

HUMAN GEOGRAPHIES: CITIES, REGIONS, ECONOMIES

Symposium #26 at the SWISS GEOSCIENCES MEETING 2022

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Sponsored by the Swiss Association for Geography (ASG)

This symposium is devoted to research that involves or interrogates the urban. Over three panel sessions, we invite contributions from urban, economic, and/or political geographers at any career stage. We welcome empirical, theoretical, or methodological interventions on (but not limited to) urbanizations, gentrifications, mobilities, neoliberalisms, contestations, exclusions, borderings, East/South/North comparative work, and more. Our goal is to create an inclusive atmosphere in which to present and engage in critical debates at multiple scales.

Deadline for submissions to all sessions is August 15th, 2022.

SESSION 1

Spaces of encounter: negotiating claims to urban public space

Organized by Prof. Patrick Rérat (patrick.rerat@unil.ch), Hannah Widmer (hannah.widmer@unil.ch), University of Lausanne

SESSION 2

Governance of the (Urban) Commons: Actors, Institutions, and Resources

Organized by Prof. Jean-David Gerber (jean-david.gerber@giub.unibe.ch), Dr. Deniz Ay (deniz.ay@giub.unibe.ch), Sarah Steinegger (sarah.steinegger@giub.unibe.ch), Jessica Verheij (jessica.verheij@giub.unibe.ch), University of Berne

SESSION 3

Infrastructures and transition (by invitation only)

Organized by Dr. Alexander Vorbrugg (alexander.vorbrugg@giub.unibe.ch), University of Berne & Dr. Jevgeniy Bluwstein (jevgeniy.bluwstein@unifr.ch), University of Fribourg

SESSION 1

Spaces of encounter: negotiating claims to urban public space

Panel organizers: Patrick Rérat & Hannah Widmer, University of Lausanne

Public space has long been recognised as a realm where encounters with others take place, including fleetingly passing someone as well as more meaningful interactions and planned activities like cultural events or demonstrations. Recently, the pandemic has sparked new interest in public space's capacity to provide space for encounters with like-minded people and strangers alike (Kasinitz 2020), and in its contribution to the physical and mental well-being of city dwellers. We understand public space as situated and processual (Qian 2020) and as a stage where power relations are constantly (re-)negotiated (Lefebvre 1991). It may provide space for functions such as leisure, commercial activity, and manifestations of political opinions, and it serves as a space of passage and a resource for mitigating the effects of climate change.

In this session, we will discuss the role of public space in providing space for social cohesion (Aelbrecht and Stevens 2019), non-commodified (Madanipour 2020) and intercultural encounters (Ganji and Rishbeth 2020), more convivial forms of mobility such as walking or cycling (te Brömmelstroet et al. 2017) as well as green and open space in compact cities (Mouratidis 2018). We are interested in the environmental and social factors, and concrete artifacts and their affordances (Davis 2020) that shape encounters in public space.

We are seeking empirical and theoretical contributions that address the following questions:

- How can inclusive public space be planned and designed?
- Which factors foster conviviality and diversity in public space?
- How is space negotiated between different groups of users? Which practices are encouraged, tolerated or rejected?
- What are challenges in transitioning car infrastructure to more sociable, walkable and cyclable streetscapes?
- How can public space contribute to making cities more resilient to climate change (fighting heat islands, desealing of surfaces, etc.)?
- What role may tactical urbanism play in reallocating public space?
- In what ways is the reallocation and reappropriation of space contested?

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- Kasinitz, P. (2020). Rending the “Cosmopolitan Canopy”: COVID–19 and Urban Public Space. *City & Community*, 19(3), 489–495. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cico.12516>
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SESSION 2

Governance of the (Urban) Commons: Actors, Institutions, and Resources

Panel organizers: Jean-David Gerber, Deniz Ay, Sarah Steinegger & Jessica Verheij, University of Berne

There is growing scholarly and political interest in commons as a mode of governance and provision mechanism based on collective needs, providing alternatives to competitive market mechanisms and state control. However, a prominent gap exists between different interpretations of the commons, depending on different schools of thought. A widely acknowledged neoinstitutionalist approach interprets the commons as a subtractable and non-excludable resource, i.e. common-pool resources. This approach focuses on identifying the institutions that can ensure sustainable resource use (Ostrom, 1990). Lately, a more activist understanding is focusing on the governance of commons and the practice of commoning as a means of decommodification and resistance against capitalist enclosure, in order to ‘reclaim the commons’ (Stavrides 2016). While the former approach has a strong analytical basis building on the seminal work of Ostrom, the latter has strong transformative potential, although a rather underdeveloped analytical basis (Caffentzis & Federici, 2014). Building on their respective strengths, this panel aims to bring these two approaches to commons and commoning together to discuss the theoretical and empirical grounds of self-governed common-property arrangements in cities and regions, forming the basis for alternative economies that prioritize the use value over the exchange value of collectively produced and socially reproduced resources.

We welcome theoretical and empirical contributions that aim to improve the conceptualization of commons. Empirical contributions that focus on the institutional settings of commons/ commoning in cities and regions, such as the role of planning and property in defining use and access rights to land; daily practices and processes of reclaiming commons through the decommodification of resources; and institutional conditions that advance or constrain commoning practices in urban or regional economies constitute the key points to be discussed in this panel.

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