



# Future Challenges in Sustainable Urban Planning & Territorial Management

*Proceedings of the SUPTM 2022 conference*

**S. García-Ayllón  
& J.L. Miralles**  
*Editors*



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# **Future Challenges in Sustainable Urban Planning & Territorial Management**

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**S. García-Ayllón  
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Editors**

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*The Technical University of Cartagena is an institution with an unwavering commitment to sustainability, the environment, urban studies and proper land-use planning. That is why it is an honour for us to be able to host, as a scientific and university institution, this first international conference on the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in terms of urban planning and land management SUPTM 2022.*

*As one of the four technical universities in Spain, our students and researchers are strongly related to these disciplines from various careers and research programs. The design of cities, urban mobility, territorial and environmental planning, or the management of natural risks in matters such as flooding or coastal space, are disciplines in which our institution is a benchmark at national and international level, and in which we train numerous graduates each year, who then transfer their knowledge to their various professional fields.*

*Research in the scientific field of all these matters that are so important for the future of this planet is an obligation of our society that must be promoted by public administrations and passed on to companies through the transfer of knowledge. In this context, I reiterate the maximum commitment of the institution that I represent in these international knowledge exchange events, which enrich our researchers by allowing them to promote their work and learn about the work of others.*

*I trust that this is no more than the first step of meetings that will be repeated in the future, allowing us to help advance the sustainable development goals of our planet with their results.*

***Beatriz Miguel***  
***Rector of the Technical University of Cartagena***



*It is a pride for the city of Cartagena to host this first international conference on challenges in urban planning and land management. The city of Cartagena, as the cradle of a three-thousand-year-old civilization, is a historical reference in terms of architecture and urban planning. However, we are not resigned to living from our past, but rather we are committed to a future in which innovation and research are the spearhead to help move our society forward.*

*In this sense, our city is a reference in sustainable urban mobility, environmental planning and innovative urban planning, incorporating researchers and professionals of the highest prestige into our projects. These projects have placed our city in a vanguard position in many of the topics that will be discussed during these days in this congress. In this sense, I am convinced that the results of this meeting will be very useful and will help our cities and territories to advance along the path of sustainable development.*

*I am confident that the success of this first call is only the beginning of new meetings in the future that will consolidate our city as a benchmark in terms of research on urban planning and land-use planning. And I am sure that in the near future, the more than 200 researchers from the five continents who will meet electronically these days, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, will be able to come and see our wonderful city in person at the next edition of the congress, which we will be happy to invite you to.*

**Noelia Arroyo**  
**Mayor of Cartagena**



## PREFACE

*This book includes the proceedings of the 1<sup>st</sup> international Conference on Future Challenges in Sustainable Urban Planning & Territorial Management held on January 17-19, 2022. Urban planning is an essential tool in our global society's journey towards sustainability. This tool is as important as the territorial management to execute the plans. Both planning and management must be efficient to achieve the goal of sustainability within the general framework of Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations. There is no B planet, so identifying urban & territorial challenges in our territories such as reaching sustainable mobility, diagnosing natural hazards and controlling land resource consumption is mandatory for our 21st century generation. Planning land uses which are compatible with the ecosystem services of the territory and managing them by public-private cooperation systems is a vast challenge for our global society. Human activities do not very frequently include the maintaining of ecosystem services of the territory among their objectives. Therefore, this field of research must help to guarantee the maintenance of natural resources, also called Natural Capital, necessary for social and economic activities of our global society. This conference aims to be a space to share research work, ideas, experiences, projects, etc. in this field of knowledge. We seek to enhance the concept that planning and management are subjects which include technological and social matters and their own methodologies. Laws, rules, and cultures of different countries around the world are, or can be, very diverse. But there is only one planet. Technologies are shared, methodologies to analyze territories are also communal to share experiences about the global goal of sustainability, so these events are a necessary way to build our joint future. We trust that the success of this first edition of the SUPTM conference (which has been attended by more than 200 researchers from the five continents) will be an opening step towards international collaboration and the dissemination of knowledge that is so important in this field of urban planning and territorial management. Finally, the chairs would like to acknowledge MDPI and the Sciforum organization for inviting us to manage this conference, and also the Technical University of Cartagena and its city Town Hall for their interest and support in this event.*



