies, urban planning, architecture, social design)
- Stakeholders at the local level (authorities and governments, policy makers, national and international non-governmental organisations)
- Urban professionals (architects, engineers, urban planners)