

# 23rd N-AERUS Conference 2026

## The Role of Partnerships in Development: Knowledge, Power, and Urban Futures



Date: 27 – 29 October 2026

Format: Hybrid, multi-locational (Global North & Global South)

Hosted by:

- University of São Paulo (USP), Brazil
- Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies (IHS), Netherlands
- International Institute of Social Studies (ISS), Netherlands
- Faculty of Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation (ITC), Netherlands

### About N-AERUS

N-AERUS (Network-Association of European Researchers on Urbanisation in the South) is a trans-disciplinary network of researchers and practitioners working on urban development in the Global South. Founded in 1996, N-AERUS aims to strengthen research, training, and knowledge exchange across institutions, geographies, and disciplines.

At a time when urbanisation remains a key driver of socio-economic transformation—and when global challenges such as climate change, inequality, migration, and fragility increasingly manifest in cities—N-AERUS provides a platform for critical reflection, mutual learning, and engaged research across North and South.

### Supporting Organizations



## Conference Theme

### *The Role of Partnerships in Development*

Development thinking and practice are currently under considerable pressure. Across many regions, universities face shrinking budgets, overseas development assistance is declining, and governments are increasingly focused inward. At the same time, global challenges demand collective responses that transcend borders, scales, and sectors.

In this context, partnerships—between universities, governments, civil society, communities, and the private sector—have become central to how knowledge is produced, shared, and mobilised in urban development. Yet partnerships are not neutral. They are shaped by unequal power relations, institutional hierarchies, funding regimes, and competing epistemologies.

The 23rd N-AERUS Conference invites scholars and practitioners to critically examine:

- How partnerships shape development agendas and urban futures
- Whose knowledge counts, circulates, and becomes institutionalised
- How North–South collaborations can move beyond extractive or symbolic cooperation toward more just, equitable, reciprocal, and transformative forms of engagement

Building on N-AERUS’ long-standing concern with inclusive urban development, the conference explores partnerships as both vehicles of opportunity and sites of contestation.

## Conference Format and Locations

The 2026 conference will take place simultaneously in the Global North and the Global South, using a hybrid, multi-locational format. This structure reflects both this year’s conference theme and N-AERUS continued commitment to plural knowledge exchange.

- In the Global South, the conference will be organised in partnership with University of São Paulo
- In the Global North, thematic conference days will be hosted at universities in the Rotterdam - The Hague area.

## The Host Institutions

### University of São Paulo (USP), Brazil

The University of São Paulo (USP) is one of Latin America's foremost public universities, with a strong tradition of critical scholarship on urbanisation, inequality, and socio-spatial transformation. Located in one of the world's largest metropolitan regions, USP provides a vital Global South perspective and a key anchor for South–South and triangular partnerships in urban research and education.

### Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies (IHS), Erasmus University Rotterdam

The Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies (IHS) is an international centre of excellence in urban development, housing, and local governance, with a strong focus on cities in the Global South. Through education, research, and advisory work, IHS promotes inclusive, resilient, and just urban development while fostering critical engagement with urban theory and practice.

### International Institute of Social Studies (ISS), Erasmus University Rotterdam

The International Institute of Social Studies (ISS) is a global school of development studies, recognized for the critical and inter-disciplinary research and education. ISS brings together critical scholarship on governance, inequality, and social justice. ISS combines rigorous academic research with policy-relevant engagement, offering a key platform for debates on development, humanitarianism, migration, and power in urban and regional contexts.

### Faculty of Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation (ITC), University of Twente

The Faculty of Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation (ITC) specialises in the use of spatial data, geospatial technologies, and earth observation for addressing societal challenges. ITC specialises in the study of Urban Futures with work on spatial planning, climate resilience, and data-driven decision-making. With a strong international and applied orientation, ITC contributes to urban development through research and education that centres socio-technical approaches to deliver action-oriented, creative, and context-sensitive outcomes across urban and regional

Participants may attend **one or multiple days**, either in person or online.

## Thematic Areas

We invite abstract submissions related to (but not limited to) the following themes:

### USP – Urban Transformations, South–South Partnerships, and Knowledge Circulation

As a leading institution in Latin America, the University of São Paulo provides a focal point for examining urban development partnerships from Global South perspectives. This theme invites analyses of South–South and triangular partnerships, urban transformations in Latin American cities, and alternative geographies of knowledge circulation. Contributions may address comparative urbanism, grassroots and municipal collaborations, and partnerships responding to inequality, informality, and environmental risk. Papers that challenge Eurocentric development models and highlight reciprocal, locally rooted, or regionally networked forms of partnership are particularly encouraged.