**Salvador García-Ayllón & José Luis Miralles**  
Chairs of the SUPTM 2022 conference

# CONTENTS

## INSTITUTIONAL GREETINGS

Beatriz Miguel. *Rector of the Technical University of Cartagena*

Noelia Arroyo. *Mayor of the city of Cartagena*

## PREFACE

Salvador García-Ayllón & José Luis Miralles. *Chairs of the SUPTM 2022 conference*

## KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Prof. Albert Saiz. *Massachusetts Institute of Technology (opening lecture)*

Prof. Fernando Gaja. *Polytechnic University of Valencia (closure lecture)*

## CONFERENCE SESSIONS

### CITY PLANNING SESSIONS

Ola Qasseer. *The Role of Transportation Networks in Enforcing the City Centrality; A case study of Budapest City.*

Benjamin Obe. *A Systematic Review of Urban Heat Islands Studies in West Africa.*

Maryam Fayyaz, Esther González-González, Soledad Nogués. *Autonomous vehicles in sustainable cities: Reclaiming public spaces for people.*

Mahdi Shakibamanesh. *An introduction to Smart City in the service of Urban Crisis Management.*

Ekaterina Kubyshkina, Egor Kotov. *Peak-load pricing and justice in public transport: using smart-card data for impact assessment of Early Bird discount in Moscow Metro.*

Moharraf Hossain, Ashik Ali Murad, Tasnim Jahan, Ferdous Farhana Huq, Muhaiminul Islam. *The impact of urban sprawl in sub urban area of Rajshahi: A study in Kashiadanga area.*

Maria-Jose Marquez-Ballesteros, Daniel Navas-Carrillo. *Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans in Spain: a critical analysis.*

Azra Zainab Shabbir Ahamed. *Provisions for Urban Social Sustainability in City Planning: A conceptual framework.*

Salvador García-Ayllón. *New perspectives for the diagnosis and planning of urban mobility after COVID-19: the case study of Cartagena.*

Shradha Chandan, Swati Sharma, Satish Pipralia, Ashwani Kumar. *Influence of Tourist Behavior Mapping in the Development of Pilgrim Cities.*

Márton Bagyura. *Urban planning in a Hungarian town after the red sludge disaster.*

Raúl Gálvez Tirado, Susy Milagros Torres Chicoma. *Open infrastructure's methodology to revitalize the Chiclayo's monumental urban area (Peru).*

Iveth Rodríguez De La Rosa, Eric Gielen, José-Sergio Palencia-Jiménez. *Relationships between urban form and mobility: gender and transport mode.*

Mara Ladu, Ginevra Balletto, Alessandra Milesi, Giuseppe Borruso, Gianfranco Fancello. *Urban enclaves and accessibility. The role of walkability in sustainable urban mobility planning.*

Simone Corrado, Luigi Santopietro, Francesco Scorza. *Municipal climate adaptation plans: an assessment of the benefit of Nature-Based Solutions for urban local flooding mitigation.*

Gulpreet Kaur, Sakshi Sahni. *Public Perception and Quality of Public Open Spaces- Case Study of City and Community Level Parks in Amritsar City.*

## TERRITORIAL MANAGEMENT SESSIONS

Alessandro Marucci, Lorena Fiorini, Lucia Saganeiti, Rosa Marina Donolo. *Indicators for monitoring the Sustainability of Transformations in Territorial Planning.*

Josep Lluís Miralles-Garcia. *The management of Natural Capital. The case of Valencian Country*

Gabriela Adriana Munguía Uribe, Pedro Joaquín Gutiérrez Yurrita. *Making sense of place in community gardens in Urban Landscape of Mexico City.*

Elena Enciso. *The concept of migratory emergency in territorial and urban planning: analysis of the Spanish Mediterranean coast.*

