METREX 30th Anniversary Conference

SPEAKERS OVERVIEW

Metropolitan City of Rome Capital | 11–13 November 2026

The speakers list is being regularly updated. The final version will be available in the coming days.



AILEEN BOUCLÉ

Chair of the Executive Directors Council of NARC – National Association of Regional Councils, USA

Aileen Bouclé leads the Miami-Dade Transportation Planning Organization and chairs the Executive Directors Council of the National Association of Regional Councils. Her work includes metropolitan transport planning and cooperation on the Strategic Miami Area Rapid Transit programme. She is a certified professional planner and holds degrees in business administration and environmental and urban systems from Florida International University.



ALASTAIR WYLLIE

First Head of the METREX Secretariat, 1996–2008, United Kingdom

Based in Scotland, Alastair has over 25 years' experience of facilitating leadership and organisational development through action research, executive and team coaching, capacity building and whole-system collaborative learning within international and multi-cultural contexts in public- and private-sector organisations.
As METREX Head of Secretariat, 1996-2008, Alastair managed the services to support the Network's growth from 15 to over 50 metropolitan cities across EU27+, its biannual meetings and biennial conferences, its member-led expert groups and study visits, and its EU co-financed transnational projects.
Alastair is currently working towards his retirement while continuing to teach and supervise mid-career Masters in People & Organisational Development students.



ALESSANDRO COPPOLA

Associate Professor of Urban Planning and Policy, Politecnico di Milano, Italy

Alessandro Coppola is Associate Professor in Urban planning and policy at the Department of Architecture and Urban Studies (DAStU) and the Director of the M.A. in Urban Planning and Policy Design at Politecnico di Milano.

He is the principal investigator of Metromosaic: patterns, drivers and outcomes of residential mobility funded by the Cariplo Foundation (https://www.metromosaic.polimi.it/), and the coordinator of the DAStU Unit of the Ruralize revitalizing Rural Communities funded by the Horizon Initiative. He has been Principal investigator of the collaboration agreement between Lombardy Region and DAStU on the analysis and strategic scenarios for Lombardy's Inner Areas (2021-2027) (https://www.altrelombardie.polimi.it/). His work has appeared in journals such as Progress in Planning, Urban Geography, Urban Studies, Cities, European Planning Studies, Leisure Studies, International Journal of Urban, Sustainable Development, European Urban and Regional Studies, International Journal of Housing Policy; Population, Space and Place.



ALPO TANI

Climate Mitigation Specialist, City of Helsinki, Finland

Alpo Tani is working as a climate change mitigation specialist for the city of Helsinki with themes ranging from impact assessments to proactive planning of green transition on the sector of the built environment.



ANDREA CALORI

President of ESTà; Coordinator, Metropolitan Lab 3 (listed with CIHEAM Bari), Italy

President of ESTà, non profit and independent think tank that works on sustainable economies, since the early 1990s he has supported the design and implementation of urban and territorial policies as well as on field projects with local, national, and international institutions (EU, Council of Europe, FAO, UNDP, OECD, etc.), foundations, NGOs, and social networks, and he works in international cooperation projects in Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East. From 2000 to 2010, he taught territorial policies and local development at the Polytechnic University of Milan. He is one of the co-founders of the Italian Network of Solidarity Economies (2002) and the Italian Network on Local Food Policies (2019). From 2010 to 2015 he has been president of Urgenci, the global association of Community-Supported Agriculture networks and he has been a member of the Civil Society Mechanism of the FAO's World Committee on Food Security. With ESTà he has been part of the working group that gave rise to the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact and he works at national and international level on the connection between food, climate and institutional innovation with a participatory approach.



ANNA KNIGHT

Regional Planner at Region Stockholm, Sweden

Anna works as a Regional Planner at Region Stockholm. She has been part of a team working on the new Regional Development Plan for the Stockholm region, focusing on how the regional perspective can contribute to sustainable land use development across both urban and rural areas. Anna has a Master's Degree in urban and regional planning from the University of Stockholm and has previously worked at the county-level government agency responsible for implementing national policies and as a planner at a local planning authority within the Stockholm region.



