Regional Studies Association
Research Today, Policy Tomorrow

RSA Research Network on Urban Policy for Sustainable Urban Manufacturing (UP-SUM) Network Kick-off Meeting

17 June 2026

Online/Hybrid in Gothenburg/Sweeden

Organised by G. Pelin Olcay, Marianna Dovidio, Jani Kozina, Sinem Yıldız

The event served as the first official kick-off meeting for our RSA funded research network. The meeting also aimed to deconstruct the theoretical frameworks underpinning the project, clarify country-specific conditions in urban manufacturing, and schedule future network activities and academic outputs.

A total of 10 participants attended the meeting, in person and online, including the organisers, representing 5 countries.

Because this was a collaborative kick-off meeting rather than a formal paper-presentation session, participants guided the discussions instead of formal presentations. Marianna Dovidio led key conceptual discussions on the ontological definition of the "city"; Jani Kozina on scale and post-socialist contexts; Stefan Gärtner on the relationship between urban manufacturing and residential areas; Jess Ferm on the sustainability transition; and Pelin Olcay on the dilemmas and approaches of local policymakers in Turkey.

Programme outline:

- Theoretical Deconstructions & Conceptual Queries: Discussions on the definition of urban manufacturing, the weight of sustainability, the impact of global megatrends, and the dilemmas policymakers face regarding retention policies.
- Project Strategy, Budget & Future Horizons: Strategising the allocation of the limited network budget and agreeing to combine existing research rather than conducting large-scale field studies, aiming to create synergies for future Horizon project applications.
- Action Plan & Task Allocation: Establishing the timeline for international field visits and setting deadlines for academic publications.

The participants agreed that urban manufacturing must be addressed through its multi-dimensional aspects, including economic, social, environmental, and cultural dimensions. Discussions highlighted the necessity of examining urban manufacturing spaces within the context of global megatrends, such as the "polycrisis", and taking into account different urban models. The meeting successfully concluded with a consensus on developing a collective Conceptual Position Paper in the first stage, followed by utilizing field visits for knowledge exchange to build a strong Research Proposal for future large-scale funding applications.

Future UP-SUM Events

- Field Visits and Case Studies: UK – online (November 2026), Milan/Italy (March/April 2027), Germany (November 2027), and Istanbul/Turkey (April 2028).
- Outputs & Publications: Working Paper 1 (Draft: March 2027), Conceptual Position Paper (Final: September 2027), Working Paper 2 (Final: June 2028), Comparative Journal Paper (Final: September 2028), Research Project Proposal (Final: October 2028), and a Final Report (Final: October 2028).

G. Pelin Olcay is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Urban Design and Landscape Architecture and the Director of the Urban Studies Application and Research Center at Istanbul Kent University. She studied urban and regional planning at Istanbul Technical University and completed her PhD in the same program. Olcay works in the fields of urban economics and local development. Her research particularly focuses on the development and transformation of manufacturing areas. She has conducted various studies on production and craft activities in the different industrial regions in Istanbul and its surround