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## CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

### The socio-political impacts of large-scale urban development

#### Session organisers:

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Over the past few decades, Eurasian cities have experienced overwhelming urban transformations through the construction of iconic flagship projects. In particular, large-scale real estate developments for elite residential, hospitality, and cultural centres are changing the landscape of cities by increasing densities, introducing new architectural design aesthetics, shifting socio-economic structures, and overturning regulatory restrictions. Initiated from both within and outside state borders, these projects further reflect the rise of private-sector actors as new authorities driving the contemporary shape of Eurasian cities.

Existing research on large-scale urban development has shown that these projects often include population restructuring and gentrification (Doucet et al, 2011; Fainstein, 2008; Lees et al, 2015). At times, they have been linked to displacement (Dixon, 2010; Gellert & Lynch, 2003). The overwhelming tendency for these projects to remain unoccupied or in a protracted state of construction speaks further to their involvement in larger global processes of real-estate speculation and capital accumulation (Swyngedouw et al, 2002), producing an urbanism driven by market forces rather than the needs of residents (Harvey, 2001; Cuthbert, 2008; Brenner et al, 2012). What is also lost are the complex place meanings embedded within cities over generations and reflected through their historical buildings (Hayden, 1997; Sandercock & Bridgman, 1999; Altman & Low, 2012; Harvey, 2012).

Existing scholarship has extensively covered the social impacts of such developments through cases drawn from North America and Western Europe. The geographies of Eurasia also have great insights to contribute to the discussion since such phenomena are globally diverse (Müller, 2018). The shift from a state-led to a market-based economy in Eurasian countries has welcomed numerous spectacular, often state-funded or state-backed megaprojects, with recent scholarship beginning to unpack important local particularities (to name only a few: on Nur-Sultan (Koch, 2018; Laszczkowski, 2016), Baku (Harris-Brandts and Gogishvili, 2018; Valiyev and Wallwork, 2019), Belgrade (Grubbauer and Čamprag, 2019; Perić, 2019), Budapest (Bodnar and Veres, 2013), Skopje (Harris-Brandts, 2020; Mattioli, 2020), Saint Petersburg (Dixon, 2010; Golubchikov, 2010), and Sochi (Müller, 2011; Trubina, 2019).

While iconic flagship projects in this region mirror some of the patterns attested in the rest of the world, especially in their reliance on exceptional legislative measures, we still have a vague understanding of their full socio-political impacts. At a time when cities are increasingly relying on iconic projects to boost local economies and power networks, understanding such trends relative to local-level civilian impressions and the global increase in private-sector real estate investment is thus crucial for preparing Eurasian cities for their futures.

This conference session aims to fill this gap. We welcome empirically-grounded, case-specific papers that consider one or several of the socio-political impacts of iconic flagship projects, including but not limited to themes such as: shifting socio-economic structures/gentrification, demographic changes, new architectural identities, heritage loss, city branding and altering place meanings, increased pluralism, and alternately, rising xenophobia.

The session seeks to foreground work that provides a fresh perspective on how we as scholars may interpret emerging trends and urban development trajectories. Contributions may focus on a specific case or a comparison across cases. By opening up conversations on urban development relative to broader impacts, this session seeks to uncover common concerns tied to such initiatives across the region.

Overall, the session asks: What are the new socio-political faultlines emerging as a result of large-scale urban development? Does the increased presence of iconic flagship projects warrant new planning laws and regulations? What roles do local, national, and extra-national actors play in the design and implementation of these projects?

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