BELINDA GOTTARDI

Vice-President of the Chamber of Local Authorities, Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe

Belinda Gottardi holds a degree in Law from the University of Bologna and has been a qualified lawyer since 2002. She served as Mayor of Castel Maggiore from 2014 to 2024, having previously held several municipal executive positions, and also served as President of the Reno Galliera Union of Municipalities. Since 2017, she has been a member of the Italian delegation to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, where she was elected Vice-President of the Chamber of Local Authorities. Her work focuses on local democracy, multilevel governance and European cooperation among local and regional authorities.



CARMINE PACENTE

Milan City Councillor and Member of the European Committee of the Regions, Italy

Carmine Pacente (born in 1978) graduated in Economics from Bocconi University and holds a Master's degree in Public Management from SDA Bocconi. He currently serves as Head of European Policies and Programming and LEAR at the Metropolitan City of Milan. He is also the author of four books on European policies, local governance and the role of urban and metropolitan areas in EU cohesion policy. Since 2019, he has chaired ANCI Lombardia's Department for European Affairs and, since 2020, has been a member of the European Committee of the Regions. Since 2026, he has also served as a Milan City Councillor and Chair of the City Council Committee on European Funds and the National Recovery and Resilience Plan.



CLAIRE BOISSET

Director of Environmental Studies, UrbaLyon, France

Claire Boisset is a geographer-urban planner with more than 20 years' experience at the LTPA, where she is now the Director of Environmental Studies. She has participated in every strategic and local urban planning initiative for Lyon, contributing to both the metropolitan land-use plan and the masterplan. Her work centres on two particular themes: Linking urban planning with environmental stewardship — leading projects such as the creation and enhancement of major parks across Greater Lyon. Secondly, Foresight and innovation — designing cutting-edge methods and tools and coordinating their development. Claire is also actively engaged in the LTPA's European and international activities.



CLAUDIA MURRAY

Associate Professor, University of Reading, and Sustainable and Affordable Housing Expert Group lead, United Kingdom

Claudia Murray is Associate Professor of Development Processes and Sustainable Construction at the University of Reading. Her research focuses on housing affordability, housing policy, and governance structures for delivering sustainable urban development, with publications in leading international journals including Housing Policy Debate and the International Journal of Housing Policy. She leads the Sustainable and Affordable Housing Expert Group at METREX and chairs the Reading Latin American and Caribbean Network, promoting transatlantic dialogue and knowledge exchange. Claudia has extensive experience leading international, multi-sector consortia for research and innovation funding, securing and delivering collaborative projects that address housing and urban development challenges.



DAGMAR KEIM

Programme manager at the City of Amsterdam | EuroDelta Expert group coordinator, The Netherlands

Dagmar is programme manager 'innovation by global collaboration' at the department of urban planning. Born in the US, raised in Aachen (Germany), educated as landscape architect in the Netherlands and Italy, Dagmar started her professional career in leading urban planning and landscape architecture firms in California (US) and the Netherlands. About 17 years ago she made the shift to government agencies, where she worked as spatial designer and project leader on local, provincial and national level in different spatial ateliers. The last 8 years she started coordinating the European work within the spatial planning department. She is currently chairing the Eurodelta secretary which is hosted by the City of Amsterdam, a collaboration of cities, regions and the academic field within the Rhine-Meuse Delta.



DANIELA BERNASCHI

Researcher and Board Member, Observatory on Poverty and Food Insecurity, CURSA, Italy

Environmental and development economist with a PhD in Social and Political Change from the University of Florence and the University of Turin. Her research addresses social inequalities, poverty, food insecurity and the right to food, with a focus on urban and territorial inequalities in Mediterranean and comparative contexts. She is a researcher and board member at CURSA's Observatory on Poverty and Food Insecurity (OIPA) and has a long-standing affiliation with the Department of Political and Social Sciences, University of Florence, where she has worked as a research fellow and adjunct professor. She has advised the European Commission as an Expert Consultant on food affordability and the Common Agricultural Policy, has been invited to serve as an external reviewer for the IN2TIC doctoral programme (MSCA COFUND) at the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (Spain), and has been Principal Investigator of the project "Food Insecurity in Affluent Societies" (University of Florence). She is the author of the monograph Collective Actions of Solidarity Against Food Insecurity (Springer, 2020) and of Food Insecurity and Changes in Social Citizenship: A Comparative Study of Rome, Barcelona and Athens (European Societies, 2023), runner-up for the European Sociological Association's Best Article Award.



