

TRUST -
TRANSFORMATIVE
URBAN
STUDIES

**The City as text:
postcolonial
approaches to
urban
transformation**

International research
conferences
2022-2023

**Institut d'Urbanisme et de
Géographie Alpine, UGA**
14, Avenue Marie Reynoard,
38100 Grenoble

05 October 2022

2 pm – 5 pm, room U106, IUGA Grenoble

Introduction: The City as Text

Marta PAPPALARDO

"One should never confuse the city with the discourse that describes it." Italo Calvino, *The Invisible Cities*. How is this discourse constructed, and who are its authors? The course will present the cycle of international conferences in which researchers from different backgrounds and disciplines will narrate the city through their research. How is the city written, traced and imagined by its actors? What happens in the passage from reality to narrative?

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Marta Pappalardo, coordinator of the conference cycle, is an Architect, with a PhD in Urban Planning, currently researcher at the Institute of Urban Planning and Alpine Geography and Pacte Social Sciences Laboratory (Université Grenoble Alpes, CNRS, Science Po Grenoble). Her research focuses on the practices of occupation and management of energy-efficient buildings and on the governance of energy communities.

12 October 2022

2 pm – 4 pm, room G106, IUGA Grenoble

From Dumb cities to Smart cities: the challenges of digitalizing urban services

Kei TANIKAWA OBREGON

Megacity trends and environmental issues lead the increasing challenges of urban management. A heterogeneous framework of services and urban configurations composes different dynamics in complex urban systems (water, transportation, housing etc. In these contexts, economic growth, private mobility and carbon emissions are changing the paradigm into emerging local configurations. Innovations and rapid transformations are increasing the complexity of stakeholders and the governance of urban services. The circulation of urban practices and urban management models are common path denominators of globalization. A particular importance is given to the emerging use of technology and digitalization process (sociotechnical and sociospatial).

This conference gives a panorama of current research and give key factors and examples to understand the ongoing transitions. Using the example of the mobility sector, the future developments related to governance in urban areas are established by the convergence of the determinants of human activities.

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Kei Tanikawa Obregón is currently a PhD student in geography at the UMR 8586 Prodig, University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne. His work focuses on the governance and management of transport systems through the lens of digitization. His work focuses on a comparative analysis between Mexico City and Paris.

23 November 2022

2 pm – 4 pm, room G103 – Salle des actes, IUGA Grenoble

The South African Lens: Transformations through Dis-locations

Myriam HOUSSAY-HOLZSCHUCH

Starting from my own research experience in and on post-apartheid South African cities, I will use the South African case as an optical instrument to critically interrogate issues of theory, epistemology and positionality. Building on Southern Urbanism and Southern Theory, we will investigate the all-too-frequent binaries our scholarship uses uncritically. Exceptional cities vs. ordinary cities, and private/public space will be examined more in-depth.

The situatedness of knowledge requires that conceptual work - e.g. on public space as a notion - navigates dis-locations (or de/reterritorialization) carefully. It also requires reflexivity on one's own positionality - our positionality as individual researchers, e.g. my own, as a white French woman doing fieldwork in South African cities, or the positionality of our disciplines, as framed by national histories and positions.

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Myriam Houssay-Holzschuch is Professor at the Institute of Urban Planning and Alpine Geography in Grenoble, and Director of the "Social Justice" team of the Pacte research centre. Her research focuses on post-apartheid South Africa, and South African cities (especially Cape Town), from a social and political geography perspective, as well as on critical epistemologies and pedagogies.

14 December 2022

10 am – 12 pm, room G106, IUGA Grenoble

Green Cities and the Unending Return of Nature

Stéphane HERITIER

The very existence of nature in the city or the idea of bringing back nature to the city are hardly new ideas. The perception of the city as fundamentally distinct from nature has been a classic opposition in many geographic scholar traditions. Regrouping more than half of the world's population, cities and metropolis are still considered as concrete, steel and glass environments by most people. However, as the number of around 10,000 red foxes in the London metropolis suggests, the presence of plants or domestic, commensal and wild animals in cities, is reported to be undoubtedly part of urban and metropolis environments.

Official natures exist however under the name of urban parks or urban protected areas. Metropolis authorities promote green infrastructures in order to address local and global environmental challenges. Appreciated for the (ecosystem, cultural) services it provides, its regulating functions (e.g. of urban temperature) or for the attractiveness it offers to the metropolis, nature is used to develop supposedly economical solutions towards environmental threats. The lecture will be an opportunity to question this new frontier of urbanity and how public authorities or local citizen initiative partly convert and redesign urban environments.

Stéphane Héritier is Professor at the Institute of Urban Planning and Alpine Geography in Grenoble, and Director of GEOPOESICE Master program. His researches focus on Social Geography of the Environment and Political Ecology, Nature Protection, Environmental Humanities, Tourism and local development, mostly located in Americas, Australia and New Zealand.

12 January 2023

2.30 pm – 5.30 pm, room G209, IUGA Grenoble

Housing in the Margins: A conversation about precarity, formality and Southern Theory

Hanna HILBRANDT

Critical shortages of affordable housing force people into housing precarity across the globe. This talk starts from my recent book *Housing in the Margins*, which was published by Wiley in 2021, to explore unruly housing practices and their regulation in the context of the German housing crisis. Through ethnographic research on the ways in which Berliners dwell in allotment gardens despite a law that prohibits housing at these sites, I discuss how these gardeners negotiate the possibilities of residency with the local bureaucracy, gardening associations and amongst themselves.