### IHS – Housing, Urban Resilience, and Inclusive Development Partnerships

Housing and urban infrastructure are central arenas where partnerships between governments, communities, private actors, and international institutions converge. This theme focuses on partnerships addressing housing provision, urban resilience, and inclusive development, particularly in contexts of inequality, informality, and climate vulnerability. Contributions may analyse collaborations around affordable housing, neighbourhood upgrading, resilience planning, and service provision, while critically interrogating whose interests are prioritised and whose knowledge informs interventions. Submissions engaging with decolonising urban theory, technology-mediated planning, and co-creation processes in cities of the Global South are particularly welcome.

### ISS – Partnerships in Governance, Humanitarianism, and Development

This theme invites critical engagement with partnerships in development governance, humanitarian action, and migration-related urban challenges. As states, international organisations, NGOs, and local actors increasingly operate through collaborative arrangements, partnerships become key sites where power, responsibility, and accountability are negotiated. Contributions may explore how partnerships reshape the role of the state, influence development agendas, and affect inequalities including vulnerable or displaced populations. Papers are encouraged to examine both formal and informal governance configurations, humanitarian–development nexuses, and the tensions between managerial collaboration and political contestation in urban contexts.

## ITC – Spatial Knowledge, Technology, and Urban Partnerships

This theme focuses on the role of spatial knowledge, geospatial technologies, and data infrastructures in shaping contemporary urban development partnerships. From remote sensing and GIS-based planning to data-driven climate and risk governance, technological collaborations increasingly mediate how cities are analysed, governed, and imagined. Contributions are invited that critically examine partnerships built around spatial data and technical expertise, including questions of data ownership and stewardship, epistemic inequality, ethics, and dependency. Particular attention is welcome on how North–South technological partnerships structure access to knowledge and decision-making, and on alternative, locally grounded or community-driven data practices.

## Cross-Cutting Theme – Education, Training, and Capacity-Building Partnerships

Across all hosting institutions, education and training partnerships play a decisive role in shaping urban development practice and research. This cross-cutting theme invites reflexive contributions on joint programmes, research training networks, and capacity-building initiatives. Papers may examine how educational partnerships reproduce or disrupt institutional hierarchies, how students and early-career researchers experience collaboration, and how alternative pedagogies foster mutual learning. Particular attention is welcome to South–South learning, long-term institutional transformation, and the evolving role of European universities in global urban knowledge production.

## Submission Guidelines

Each author can submit (via email) up to two different abstracts. In case of multiple author contributions, please indicate who is the envisioned presenting author. It is also possible to submit panel ideas, by submitting individual abstracts and indicating a common panel name. Depending on submissions, panel languages different than English may be considered.

### Format

- **Abstract length:** maximum **300 words**  
*Language: English* *Format: .docx or .rtf*
- **Abstracts should include:**
  - *Title* - *Author(s) and affiliation(s)*
  - *Five Keywords* - *Mode of participation (in-person / online)*
  - *Preferred thematic area / location* - *Single contribution or part of a panel*
  - *Preferred presentation language* *proposal (indicate panel name)*

## Timeline

<b>Launch of Call for Papers:</b>	08 June 2026
<b>Abstract Submission deadline:</b>	15 July 2026
<b>Review Decision</b>	31 July 2026
<b>Full paper Submission deadline:</b>	02 October 2026
<b>Confirmation of participation:</b>	05 October 2026
<b>Conference days:</b>	27-29 October 2026

Following established N-AERUS practice, abstracts will be selected through a **blind peer-review process**, coordinated by an independent scientific committee composed of representatives from host institutions and the N-AERUS network,.

## Publications

Selected abstracts and papers from the conference may be considered for publication in a special issue or edited volume, supporting the dissemination of conference debates to a wider international audience. Depending on partnerships with publishers (via Trialog), the publication strategy may be integrated into the conference process from an early stage.

### *Trialog – Journal for Planning and Building in the Global South*

Trialog is a peer-reviewed journal dedicated to critical research and practice on planning, architecture, and urban development in the Global South. With a long-standing commitment to reflexive, context-sensitive, and politically engaged scholarship, Trialog provides a platform for voices that challenge dominant development paradigms.

## Participation and Fees

In line with N-AERUS tradition, no conference fees will be charged. Hosting institutions will, where possible, provide local logistical support and refreshments. Participation modalities may vary by location.

## Contact and Further Information

Further information will be available via [www.n-aerus.net](http://www.n-aerus.net)  
For inquiries, please contact: [naerus.2026@gmail.com](mailto:naerus.2026@gmail.com)