DARIO PARRAVICINI

Director of economic and social development Department in the Metropolitan City of Milan, Italy

The department deals with the promotion of economic development and social cohesion measures for the whole metropolitan area composed by 133 municipalities, it includes programming and planning interventions about public transport for passengers as well as freight transports. Within the department policies about tourism and territorial marketing are carried out with the involvement of various regional and local institutions. The main objectives of the Department's activity are: facilitating the cohesion between rural and urban areas and making MCM a more liveable attractive territory for people, investors and tourists.



DAVIDE MARINO

Professor of Economics and Rural Assessment, University of Molise, Italy

Professor of Economics and Rural Assessment at the University of Molise, teaches "Food Policy" and "Environmental Accounting and Ecosystem Services". Lecturer in Food and Wine Sciences in Rome 3 University, where he teaches "The Agro-food Made in Italy". Member of the Doctoral College in "MODELS FOR ECONOMICS AND FINANCE" of La Sapienza University in Rome. He represents the University of Molise in the Group "Food" in the Network of Sustainable Universities (RUS). He is a member of GDL2 - Hungry - of ASVIS (Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development). Scientific coordinator of the Food Atlas and Food Plan within the Metropolitan Strategic Plan (PSM) for the Metropolitan City of Rome Capital. He is coordinator of several national and international research projects on urban agriculture, agricultural landscape, biodiversity, ecosystem services and environmental accounting.



DIETMAR SCHULMEISTER

Public affairs advisor, Rhineland Metropolitan Region, Germany

Dietmar is specialised in energy and transformation topics at the Rhineland Metropolitan Region. He represents the region's interests in EU, federal, and state politics, helping to stabilize and strengthen the region as a center of business and innovation beyond 2045. With over ten years of experience in public affairs and project management, he combines strategic planning skills with a clear focus on implementation. In addition to his professional activities, Dietmar Schulmeister is involved in political education, anti-racism work, and German-Ukrainian economic relations - always with the aim of building bridges between business, politics, and society.



DOUGLAS GORDON

Architect and Spatial Planner; Visiting Professor at EKA, Tallinn, Estonia

Douglas Gordon is an architect and spatial planner who was educated at the Bartlett, UCL. He worked for 15 years in London, primarily working on 2 major London Plans and coordinated the regeneration of Covent Garden and Camden Town in the 70's and 80's. His family moved to Helsinki in the late 80's whereupon Douglas was employed as an architect and international coordinator on spatial planning for the City of Helsinki. He also worked as chief architect for the State's Housing Fund of Finland. Douglas was instrumental as part of the City Plan team in creating and designing a new-style of City Plan for Helsinki and was responsible and led a large number of EU and Metrex spatial projects for city-regions. Today, he is a visiting professor at EKA in Tallinn and gives lectures at Aalto University Helsinki on architecture, design and city planning. Douglas has written extensively with many books and articles on cities and given lectures/seminars across the world from Rio de Janeiro, Chicago and Vancouver, to Paris, London and Helsinki, Stockholm and Copenhagen, Cape Town, Shanghai and Tokyo.



ERICH ZIMMERMANN

Executive Director, National Association of Regional Councils (NARC), USA

Erich Zimmermann is Executive Director of the National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) based in Washington, DC, USA, where he advances regional collaboration and planning as solutions to transportation, economic, environmental, and community development challenges. With more than 20 years of experience in nonprofit leadership, federal policy, and advocacy, he has built a reputation for strategic collaboration and effective policy engagement. Before becoming Executive Director, Erich served as NARC's Director of Transportation Programs and Deputy Executive Director. He holds degrees from The George Washington University and the University of Montana and completed a Master Certificate in High Performance Leadership in 2023.