José Sergio Palencia, Eric Gielen, Rafael Ramón Temes, Josep Lluís Miralles. *Minimization of the territorial impact of housing on non-urban land in areas affected by flood hazard.*

Anna Serra-Llobet, John Radke. *From epic wildfires to epic flash floods: Rethinking environmental planning in an era of extremes.*

Francisco Gómez, Salvador García-Ayllón. *Analysis of the relationship between coastal development and the alteration of beach shorelines: a retrospective view based on spatial indicators.*

Ginevra Balletto, Mara Ladu, Alessandra Milesi, Tiziana Campisi, Giuseppe Borruso. *Walkability and city users. Critical analysis of opportunities and risks.*

Alfonso Bernal, Pedro Sánchez, Fernando Miguel García, Marcos Ros, María José Silvente. *Urban planning facing to dispersion in the traditional huertas of the Region de Murcia.*

María del Mar Cobo. *Rooting: peri-urban agroecology through territorial planning.*

Ángela Franco, Salvador García-Ayllón. *Urban policies as a factor of vulnerability to flooding in Mediterranean coastal areas: retrospective spatial analysis of the case study of the Region of Murcia.*

## ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING SESSIONS

Miguel Angel Ajuriaguerra, Alba Ramírez. *The recovery of non-residential vacant plots in southern Madrid districts through green infrastructure implementation.*

Anissa Bellil. *Assessing the ecological relevance of conservation planning using landscape graph modelling.*

Federica Isola, Federica Leone, Corrado Zoppi. *Ecological corridors and landscape planning: A study to develop a regional network of protected areas in Sardinia (Italy).*

Francesco Zullo, Bernardino Romano, Cristina Montaldi, Chiara Cattani. *Ecological connectivity efficiency: a study for Maiella National Park and Abruzzo, Lazio and Molise National Park.*

Rafael Córdoba, Lucas Martí. *Ecosystem Vulnerability due to Planning. The role of regulatory ecosystem contributions in the land planning.*

Francesca Leccis. *Beyond environmental protection and conservation: local-level implementation of the 2030 Agenda to deliver universal goals and targets. Lessons from Sardinia, Italy.*

Luigi Santopietro, Francesco Scorza. *Small CoM Municipalities and local climate-change responsive strategies.*

Enrique Mínguez. *Strategies for the renaturalization of tourist destinations: La Manga del Mar Menor (Spain).*

Andreea Melinescu. *Residents' perception and preferences with regard to fruit species in public spaces and private gardens.*

Gaia Turchetti. *Environmental monitoring of the historic city.*

Maria José Aguilar, Eric Gielen, María Concepción Vallés, Francisco Galiana, Gabriel Riutort-Mayol, Yaiza Pérez. *Evaluating limiting factors for people with disabilities using mobility assistive technologies to enjoy National Parks - Comparative findings between Canada and Spain.*

Abdulrahman A. Zawawi, Nicole Porter, Christopher D. Ives. *What influences the use of greenways as active transportation corridors?*

Alba Cristina Núñez Basantes. *The relationship between built environment and Station boardings for Quito's BRT.*

Anjali Saraswat, Satish Pipralia, Ashwani Kumar. *Sustainable Urbanisation: An Ecosystems Approach towards Future cities.*

Ginevra Balletto, Filippo Pavesi, Anna Richiedei, Michèle Pezzagno. *Method to Support Urban Planning for circular economy of aggregates (Sand/Gravel).*

Mara Ladu, Martina Marras. *Nature protection and local development: A methodological study implemented with reference to a natural park located in Sardinia (Italy).*

Shu-Hui Hung, Ju Hui Hsu. *Using the Artificial Intelligence Ecosystem Services (ARIES) model to explore the value of socio-economic ecosystems using the Jinshan Qingshui Wetland in Northern Taiwan as a case study.*

## SPATIAL ANALYSIS SESSIONS

Shruti Sidhu. *Analysis of land development potential using remote sensing for Kangra District, Himachal Pradesh, India.*

