

# Urban Futures for a Cooler Planet

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## Built Environments for a Cooler Planet: Sustainable Urbanization Pathways for the World of 2075

Afternoon research seminar at Aalto University, Espoo, Finland

### Venue and time

Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> October at 13:00–16.30 at Marsio Cinema, [Marsio](#) event building, Aalto University campus.

A reception with refreshments will follow at 16.30–18:00 in Marsio Living Room.

The seminar will also be live-streamed. Further information from: [Built Environments for a Cooler Planet: Sustainable Urbanization Pathways for the World of 2075 | Aalto University](#)

[Pre-registration](#) is mandatory.

### Organizers

International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA), the Finnish IIASA Committee, the Research Council of Finland, and Aalto University.

### Context

The built environment is a major contributor to global emissions, accounting for significant portions of those from construction, heating, and resource use. Rapid urbanization exacerbates this challenge across the planet, and particularly in fast-developing emerging economies undergoing transformative growth. Africa, for instance, home to 18% of the global population, is expected to triple its urban population by 2050. Without new approaches, this growth risks replicating unsustainable patterns seen elsewhere, leading to catastrophic consequences for the planet.

Drawing on experiences from Europe, China, and the Americas, it is evident that the accelerating urbanization must undergo a profound sustainability transformation. This can only be done by innovative, multidisciplinary and international research and close cooperation with various stakeholders.

The International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) is a globally leading independent research institute that conducts policy-oriented research into global challenges transcending national and disciplinary boundaries. Finland, through the Research Council of Finland, has been a member of IIASA since 1976, enabling close collaboration of Finnish research organizations, companies, and researchers with IIASA's programs. IIASA is also active in capacity building activities for young talent, including the annual Young Scientists Summer Program (YSSP) and numerous thematic events and courses.

Aalto University has the pleasure to host this research seminar as a part of the Designs for a Cooler Planet festival. This year's theme, *Acts of Change*, emphasizes that a better future won't happen on its own—we must make it happen through bold, creative solutions to global challenges.

### **Objective**

The seminar aims to provide a platform for inspiration, networking and mutual learning. The goal is to identify innovative ways to approach urbanization challenges by turning them to opportunities to foster climate and society sensitive urbanization pathways that:

- Minimize emissions and resource consumption from the built environment.
- Address the unique challenges of rapid urbanization in emerging regions.

### **Target audience**

Researchers, university students, government officials, and business representatives from Finland and abroad—including the international and national IIASA alumni communities—are warmly invited. In particular, we want to welcome the participation of students and early career researchers, who will have a key role in creating a more sustainable future.

## Programme

<b>Welcome and introduction</b> <i>Chair: Olli Varis, professor, Aalto University, Finnish IIASA Committee</i>	<b>13:00</b>
Welcome address <i>Floora Ruokonen, executive director, Research Council of Finland</i>	
Setting the scene <i>John Schellnhuber, director general, IIASA</i>	
<b>Issues: Urbanizing planet towards 2075</b>	<b>13:30</b>
Changing environment and climate' <i>Timothy Carter, Finnish Environment Institute</i>	
Demographic and societal projections <i>Roman Hoffman, research group leader, IIASA POPJUS</i>	
Environmental consequences of urban growth <i>Adriana Gomez, senior research scholar, IIASA ECE</i>	
Discussion	
<b>Coffee Break 14:30 - 15:00</b>	
<b>Solutions: Sustainability transformation for what?</b>	<b>15:00</b>
What needs to be done differently? <i>Matti Kuittinen, professor, Aalto University</i>	
What policy opportunities emerge? <i>Teppo Lehtinen, director general, Ministry of the Environment</i>	
What innovation and business opportunities emerge? <i>Piia Pessala, executive director, Sweco Finland Oy</i>	
How can our generation do better? <i>Joaquín de la Barra, doctoral candidate, Aalto University, IIASA YSSP 2025</i>	
Discussion	
<b>Closing of the seminar</b> <i>John Schellnhuber and Olli Varis</i>	<b>16:15</b>
<b>Networking with refreshments 16:30 - 18:00</b>	