FEDERICA FANELLI

Junior Researcher, PROWD Project; Urban Science and Human Mobility, Italy

She holds a degree in Physics from Sapienza University of Rome and recently completed her PhD in Physics at the same University, in collaboration with Sony Computer Science Laboratories Rome as part of the Sustainable Cities group. She has been a visiting researcher at the Bartlett Centre for Advanced Spatial Analysis (CASA), University College London, and at the Department of Applied Mathematics and Computer Science, Technical University of Denmark (DTU). Her work sits at the intersection of complex systems, urban science and human mobility. Using large-scale mobility data and geospatial information, she studies how access to urban services, green spaces and collective mobility patterns vary across cities.



FLAMINIA VANNINI

Urban Planner and PhD Candidate, Università Iuav di Venezia; PROWD Project, Italy

Urban planner and PhD candidate in Urban Planning at Università Iuav di Venezia. She is a member of the LABIC research group and an editor of U3 – UrbanisticaTre. Her research focuses on moving beyond metric-based paradigms of urban densification, exploring new strategies for territorial regeneration and transformation through practices of relational urbanism. She contributes to the European PROWD project and is part of the research team coordinating We-Z – Emotional WEllbeing of Generation Z in the Vigne Nuove Public Housing Neighbourhood. She is also a member of the territorial team of Laboratorio di Città Corviale, where she works on co-programming and co-design processes for the "intangible" territorial regeneration of the Corviale Urban Integrated Plan (PUI). She has gained international research experience in France at ENSAG and Grenoble Alpes Métropole, and has collaborated with professional practices, companies, and non-profit organisations. She holds a Master's degree in Urban Design and Planning from Roma Tre University; her 2023 thesis, "Normogenesi Urbane," proposed an action model for flexible urban transformation based on regulatory tools and innovative collaborative governance practices.



FRANCESCA BENEDETTA FELICI

Anthropologist and PhD Candidate, Sapienza University of Rome, Italy

Anthropologist and Ph.D. candidate at Sapienza University of Rome, she has several years of research experience in the fields of food systems and the right to food. She has worked with universities and international research institutions, focusing in particular on urban food policies, food poverty, and food insecurity. Her current doctoral research explores the right to food through the lens of public food procurement, with a specific focus on food provision in Italian prisons. She collaborates with the Observatory on Food Insecurity and Poverty at CURSA and works as a consultant for the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).



FRANCESCA VOLPE

In-house Consultant, CIHEAM Bari, and FOODGaP Project Manager, Italy

Francesca Volpe is a political scientist, In-house Consultant at CIHEAM Bari, and the Project Manager of the FOODGaP project. She specializes in capacity building for public officials, establishing participatory governance, and fostering inter-institutional cooperation.

Expert in local food policies, she provides technical assistance to Italian and African municipalities to adopt participatory food plans. She also serves as the Secretary of the Italian Observatory of Local Food Policies and focal point for the Resilient Local Food Supply Chain Alliance (UN FSS 2021).

Backed by 15 years of experience as an Innovation Manager in the agri-food sector, her current activities focus on promoting the Mediterranean and African dialogue on food policies as a key final result of her international cooperation initiatives



FRANCESCO NAZZARO

Chief of Staff, Metropolitan City of Rome Capital, Italy

Francesco Nazzaro is Chief of Staff of the Metropolitan City of Rome Capital and has extensive experience in national and local public administration. He graduated in Political Science and pursued further studies in Territorial Economics and Statistics, followed by a second-level Master's degree in Institutional Relations, Lobbying and Corporate Communication. He joined local public administration in 2001 and became a Municipal Secretary in 2011. From 2018 to 2024, he served at the Italian Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF) as Head of the Secretariat to the Deputy Minister and to the Undersecretary. In July 2024, he was appointed Chief of Staff of the Metropolitan City of Rome Capital by Roberto Gualtieri.