Preeti Jaiswal, Pooja Nigam, Satish Pipralia. *Evaluating Land Valuation Techniques and Urban Development Practices in India.*

Muhammad Mainuddin Patwary. *Spatial-temporal analysis of urban eco-environmental quality of an urban area using geo-spatial techniques: The case of Dhaka megacity, Bangladesh.*

Montaña Jiménez-Espada. *Geographical accessibility by bus to the University Hospital of Cáceres by means of GIS.*

Dan Narita. *Designing a Nature-based Transition for In-between Territories in the Greater Bay Area.*

Angela Pilogallo, Francesco Scorza. *Ecosystem Services Multifunctionality: an analytical framework to support sustainable spatial planning. Insights from the Italian case study.*

Álvaro Bernabeu-Bautista, Mariana Huskinson, Leticia Serrano-Estrada. *Reading urban transformation based on geolocated crowdsourced data.*

Attila Buzási, Berttina Szimonetta Jäger, Olivér Hortay. *Analyzing and mapping heatwave vulnerability and urban sustainability - the case of largest Hungarian cities.*

Lucia Chieffallo, Annunziata Palermo, Maria Francesca Viapiana. *Spatial analysis for territorial marginality mapping. GIS-based application to the case of southern and insular Italy.*

Hani Amir Aouissi, Alexandru-Ionut Petrisor, Aissam Gaagai, Mostefa Ababsa, Feriel Kheira Kebaili. *Geo-statistical Approaches to Study the Influence of Land Use on Avifauna in North Africa.*

Gloria Martínez. *Analysis and diagnostic tools to improve governance in the context of urban planning and territorial management.*

Sabrina Lai. *Synergies and trade-offs in ecosystem services' provision in Sardinia (Italy): A planning-oriented spatial assessment.*

## MISCELLANEOUS SESSIONS

Margarita Martínez-Díaz. *The gender perspective in sustainable urban planning.*

Mai Adel Marzouk. *Applicability of PV Rooftops Versus Agriculture Rooftops in the Residential Buildings of Nasr City, Cairo.*

Mariana Huskinson, Álvaro Bernabeu-Bautista, Leticia Serrano-Estrada. *A mixed-source approach to public participation for assessing urban accessibility of neighbourhood public spaces.*

Shu-Hui Hung, Yi-Ting Wang. *Implementing the 3E assessment model of sustainable development to investigate coastal pollution management: using PET recycling (bottle-to-fiber) as a case study.*

Neginsadat Mirvahedi, Abbas Doorudinia. *Three Decades of Research in Human mobility: A Scientometric Analysis.*

Ahmed Saleh. *Evaluation of heavy metals pollution in the soil of Helwan, Cairo, Egypt using magnetic and chemical analysis techniques.*

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*Proceedings*

# Ecological corridors and landscape planning: A study to develop a regional network of protected areas in Sardinia (Italy)

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**Abstract:** Ecological corridors (ECs) aim at establishing or maintaining ecological connectivity among habitat patches in terms of migration of wild species, climate change adaptation, and maintenance and restoration of ecological processes. In Sardinia, the Regional Landscape Plan (RLP) defines a spatial taxonomy of the region in relation to landscape components characterized by environmental relevance in order to establish protection levels. Building on previous research works, this study aims at defining and implementing a methodology to identify ECs connecting the Sardinian protected areas and at assessing the relations between ECs and the spatial taxonomy defined by the RLP.

**Keywords:** ecological corridors; regional landscape plan; protected areas

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## 1. Introduction

According to IUCN [1], ecological corridors aim at establishing or maintaining ecological connectivity among habitat patches in terms of genetic exchange, migration of wild species [2], climate change adaptation [3], maintenance and restoration of ecological processes [4] and mitigation of undesirable processes [5]. Moreover, connectivity strongly influences ecosystem services (ESs) provision [6]. For example, spatial biotic and abiotic flows affect regulating ESs, such as pollination and seed dispersal [7]. Several authors [8-9] claim that connectivity concerning ESs depends on land cover structure and spatial patterns such as location and physical continuity. Both land cover structure and spatial patterns influence connectivity, which is identified by Taylor et al. as «...the degree to which the landscape facilitates or impedes movement among resource patches» [10] (p. 571).

