



**Research Committee 21** on  
Sociology of Urban and Regional Development of the  
International Sociological Association

**Terms of reference for institutional candidates for the organization of the RC21 Conference  
and (if relevant) of the RC21-IJURR PhD Summer/Winter School**

**Last updated March 2018**

Those guidelines are prepared for teams and institutions which are considering applying for the organization of the RC21 Conference and (if relevant) of the RC21-IJURR PhD Summer/Winter School. They outline the tasks involved in the organization and the responsibilities of the local organizing team and of the RC21 (and other parties if relevant).

**1. The RC21 conference**

The RC21 conference is normally organized each year in the summer (considering the Northern hemisphere calendar). Every four years it takes place within the broader framework of the ISA World Congress, and sometimes in the framework of the ISA Forum. It is up to the RC21 board to decide whether to integrate the RC21 conference within the ISA Forum or organize its own conference on the relevant year.

***Responsibilities of the local team and venue proposal***

The local organizing team (LOT) oversees all organizational and logistical procedures, finds a suitable venue for all activities of the conference, recommends hotels and other suitable forms of accommodation, organizes fieldtrips, invites keynote speakers, in dialogue with the RC21 president and secretary. It is also in charge of building a conference website where all information is publicized. The Conference program is proposed by the Local team, in dialogue with the RC21 president and secretary. The Conference website is usually located by the host local institution and linked to the RC21 website. By request, it may also be located directly on the RC21 website, but the institution that hosts the website is responsible for its management. Ideally, the president and/or the secretary should visit the venue and meet the LOT at least one year before the Conference, to oversee the process and set the details of the organization.

All the costs incurred for the preparation and running of the conference, including the refund of travel costs for keynote speakers, are the responsibility of the local organizing institution, which can mobilize local funding sources, and will receive the proceeds of the registration fees collected for the Conference – see section below.

***The program***

The program includes parallel sessions (usually of 1h30 or 2h, with 15-20 min allocated to each paper presentation and time for questions and discussions), keynote plenaries, “authors meets

critics” sessions and other special sessions. The LOT and the RC21 president and secretary are jointly responsible for the selection of the themes of the sessions on the basis of a call for sessions. Within individual sessions, abstracts are then selected by the sessions’ coordinators following a separate call for papers, who then inform the LOT of the selection process at designated moments.

Keynote speakers are chosen by the LOT, with the agreement and participation of the RC21 president and secretary. The financing of keynote lectures should be part of the Conference budget and included in the financial design of the event. The RC21 does not accept the practice of keynote speakers selected by external organizations or institutions which finance their costs (with the exception of the IJURR lecture, see below). The speakers at keynotes and plenary sessions are chosen based on scientific criteria, the relevance of the proposed themes to the conference and debates in urban studies, their scientific expertise in particular fields. The keynotes and the plenaries should cover as much as possible a plurality of themes, disciplines, gender, age groups and world regions to represent the diversity and vibrancy of the urban and regional studies field, including emerging scholars, and scholars from both the Global North and South.

The only fixed keynote is the IJURR lecture, which is rooted in the special relationship between the RC21 and the journal since their foundation, as well the several activities developed in scientific partnership. This speech is delivered by a scholar chosen by IJURR and financed by IJURR and has to be scheduled in the program from the beginning.

#### ***Funding and financing of the conference***

All the costs incurred for the preparation and running of the conference, including the refund of travel costs for keynote speakers, are of the responsibility of the local organizing institution. The LOT manages the daily finances and contracting of suppliers and service providers of the conference. It is expected that the costs of the conference will be in large part covered by the conference registration fees, but other sources of funding (including in-kind) and sponsors can be sought (with the caveat mentioned above under Keynote Lectures).

The decision on the amount (and differentiated structure) of conference registration fees is taken by the LOC in coordination and agreement with the RC21 President and Secretary, based on (i) the estimated overall cost of the conference organization, (ii) the estimated attendance in relation to the location and time of the year when the conference takes place and (iii) previous practice at former conferences. There is usually a system of differentiated fees (early bird/late bird registration, A and B&C country scholars, student discount) and the RC21 has always tried to keep the fee as affordable as possible for a large audience. This system has so far allowed the Conferences held over the past ten years to be financially viable.

The conference registration fees are paid through the RC21 electronic payment system which is managed by the RC21 Secretary/Treasurer. The fee income is then forwarded by bank transfer to the designated account of the local organizing institution in several installments, at dates predetermined by the LOT and RC Secretary/Treasurer.

## **2. The joint RC21-IJURR Summer/Winter School in Comparative Urban Studies**

This Summer/Winter School - for PhD students at the early stage of their studies - is usually organized every two years, in partnership with the LOC organizing the RC21 conference that year. The Summer/Winter School usually takes place in the 10-12 days that precede the conference, in the same city or nearby. It is funded by three main sources: a grant from the IJURR Foundation, some funding by RC21, and tuition fees paid by a small number of participating students from A countries. Students from B&C countries usually get a fully funded scholarship covering all their costs. The Summer/Winter School usually caters for 25 students (15 from B&C countries, 10 from A countries), and invited scholars contribute their time for free, but their travel and accommodation expenses are refunded.

The School focuses on the interaction between theory and methodology in comparative urban studies, addressing three broad themes:

1. The value-added of comparative research in urban studies and the changing nature of the urban question. How and why are cities across the world changing, and with what consequences? How can we compare those processes?
2. What (new) research tools and methodologies are appropriate to making sense of the changes occurring in contemporary urban society? How should we make use of, or combine, qualitative research methods and the analysis of quantitative data?
3. Are our theories appropriate for the study of contemporary urban form and society, especially in the global South where we often apply theories of the global North without regard to the specificities of old and new urban contexts in the South?