FRANCESCO VASSALLO

Deputy Metropolitan Mayor, Metropolitan City of Milan, Italy

Francesco Vassallo is Deputy Metropolitan Mayor of Milan, with more than 30 years of experience in territorial governance and local public administration. His political career began in Bollate (Milan) in 1995, where he served as Municipal Councillor, Council Group Leader and Executive Councillor for two consecutive terms (1999–2010), before becoming Mayor of Bollate from June 2015 to May 2026. Alongside his political roles, he has worked as a local government official in the Milan metropolitan area since 1996, developing in-depth knowledge of public administration and decision-making processes. He joined the Metropolitan Council of Milan in 2016, with responsibilities for finance, property, digitalisation and economic development. Reappointed as Delegated Metropolitan Councillor by Metropolitan Mayor Giuseppe Sala in 2022, he subsequently became Deputy Metropolitan Mayor, coordinating economic development, digital transition and the financial sustainability of municipalities across the metropolitan area.



GIANINA PANATAU

Vice-President of METREX and General Director, Bucharest Metropolitan Area Intercommunity Development Association, Romania

After many years in the Association as coordinator of the Legal Department, where she was responsible for overseeing and managing all the legal affairs of the organisation, she was appointed as the Association's Deputy Director General, in 2022. In that capacity, she worked closely with all departments, offering steadfast support to both the teams and the institution. She ensured the Association's effective performance, overseeing the day-to-day management and activities, preparing long-term strategies, and monitoring the overall performance. She is currently leading a team of 60 professionals, having full responsibility for them, providing vision, leadership and strategic direction.



GIOVANNI CAUDO

Full Professor of Urban Planning, Roma Tre University, Italy

Full Professor of Urban Planning and researcher at Roma Tre University, where he teaches Urban Planning. His research focuses on contemporary urban challenges, urban and regional planning, decision-making processes, urban design, and the impacts of planning policies, with a particular focus on housing and the experience of living in the city. He has extensive experience in national and international research, including studies on housing policies and inclusive housing. His work has been presented and developed in contexts such as the Italian Pavilion at the 11th Venice Architecture Biennale (2008) and through research commissioned by the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy. From 2013 to 2015, he served as Advisor for Urban Transformation to the Department of Urban Planning of the City of Rome, where he contributed to the implementation of the city's Urban Regeneration Strategy and promoted applications for funding under European Framework Programmes and Horizon 2020. He is currently Scientific Coordinator of the WE-z project (UIA) and the PROWD project (DUT).



IVÁN TOSICS

Director, Metropolitan Research Institute, Hungary

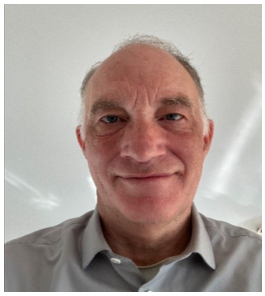
Iván Tosics (born in Budapest in 1952) is one of the principals of Metropolitan Research Institute. He is mathematician and sociologist (PhD) and research fellow with long experience in urban sociology, strategic development, housing policy and EU regional policy issues. Since late 2011 he was one of the three Thematic Pole Managers of the URBACT programme, which has changed since January 2016 into Programme Expert position. He teaches at the University of Pécs, Department of Political Studies, Doctoral School. He is Vice Chair of the European Network for Housing Research (ENHR), Board member of the European Urban Research Association (EURA). He was member until 2013 of the HS-NET Advisory Board to UN-HABITAT. He is the Policy Editor of the journal 'Urban Research and Practice', member of the Editorial Advisory Board for the 'Journal of Housing and the Built Environment' and for 'Housing Studies.