In Sardinia, an insular region of Italy, RLP approved by the Deliberation of the Sardinian Regional Government no. 36/7 of September 5, 2006, defines a spatial taxonomy of the region on the basis of landscape components characterized by environmental relevance (LCERs) in order to establish protection levels in relation to the value of nature and natural resources.

Building on Cannas' previous research work [11, 12], this study aims at: i. defining and implementing a methodology to identify ECs connecting the Sardinian protected areas; ii. assessing the relations between ECs and the spatial taxonomy defined by the RLP. By means of this methodology, the current RLP zoning code is analyzed in order to detect if, and to what extent, the present planning implementation code can be used to protect and enhance the effectiveness of ECs.

## 2. Area of study

Sardinia is one of the two largest Italian islands, with an area of around 24,000 km<sup>2</sup>.

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This study analyzes a set of protected areas conceptualized as the nodes of the Sardinian regional ecological network and identified as follows: i. regional parks, identified under the provisions of the Regional Law no. 31/1989; ii. publicly-managed forests, administered by the Regional Agency for Forests; iii. permanent oases of faunal protection, identified under the provisions of the Regional Law no. 23/1998; iv. Ramsar sites, designated under the Ramsar Convention; and, v. Natura 2000 sites, which include Sites of Community Interest (SCI) and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), established under the provisions of Directive no. 92/42/EEC (the "Habitats Directive"), and Special Protection Areas (SPA), designated by Directive no. 2009/147/EC (the "Birds Directive"). Marine protected areas and national parks are not there because the study only focuses on terrestrial contexts characterized by land cover changes.

### 3. Methodology

This study builds upon a methodology developed by Cannas and applied in previous studies [11,12] where ECs are mapped with reference to the metropolitan city of Cagliari and to the whole Sardinian Regions.

The methodological approach is structured into two main phases. The first phase concerns spatial identification of potential ECs based on the Least-cost path (LCP) and Cost-weighted distance (CWD) analyses. LCP and CWD identify connections between habitat patches that entail minimum resistance to movement and, as a consequence, paths characterized by the highest probability of species flows [13]. In a nutshell, the LCP and CWD analysis finds sequences of least-cost patches which minimize the cost-weighted distance between the nodes of a spatial network in terms of movement.

The first phase is structured into four steps as follows:

1. definition of a habitat suitability map based on findings shown in a report commissioned by the Sardinian regional administration [14], where scores related to habitat suitability are assigned to Sardinian Natura 2000 sites on the basis of the land cover classes identified by the Corine Land Cover (CLC) Taxonomy, and;
2. definition of an ecological integrity map based on Burkhard et al.'s work [15];
3. definition of a resistance map defined on the basis of the inverse of the sum of the habitat suitability and ecological integrity values, according to the approach proposed in a report of the European Environment Agency [16];
4. spatial identification of ECs and definition of a raster map of CWD values, through Linkage Mapper, a GIS tool.

**Table 1.** Definition and description of variables relating to the LCERs.

Variable	Description
CWD	Cost-weighted distance.
SV	Scrub vegetation in dry areas and wetlands
WL	Woodlands.
GR	Grasslands.
CC	Cork and chestnut woods.
ST	Specialized and tree crops.
AW	Artificial woods.
SH	Specialized herbaceous crops, agricultural and forest areas, and un-cultivated areas
AL	Altitude

In the second phase, the raster map of the CWD values is clustered into ten groups identified by the deciles of its distribution. Patches whose CWD values are lower than the second decile are identified as suitable to be included in an EC. The resulting map is overlaid with the LCERs reported in Table 1. A linear multiple regression model is used in order to assess the relation between patches' suitability to be included in ECs and the spatial taxonomy defined by the RLP.