This analysis highlights the contested terrain of enacting regulations and the exclusions that these negotiations entail. Building on postcolonial theory, anthropology of the state and critical legal geography, the book draws attention to the power of negotiations in the governance of urban space. On this basis the seminar seeks to discuss novel approach to theorizing the nexus of informality and the state in ways that bridge analytical divides between debates about Northern and Southern states.

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Hanna Hilbrandt is a Professor of Social and Cultural Geography at the University of Zurich. Her research explores marginality and exclusion in housing and urban development as well as socio-spatial inequalities in the context of global economic restructuring. Focusing predominantly on Mexico City and Berlin, her work pays close attention to the everyday politics of city-making and the structural constraints in which such practices are inscribed.

13 January 2023

2 pm – 4 pm, room G106, IUGA Grenoble

Decolonising European cities: some entry points

Claske DIKEMA

After the killing of George Floyd, structures and representations of white supremacy, including symbols, maps, and memorials became targets worldwide to contest racism nowadays. The tribute to white males who played a role in slavery and colonialism through statues and place names became objects of contestation. Contested monuments are therefore interesting starting points for analysing the racialized and gendered power relations and capitalist dynamics that shaped cities in the past and continue to shape them in the present. In this lecture I propose a globalized reading of some European cities, including Grenoble, Basel and Amsterdam and show how cities themselves or their residents were involved in colonial encounters and the slave trade from the 16th century onwards and how these histories are dealt with at present. If cities are partly shaped by colonial relations and if the coloniality of power is still relevant for these cities today, how can we conceive of decolonising urban landscapes?

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Claske Dijkema is Marie Skłodowska-Curie fellow at swisspeace and part-time lecturer at the University of Basel. She works with a geographies of peace approach applied to European cities confronted with the aftermaths of recurrent episodes of violence. During her PhD research at the University Grenoble-Alpes she developed a decolonial approach to marginalised-social housing neighbourhoods in France that deal with urban violence. Her research is currently taking a new direction in the question of spaces.

20 January 2023

10 am – 12 pm, room G106, IUGA Grenoble

Time, movement, urban space. The example of transit places: an urban asynchrony?

Giulia BUFFOLI

The presentation aims to question the spatial transformations of places of "asylum" in Europe in the 21st century: camps, settlements and other "*hors-lieux*" used as "refuges" (hotspots, reception centres, detention centres...). The aim is to analyse the relationship between these places and the contemporary city, and how the city is being transformed, or should be transformed, taking into account - or not - their existence. These urban phenomena are inscribed in a short time, with a "normatively" limited duration; however, their existence has an impact on the morphology of the city over a (more or less) long period. Talking about these places implies extracting them from their so-called "non-existence". We can indeed question a paradox: on the one hand, they are hidden in the social reality of many of the inhabitants who are their immediate contemporaries; on the other hand, they embody, at the same time, such a fixation that the media make them places of incarnation of major global issues (migrations, terrorism, geopolitical relations, etc.). We can also wonder about the erosion of traces or, on the contrary, their exaltation, which contribute, or not, to making them, if not places of memory, at least places of a pluralised memory, taking into account the personal or collective trajectories of which they are the receptacles.

Rather than considering them either as « *hors-lieux* » or as « *hauts-lieux* » (newsworthy and, therefore, ephemeral because they are "in the spotlight"), why don't we "cool down" the object? We could thus consider them as places that, like the other elements of the urban puzzle, (de)structure, organise and shape the city and the lives of those who live there. These questions seem to me to be all the more appropriate that migratory phenomena in Europe are most often managed as "crisis" or "emergency" phenomena to which are commonly attached the themes of "impossible management", "overflow" or "non-absorption". The multiplication of camps and places of refuge in Europe is therefore the most obvious sign of this "crisis". Kamel Dorai and Nicolas Puig, in their introduction to *L'urbanité des marges*¹, defines them as "interval places" that serve as breaks in the continuity of the city. Characterised by a specific temporality, one in which exile becomes waiting, these places are "intervals" because they are as much perimeters obeying particular social and spatial dynamics as they are "perimeters of time" that cover ways of living in this territory that are desynchronised or poorly synchronised in relation to the "urban pulsation".

The question of time seems to me to be a decisive entry point for reading the relationship between these places, whose nomenclature should first be explored in order to qualify them and the territories in which they are located. To write that these camps are perimeters of time is: 1) to state a reality since all micro-society obey temporal logics; 2) it is also, from my modest point of view, to try to go against this common sense by understanding this perimeters of time as a prism that allows us to "reveal" in counterpoint an "urban pulsation" that is so homogeneous that it condemns these "*hors-lieux*" to being perimeters of « *hors-temps* » urban. There are, however, contacts between these perimeters and their environment that go beyond the sole interface constituted by the camp's boundaries (the transport network, the local press in its dimension of constructing an urban identity, the names of the streets, contacts with actors from outside the camps, first and foremost the NGOs...). The time of the place of transit is an interweaving of individual temporalities according to the different personal trajectories; it also relies on their

¹ Dorai, Kamel ; Puig, Nicolas (eds.). 2018. *L'urbanité des marges. Migrants et réfugiés dans les villes du Proche-Orient*. Paris : Téraèdre.

temporary homogenisation (food distributions, showers, school at fixed hours...). This presentation questions the interactions between these temporalities and the urban fabric in its granular dimension.

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Giulia Buffoli is an HMONP architect, graduated from IUAV (Istituto Universitario di Architettura di Venezia) and ENSA (École nationale supérieure d'architecture) Paris-Belleville. She is currently a PhD fellow in her final year. Her thesis is co-tutored between the doctoral school of architecture in Venice and the doctoral program in geography at the university of Aix Marseille. Her research aims to explore the inscription of transit places in their immediate urban environment by paying particular attention to the question of temporalities.