JAKUB MAZUR

First Deputy Mayor of Wrocław, Poland

Jakub Mazur has over 20 years of corporate and business experience.
His areas of expertise are IT, e-commerce, energy, advertisement, marketing, brand strategies and construction sector. He is co-author of the success of the European Capital of Culture 2016 in Wrocław (mid-2015 to March 2017).
First Deputy Mayor of Wrocław (since 2018), supervising the Department of City Development and Strategy and as a representative for international affairs. Responsible for the creation and implementation of strategic studies for the city, agglomeration, region in the 2050 perspective. In charge of urban planning and land use plans, architecture, construction administration, city aesthetics, monument preservation, economic development, geodesy and land cadastre, sustainable development, blue/green policies, energy.



JOHAN VAN ZOEST

Eindhoven University of Technology and City of Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Johan van Zoest has extensive teaching experience at the Faculty of Building Sciences at Eindhoven University of Technology. His courses include city diagnosis and strategy making in today's complex world and designing for a sustainable future, in which students learn to contribute to big challenges by targeted local action. The latter course was recently elected first runner up in a university-wide competition in sustainability education. Johan also works as a general strategist for the city of Amsterdam, where he is involved in European-to-regional issues. He is a biologist by training and started out as an urban ecologist.



JULITA MIŁOSZ-AUGUSTOWSKA

Expert in European Cooperation, Western Pomerania, Poland

Julita Miłosz-Augustowska (Poland) is an expert in Polish-German and European cooperation with over 20 years of experience in public administration and international projects. She specialises in regional development, strategic planning and building cross-border partnerships. She has managed Interreg projects and worked with organisations including the European Commission, OECD and ESPON. She also delivers training for Polish and German public-sector professionals. Western Pomerania, which she represents, has been a member of METREX since 2011.



ŁUKASZ MEDEKSZA

Deputy Director of the Strategy and City Development Department Municipality of Wrocław and Metro Governance & Strategies EG coordinator, Poland

Coordinator of the Social Foresight Wrocław 2036/2056 (in the framework of the European Capital of Culture Wrocław 2016), Chief editor of the publications "Strategies for the City of the Future". Member of the Council of The Society of Polish Town-Planners (since 2018). Active member of the Metrex Management Committee. Among other things, culturologist. Łukasz has also worked for the Marshal's Office of Lower Silesia (2010-2016).

Previously, he had worked for the local and regional media (2000-2010).



MARCO GRIGUOLO

President of METREX and Councillor for Infrastructure, Metropolitan City of Milan, Italy

Marco is President of METREX. Marco Griguolo, married to Ilaria and father of two children Edoardo Gianni and Emma Vittoria, is a lawyer mainly working on wealth management immigration and corporate criminal law.

He is Councillor for the Metropolitan City of Milan with responsibility for infrastructure. Marco is also a Councillor in the City of Segrate, little town near Milano and President of the Anti-Mafia Commission in Città metropolitana di Milano.



MARIO MAIORANI

Architect and Doctoral Researcher, Roma Tre University; PROWD Project, Italy

Architect and researcher working at the intersection of critical urban theory and applied spatial analysis. Based in Rome, he is a doctoral researcher at the Department of Architecture of Università degli Studi Roma Tre, where he is affiliated with the LABIC research group and involved in the European PROWD project. His research focuses on metropolitan transformations, peri-urban agriculture, and informal service systems, with particular attention to self-organised practices in low-density territories and to density as a social and relational, rather than purely physical, phenomenon. His doctoral research develops the concept of "relational density" as an alternative framework for understanding urbanity in the Roman city-territory and comparable European contexts. His research approach combines qualitative fieldwork with quantitative and spatial methods, including GIS mapping and data visualisation. His work spans academic outputs—including theses, papers, and conference presentations—as well as technical reports and territorial analyses developed through professional practice.



MAURO BAIONI

Urban Planner, Researcher and Lecturer, Roma Tre University, Italy

Urban planner and PhD in Urban Policies, he is a fixed-term researcher and lecturer in the Urban Planning Laboratory at the Department of Architecture of Roma Tre University, where he also coordinates the Master's programme in Heritage Making and Adaptive Reuse.

His research focuses on urban transformation processes in the Rome metropolitan area, public spaces, and cultural heritage, with experience in both national and international research projects. He is currently Senior Researcher in the PROWD project (DUT).