The model takes the following form:

$$\text{CWD} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{SV} + \beta_2 \text{WL} + \beta_3 \text{GR} + \beta_4 \text{CC} + \beta_5 \text{ST} + \beta_6 \text{AW} + \beta_7 \text{SH} + \beta_8 \text{AL} \quad (1),$$

where:

- CWD is the dependent variable;
- SV, WL, GR, CC, ST, AW, SH are the explanatory variables;
- AL is a control variable.

#### 4. Results

Estimates of the multiple linear regression model are reported in Table 2. The control variable AL shows significant p-values and a positive sign. Therefore, patches characterized by lower CWD or higher connectivity are likely to occur in areas with comparatively lower altitude, such as flat areas, as expected.

The explanatory variables related to the LCERs are expressed as percentages of the patch areas. The estimates of the marginal effects on CWD are significant at 6.6%, with the exception of SV, which is only significant at 10.8 percent.

The results of the regression show that being identified as a LCER has a positive impact on the suitability of a patch to be part of an EC, since the percentage increase in each LCER is correlated with a decrease in CWD, with the exception of specialized and tree crops (ST), whose coefficient is positive and indicates that a 1 percent increase in ST at the regional level entails an average increase of about 7.7 meters in the average CWD of the ECs.

**Table 2.** Regression results.

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Deviation	t-statistic	p-value	Mean
SV	-2.77172	26,775.40	-1.60534	0.108428	16,962.44
WL	-7.20867	29,513.47	-4.16805	0.000031	18,038.76
GR	-5.80510	27,314.39	-3.35834	0.000785	18,879.67
CC	-6.91227	12,865.24	-3.49271	0.000479	3,190.58
ST	7.70003	11,326.36	3.69729	0.000218	3,107.70
AW	-5.33205	16,500.74	-2.85482	0.004309	4,721.13
SH	-3.16692	31,984.68	-1.84476	0.065081	23,207.82
AL	1.45191	275.76	22.37541	0.000000	365.36

As regards the remaining LCERs, wooded areas (WL) and cork and fruit chestnut woods (CC) are the most suitable to enhance the effectiveness of the ECs, with coefficients equal to 7.2 and 6.9 respectively, that implies an average ECs' CWD decrease of 7.2 meters and 6.9 meters related to a 1% increase at the regional level. Grasslands (GR) and artificial woods (AW) show positive and slightly lower impacts, since their coefficients are equal to 5.81 and 5.33 respectively. Finally, the marginal effects of the variables related to scrub vegetation in dry areas and wetlands (SV, coefficient equal to 2.77), and to specialized herbaceous crops, agricultural and forest areas, and uncultivated areas (SH, coefficient equal to 3.16), are decidedly lower.

#### 5. Conclusions

The estimates of model (1) help to assess whether, and to what extent, the current zoning rules of the RLP are suitable to implement an effective spatial system of ECs.

The transition of land uses from agriculture to forestry is associated to a decrease in CWD. For this to take place, public financial support is definitely needed to compensate the income loss of farmers. This is likely to occur, in terms of financial feasibility, as regards areas classed as SH (specialized herbaceous crops, agricultural and forest areas, and un-cultivated areas) and, to a greater extent, with reference to ST areas (specialized and tree crops), whereas transitions concerning agricultural intensive production, characterized by the highest rents, are unlikely, due to the often unaffordable public financial effort needed thereof.

In conclusion, spatial policies aimed at strengthening the effectiveness of regional networks of the natural protected areas through the protection and enhancement of ECs must be studied, defined and implemented on the basis of habitat quality, ecological integrity and health of ecosystems, with particular attention to land use conditions and transition opportunities.

**Author Contributions:** Federica Isola (F.I.), Federica Leone (F.L.), and Corrado Zoppi (C.Z.) collaboratively designed this study. Individual contributions are as follows: F.I. wrote Section 1 and 2; F.L. wrote Section 3 and 5; C.Z. wrote Section 4.

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**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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