

PUBLIC PANEL

5th June 2026 | 15.00-19.00, Friday
Salt GALATA



Cities in the “Buffer Zone” Reading the Genesis of the World System from Its Void

Gruia Badescu

Historical urbanism

Kacper Poblocki

Anthropology

Orhan Esen

Historical urbanism

Dimitra Siatitsa

Athens

Ileana Apostol

Bucharest

Justyna Orchowska

Warsaw



Cities in the “Buffer Zone” Reading the Genesis of the World System from Its Void

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The 32nd INURA conference’s public session asks whether the urban histories of the belt stretching from the Baltics to the Black Sea and the Eastern Mediterranean / the Persian Gulf can be approached on their own terms, rather than as a mere transition zone in narratives written from the West. In modern world-historical imagination, this region has often been cast as an instrumental space through which the West defined its own opposites or projected “elsewheres.”

Against this external gaze, the first panel with Kacper, Gruia and Orhan will revisit the region’s historical urbanism as a field of ideas and positions, asking what conceptual framework might emerge from within. A re-reading of the region’s urban histories from within, beyond the usual narratives of colonial power and global accumulation. Rather than treating these cities as peripheral, bridging or transitional, it asks how they might illuminate a different geography of modernity—one shaped by empires, local states, and urban actors whose trajectories do not fit the dominant world-system story.

The second panel with Dimitra, Justyna and Ileana brings the discussion to the ground, with reports from cities across the region. INURA members who hosted past conferences will share current urban struggles, civic practices, and grassroots agendas, offering a living map of how cities are responding to change, conflict, and possibility.

In this way, the public session will create a space for mutual learning across cities, to better understand how they are being confronted, negotiated, and transformed.



Ileana Apostol

Urban studies, architecture

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Ileana Apostol is an urban scholar and architect whose work connects Zurich and Bucharest. Based in Zurich, she has been active in research and teaching in architecture, urban studies, and the politics of the built environment. Her Bucharest-related work focuses on urban memory, planning, preservation, and post-socialist city-making. Across both contexts, she links academic inquiry with civic and cultural engagement. Her work highlights the relationship between urban form, social justice, and historical change.





Gruia Bădescu

Urban studies, memory studies



Gruia Bădescu is a scholar of urban studies, memory, and post-war reconstruction. He is a Research Fellow at the University of Konstanz's Zukunftskolleg and a fellow at the Paris Institute for Advanced Study. His work examines how cities are shaped by conflict, political change, and collective memory, with a comparative focus on Europe and beyond. He has published on urban memory, heritage, and rebuilding after war. His research bridges history, architecture, geography, and the social sciences.





Orhan Esen

Historical urbanism, cultural work



Orhan Esen is a historical urbanist and cultural worker based in Istanbul and Berlin. He studied social and economic history at Boğaziçi University in Istanbul and art and architectural history in Vienna. He works as a freelance researcher, writer, lecturer, and curator, collaborating with academic, civic, media, cultural, and arts institutions. He co-edited *Istanbul: Self Service City*, which explores the making of the megacity through informality and economic change. He has been an active member of INURA since 2006 and is coordinating the INURA 2026 meeting in Istanbul.





Justyna Orchowska

Urban sociology, housing studies



Justyna Orchowska is a sociologist and Deputy Head of the Urban Studies Programme at the University of Warsaw. Her research focuses on urban sociology, housing studies, class theory, social inequality, and access to public services. She is the author and co-author of numerous academic and expert publications, including Blank Spots. Warsaw Residents on Public Services. She has led and participated in research projects and worked as an expert for public institutions and NGOs. She is also active in Warsaw's urban and civic movements





Kacper Pobłocki

Urban sociology, social anthropology

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Kacper Pobłocki is an urban scholar working on class, inequality, and urban change in East-Central Europe. He holds a PhD in Sociology and Social Anthropology from Central European University and studied at University College Utrecht. His work has focused on urban movements, the right to the city, and the social transformation of Polish cities. He has long been involved in urban activism and co-organized the first National Congress of Urban Movements in 2011. He also co-authored *A guide for the helpless: practicing the right to the city* and is currently working on a book on urbanization and global economic change in Poland.



Dimitra Siatitsa

Urban research, planning

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Dimitra Siatitsa is an urban researcher and planner based in Athens. Her work focuses on housing, urban development, and the politics of the city, with particular attention to social inequality and spatial justice. She has worked on urban governance, neighborhood transformation, and the everyday life of cities in the context of crisis and redevelopment. Athens serves as both her main base and a central reference point in her work.



REGISTRATION FORM



As we have limited capacity for the Public Panel, registration is required to reserve your place.

Please fill out the form via the QR code.