He also collaborates with the Cultural Welfare Center on training and evaluation activities and has worked as a consultant for public administrations and research institutions. From 2013 to 2015, he was part of the staff of the Department for Urban Transformation of the City of Rome.



MICHELE LUGLIO

Associate Professor of Telecommunications, University of Rome Tor Vergata; Invited Speaker, Metropolitan Lab 2, Italy

Michele Luglio received the Laurea and the Ph.D. in Electronics. In 2001 and 2002 he was visiting professor at UCLA. He teaches "Internet via Satellite" and "Telecommunications Fundamentals". From 2018 to 2021 he was affiliated to the Italian Space Agency and the Italian expert delegate and co-chair of the advisory committee 5JAC of ESA. He was general chair, co-chair, technical program chair, keynote speaker at several international conferences. He authored more than 200 international publications. He was president of NITEL consortium and is co-founder and president of Romars company.



ONDŘEJ CMORIAK

Project Manager, Strategic Development and Cooperation Department, City of Brno, Czech Republic

Ondřej Cmoriak is a project manager at the Strategic Development and Cooperation Department of the City of Brno. He focuses on metropolitan cooperation and strategic territorial development of the Brno Metropolitan Area and has experience in leading the international project MECOG-CE that aimed at strengthening metropolitan cooperation and governance in Central Europe. Currently, his work includes cooperation with European networks, national associations and authorities, and he participates in activities connected to food cooperation.



PAUL LECROART

Senior Urbanist, Institut Paris Region, France

Paul is a Senior Urbanist at the Paris Region Planning and Environmental Agency, advising regional, metropolitan and city governments on strategic planning and transformative projects. Paul currently leads the Metropolitan Nature Pilot-Projects initiative and the Metropolitan Avenues programme in the Grand Paris.

Paul has been involved in planning in over 30 cities in Europe, the Americas, North Africa, the Middle East and China. He was a member of the Advisory Board for the 4th New York Regional Plan and a coordinator for Metropolis. He is the editor of 'Large-Scale Urban Development in Europe' (2007) and 'Cities Change the Word' (2019).



PETER AGH

Secretary General of METREX

Ing. Peter Ágh, PhD., Secretary General of METREX is a public-governance leader with more than twenty years of experience steering local and metropolitan administrations across Europe, the Middle East, and the United States. Besides his role in METREX, he currently advises Slovakia's Minister of Education, Science, Research and Youth on artificial intelligence, skills development, and EU funding strategy. As the founding Managing Director of ICMA Europe, Peter built the organization's European branch from the ground up, convening nine international conferences and securing funding for cross-border projects that strengthened local-governance standards across Europe. His earlier career spans city-manager roles including the city of Bratislava, where he authored the city's Smart City Concept. He has also advised Saudi Arabia's Royal Commission for AlUla and launched the inaugural AlUla Global Cities Summit. A specialist in decentralization, smart cities, and EU project delivery, Peter holds a PhD and executive education from Harvard Kennedy School and the University of Virginia.



PETER AUSTIN

City of Oslo and NBN coordinator, Norway

Peter Austin works in the Urban Development Department, City of Oslo as Planning Advisor with responsibilities for regional collaboration. Peter has contributed to strategic analysis and planning in the Oslo region, including housing, transport, environment, climate, social issues, retail and economic development. Peter is also International Coordinator for the Urban Development sector in Oslo. He represents Oslo as co-chair in Eurocities Working Group for Metropolitan Areas where he has developed the network as a learning platform and provided policy advice to EU institutions. He has also taken part for Oslo in projects under EU programmes including URBACT, Interreg Europe, ESPON, Horizon and CERV.