The Summer/Winter School organization and coordination team is formed by one or two board members from the RC21, one or two board members from IJURR, and one or two members of the LOT. They jointly prepare the call for candidates, select students among applicants, define the program of the Summer/Winter School, invite the speakers and contributors, communicate with the selected students and contributing scholars, manage the Summer/Winter School finances in partnership with the RC21 Treasurer and the IJURR Foundation Treasurer, and deal with the logistics (e.g. teaching rooms and accommodation for students), with the help of the LOT. They attend and coordinate the daily running of the Summer/Winter School. The call for applicants for the Summer/Winter School is usually launched in the late autumn (November or December), with a closing date in January if the School is held in the summer time (as defined in the Northern hemisphere). We have developed a set of selection criteria and a process to manage and rank student applications which we used in the past to make the process more efficient. A repository of useful documents, selection procedures, letter templates, programs, final reports etc. from previous Summer Schools is held in a shared folder stored in a cloud and will be shared between successive teams of Summer School coordinators, in order to collect and transfer good practice and accumulated organizational knowledge.

The main expected contributions of the LOT with respect to the Summer/Winter School (in line with the practice of previous editions) would be:

- Support to find a suitable teaching room (for about 30 people, with flexible seating and a screen and display facilities), and possibly one or two break-out rooms for seminar discussions, bookable for the duration of the Summer/Winter School and to identify relevant accommodation for the students (e.g. student halls for the students, and local B&B/hotels for the teaching staff, who will teach for free, but with accommodation paid for by the Summer/Winter School budget).

- Organization of 2 or 3 local or regional study tours/visits in relation to the topics covered in the Summer/Winter School.
- Academic contribution by 2 or 3 members of the LOT, on a voluntary basis based on motivation, to the pedagogical content of the Summer/Winter School, either by giving a methodology-focused lecture/session, a special lecture presenting an interesting and innovative comparative research project ongoing locally, and/or a lecture on the hosting city and its urban development. These activities must be discussed with the RC21 and IJURR coordinators, who will jointly prepare and coordinate the pedagogical program of the Summer/Winter School and liaise with invited academics.

Examples may be found in the previous SS:

<http://www.rc21.org/summerschool2011/programme.php>

<http://www.rc21.org/en/conferences/summerschool2015/>

<http://www.rc21.org/summerschool2013/programme.php>

<http://www.rc21.org/en/summer-schools/summer-school-2017/>

## General dates and procedures of the RC

### Procedures for venue selection

The ideal schedule for venue selection is the following. Since the RC21 Summer/Winter School happens every two years, the proposals for the conference to be held on the year of the Summer/Winter School should include details about the latter.

Date	Activity	Institution Responsible
September year X-3	Call for venues for the Venue	RC21 Pres/secret.
October X-3 to January X-2	Submission of venue proposals	Local organization candidates
March year X-2	Electronic voting process for the venue at the board	RC21 Pres/secret.
Board meeting year X-2	Confirmation of the venue	RC21 board meeting
October X-2	Announcement of the venue year X	RC21 Pres/secret.
Board meeting year X-1	Submission of report of the preparation for the conference to the RC21 board	LOT
Year X	Conference	LOT and RC21 Pres/secret.

### Procedures for conference organization

Once the venue is chosen for year X+1 (in year X-1 and confirmed by the board meeting of year X), the organization of the Conference should follow this schedule (using as example a Conference held either in July - at the latest the 3<sup>rd</sup> week - or in late August/early September):

Date	Activity	Institution Responsible
October of Year X-2 (or at least 23 months before the conference)	Announcement of the venue year X	RC21 Pres/secret.
August of year X-1 (or at least 14 months before the conference)	Conference website online	LOT
September of year X-1 (or at least 13 months before the conference)	Deadline for session proposals	LOT and RC21 Pres/secret.
December of year X-1 (or at least 10 months before the Conference):	Notification of selected sessions and Call for papers open	LOT and RC21 Pres/secret.
February of year X (or at least 7 months before the conference)	Deadline for abstract submission or paper sessions	LOT
March of year X (or at least 5 months before the conference)	Notification of abstract approval	LOT
April of year X (or at least 4 months before the conference)	Early bird registration opens	LOT
June of year X (or at least 3 months before the conference)	Preliminary conference programme	LOT
July/August/September year X	Conference	LOT and RC21 Pres/secret.



## **RC21 Annual conference venue proposal**

(max 3-4 pages to be submitted )

### **Host**

[please specify which institution(s) will host the conference, including address and contact person(s). Please detail the formal responsibilities of each institution. Please provide the names of core individuals who will form part of the Local Organising Team]

Theme and scientific proposal [please synthesize here the overall broad theme you propose for the conference. This theme is a suggestion to the board, which will decide upon the theme. Max length half a page]

### **Dates**

[please specify the proposed dates for the conference including a tentative schedule, i.e. day/month/year of beginning and end. This must take into consideration the dates of other major international conferences]

### **Overall rationale of the proposal**

[please describe the venue and synthesize here why do you think the venue and the theme would be appropriate for an RC21 conference. Max length half a page]

### **Cost coverage**

[please detail here how you will cover the costs of the conference listing the estimated costs and the sources of funding (sponsors?). A detailed cost breakdown will help the board to decide about the sustainability of the proposal. About a page.] Please specify whether your institution has the capacity to pay some organizational upfront (i.e. in advance of the receipts of the conference registration fees).

### **Accommodation & Board**

[please detail here the potential accommodation/board costs for participants]

### **Draft Summer/Winter School proposal**

[Only for Summer/Winter School years. For details, please consult previous SS programs. Once the venue proposal is accepted, the RC21 and the IJURR Summer/Winter School coordinators will start the discussion of the SS with the local team]