Inequalities and the City. Old Issues, New Challenges

Call for Sessions

The next RC21 conference will be held in Vienna on 20-22 July 2026. The Research Committee 21 (RC21) on the Sociology of Urban and Regional Development of the International Sociological Association was established in 1970 to promote theory and research in the field and create an international community of scholars who will advance the field. The 2026 conference will be hosted by Department of Sociology and the Research Platform "The Challenges of Urban Futures" at the University of Vienna and organized by a Local Organising Team comprising scholars from different universities in Vienna and members of the RC21 board.

The conference, under the broad theme of *"Inequalities and the City. Old Issues, New Challenges"*, seeks to engage with the (continuing) challenges posed by urban inequalities while exploring innovative perspectives and methodologies.

Cities have long been spaces where social, economic, political and environmental inequalities are produced, reproduced, contested, and addressed through various forms of collective action. Questions of access to housing, basic goods, employment, livelihoods, education, welfare services, and public spaces have historically shaped social sciences, in particular urban and regional studies, and remain central today. These persistent challenges intersect with multiple, intertwined dynamics that are reshaping (urban) life in complex ways. Across the world, in the Global 'North' and 'South', inequalities are deepening under the combined effects of economic and technological transformations; climate change; environmental degradation and depletion; armed conflicts; neo-colonial, exclusionary and xenophobic political projects, etc. To some extent, those dynamics challenge traditional analytical, methodological and theoretical frameworks for understanding inequalities, citizenship, integration, belonging, and the collective action capacity of social actors and institutions.

We invite proposals for **sessions** that critically explore how old and new inequalities are produced, expressed, contested and addressed in cities and regions across the globe, by scholars from various disciplines of urban and regional studies. Broader topics can also be explored in proposed sessions. We welcome contributions from diverse theoretical and methodological perspectives. In bringing together insights from across the world, we seek to foster comparative discussions within and between sessions, which help us to better understand multiple forms of inequalities, and how to address them, in an era of profound uncertainty, transformation and violence.

We welcome submissions for four types of **session format**:

1. **Regular Panels** (90-120 mns) consist of four to five paper presentations (to be selected after a call for papers). Each presentation is usually allocated 15 minutes followed by a discussion.

2. **Round Tables** (90-120 mns) consist of a thematic discussion, led by session convenors who invite 3 to 5 speakers. In short initial statements of 5-10 minutes, each speaker outlines their reflections on the proposed topic. This is followed by a discussion between the session chairs, invited speakers and the audience, to foster an engaging exchange. A limited number of sessions will be in this format.

3. **"Authors meet critics" (book discussion) sessions** (90 mns): session convenors invite the author(s) of one or two books to engage with two or three invited discussants and the audience about their recently published works. The convenors are responsible for selecting one or two recent books on an important theme and inviting authors as well as discussants. A limited number of sessions will be in this format.

4. **Innovative sessions** (90-120 mns)**:** session convenors can propose new, creative, engaging session formats that deviate from the above three. Examples are lightning talks, PechaKucha presentations, or visual sessions. We are open to suggestions. A limited number of sessions will be in this format.

Guidelines

- All sessions must be **open to a broad audience**, and not limited to the participants of an existing project or network.
- Each participant to the conference may contribute to a **maximum of two roles**, such as presenting a paper, chairing a session, or being a panelist.
- Once the selection of accepted sessions is complete, a **Call for Paper** will be launched in **early November**. Session organisers/convenors will be responsible for selecting the submitted abstracts for their session via the conference online submission tool. (The Conference Organising Team will give guidance on the selection process in more detail in due course).
- Session organisers/convenors will chair their respective session(s).
- In cases where a high number of abstracts are submitted to a specific session, more than one session slots may be allocated, subject to space availability at the conference venue.

Submission

- Submit your session proposal via the conference website: www.rc21-vienna2026.org, by **the 6th of October 2025**.
- Your proposal should not exceed 500 words. It should include a title for the session, and include the organisers' names, titles and affiliations.
- Proposals for regular sessions should indicate what kind of key themes, sub-themes and research questions; methods, theories, and/or approaches, are invited from potential paper presenters.
- Proposals for other kinds of sessions should embed the proposed topic or focus within contemporary debates.

We look forward to submissions from various scholarly traditions, disciplines and parts of the world, that will deepen our understanding of urban dynamics and inequalities.

A selection committee made of members from the Conference Local Organising Team and the RC21 Board will select the sessions shortly after the closing date of the Call for Sessions. Submitters will be informed of the result by the **1st of November 2025**. A Call for Paper will be subsequently opened in **early November**.

For any question relating the call for sessions, please contact: **info@rc21-vienna2026.org**