PETER POL

Strategic Adviser at the City of The Hague and EconoMETREX2.0 EG coordinator, The Netherlands

Dr. Peter M.J. Pol is an experienced Strategic Adviser with a demonstrated history of working in urban planning in Europe and in urban academic education and research. Skilled in Urban Economic Development, Governance and Urban Planning. Peter is an expert on large scale urban developments related to sustainability, economics and mobility. He works for the City of The Hague and cooperates with other large cities in The Netherlands. Peter has a background in urban economics and was involved in numerous international comparative urban studies. He wrote a dissertation on ‘A Renaissance of Stations, Railways and Cities, Economic Effects, Development Strategies and Organisational Issues of European High-Speed-Train Stations’ at the Erasmus University of Rotterdam. Peter is member of the Managing Committee of the Metrex, a network of about fifty European Metropolitan Regions. He works on spatial economic topics in the SURE Eurodelta, a network of metropolitan regions in the Rhine-Meuse-Scheldt delta.



PIERLUIGI SANNA

Deputy Metropolitan Mayor of Rome, Italy

Pierluigi Sanna is the current Deputy Mayor of the Metropolitan City of Rome. Graduated with a degree in Lettere, Sapere Amministrativo e Formazione, he served as Mayor of Colleferro for over a decade.

On the international front, Sanna has focused significantly on aerospace policies and cooperation among European space cities. From 2022 to 2024, he served as President and Vice-President of the Communauté des Villes Ariane (CVA), a network that bridges local governments and aerospace supply chain companies involved in the Ariane and Vega launcher programs. His commitment to the Space Economy was further consolidated in June 2026, when he joined the Scientific Committee of the NSE – New Space Economy Expoforum.

Additionally, Sanna drives local technological and industrial development as a founding member of the ITS Academy Logistica 4.0 and as a member of the General Assembly of the Lazio Industrial Consortium.

In June 2026, he assumed office as President of the Colleferro Municipal Council. He also represents local authorities within the CAL (Council of Local Authorities) and serves as an effective representative monitoring European funds for the PR Lazio FSE+ 2021–2027 programme.



ROBERTO PAOLESSE

Chair, Department of Chemical Science and Technologies, University of Rome Tor Vergata, Italy

Roberto Paolesse started his academic career at the Department of Chemical Science and Technologies of the University of Rome “Tor Vergata”, where he is now the Chair of the Department, one of the Excellence Departments for the VQR 2023–2027.

Roberto Paolesse authored more than 530 articles in international journals, six patents, and edited two books, with an H-index of 66 (source: SCOPUS, August 2026). He received the Hans Fischer Career Award for Lifetime Achievements in Porphyrin Chemistry in 2024.

He is co-director of the Sensors Group of the University of Rome Tor Vergata.



SARAH JOHNSTONE

Regional planner at Gothenburg Region, Sweden

Sarah works as a regional planner at the Gothenburg Region. She specialises in climate change mitigation, sustainable development, and the green energy transition.



WEDAD KABI

Policy Advisor, STRING Megaregion

Wedad Kabi is a Policy Advisor at STRING Megaregion, a cross-border partnership connecting regions in Denmark, Germany, Norway and Sweden. At STRING, she works on policy analysis, strategic partnerships and initiatives supporting sustainable growth, green infrastructure and the green transition. Her work focuses on strengthening cross-border cooperation and bringing together public and private stakeholders to advance shared regional priorities. She has previously worked on EU-funded hydrogen infrastructure projects and gained international policy experience within the EU and UN systems. Wedad holds an LL.M. in International and European Law from the University of Amsterdam.



ZHONG LV

Panellist, Beyond Europe; Shanghai Design Capital Promotion Centre (SPCCD), China (online)

Zhong Lv is a Chief Professional Engineer and Shanghai Leading Talent, an accredited ENV SP expert, and Vice President of the Shanghai Landscape Architecture Society.

She pioneered the innovative Perceptive Space Theory, focusing on spatial perception and experiential design for urban public green open spaces, urban green infrastructure and urban regeneration. She has led landmark waterfront renewal projects along the Huangpu River and Suzhou River in Shanghai, and curated a number of international urban art and landscape exhibitions.

Her research and practices have been selected for global authoritative cases. She has won prestigious ASLA and IFLA awards, taken part in national standard development and published several academic monographs.