



Parallel plenary 3A

Reshaping Urban Spaces

Tuesday 12 November, 09.30 – 11.00

IAS Common Ground

Chair / discussant: **Dr Balakrishnan Rajagopal**, Associate Professor of Law and Development, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

This session considers how processes of investment, law and the state are reshaping urban spaces, including: the financial and legal politics of property restitution; the ways in which refugee and humanitarian interventions are reshaping urban development politics; and the ways in which forms of colonial power configure displaceability.

Dr Joanna Kusiak

Joanna Kusiak is a Junior Research Fellow in Urban Studies at King's College, Cambridge, working with the departments of geography and architecture. Her work focuses on land, property and the role that legal technicalities play in shaping our cities. She is completing a book based on her PhD, titled *Orders of Chaos: Law, Land and Neoliberal Globalization in Warsaw*. Joanna's next project follows urban legal activism in its attempts to reinvent urban property regimes on more egalitarian terms, including new forms of democratic expropriation. She also investigates the feasibility of progressive, quasi-Machiavellian approaches to co-opting neoliberal urban systems.

Law as an urban frontier: Land struggles in Warsaw and Berlin

No urban conflict is more political than a land struggle. And nothing works more powerfully to depoliticize such conflicts than a legal ruling. Yet while the rule of law has emerged as a hegemonic tool of the modern state and capitalism, it also reproduces their internal contradictions. Based on my research in the cities of Warsaw and Berlin, this paper explores how urban movements undermine or co-opt the normative authority of the law to advance their political agendas. Both Warsaw tenants opposing dispossession-by-restitution and Berlin tenants seeking to expropriate corporate landlords have delved into the domain of legal technicalities, thus occupying the law rather than physically occupy the land. What are the potential gains and limits of such strategies?

Dr Romola Sanyal

Dr Sanyal is Associate Professor of Urban Geography at the Department of Geography and Environment, LSE. She joined LSE in 2013 from the Development Planning Unit at UCL. She has previously taught at Rice University, Texas, and Newcastle University. She is interested in architecture, urban geopolitics, urban theory, housing and citizenship rights. She has written on the politics of space in refugee settlements in the global South with a particular focus on Lebanon and India. Romola's current research work looks at the urbanization of

particular areas in Lebanon through humanitarian aid that has come in response to the Syrian refugee crisis. Dr Sanyal obtained her PhD at the University of California, Berkeley.

Humanitarian Urbanism: Experiments in Making Cities of Refuge

Displacement due to conflict has continued to grow through the 21st century and increasingly, those who are forcibly displaced are moving into urban areas rather than to camps. Humanitarian work has had to follow displaced populations into these spaces and find ways to support them whilst remaining politically neutral and maintaining “do-no-harm” principles. Cities are challenging environments for humanitarians who are largely unfamiliar and uncomfortable working in them. Locating displaced persons in urban environments- who would prefer to remain hidden- is already difficult; supporting them, particularly in informal settlements and amongst the urban poor is even more challenging. State and municipal governments either aid or add to the difficulties by supporting or restricting the rights of displaced people within their jurisdictions. Humanitarian organizations have to resort to ‘experimenting’ in urban environments and developing lessons for crises elsewhere. In this talk, I outline one such experiment and use it to unpack the politics of urban humanitarianism, the commodification of urban refugees as part of the humanitarian business, and the implications of these on urban and humanitarian futures.

Prof. Oren Yiftachel

Oren Yiftachel is Chair of Urban Studies at the Department of Geography and Environmental Development, Ben Gurion University of the Negev. He previously taught at urban planning, geography, political science and Middle East departments at a range of institutions, including: Curtin University, Australia; the Technion, Israel; the University of Pennsylvania, Columbia and UC Berkeley; University of Cape Town; and the University of Venice. He was a research fellow at RMIT, Melbourne; the US Institute of Peace, Washington DC; and the Van Leer Institute, Jerusalem. Professor Yiftachel has worked on critical theories of space and power; minorities and public policy; and ‘ethnocratic’ societies and land regimes. He is currently working on three main research projects: the spatial transformation of Israel/Palestine; the geography of ethnocratic power structures; and the various shades of the ‘grey city’ using a comparative international perspective.

Nationalizing the Urban Frontier: A Political Geography of Polarisation and Displacement

Nationalism and urban studies have developed into two of the most important fields of research in the social science. Yet these fields rarely converse, leaving the interaction between nationalism and urbanism unexplored and under-theorised. Such ‘conversation’ is more needed than ever, given the rapid rate of urbanisation and the ‘return’ of (neo)nationalism in recent years.

The lecture explores the frontier of such interactions by focusing on the emergence of a new urban political geography marked by double polarisation and new forms of coloniality, born of the ‘friction’ of globalising urbanism and neo-nationalism. These processes, it is argued, run against most dominant urban theories, framing the city as a ‘post-political’ space, drawn within, and a process of ‘planetary’ urbanisation and globalising neoliberalism.

Neo-nationalism and state politics appear to create a far more contentious political geography of polarisation, which emerges on two key axes: (a) between metropolitan and country regions (including regional cities); and (b) within metropolitan regions.

The lecture analyses the impact of these polarisations on the remaking of contemporary 'metrozenship'. Drawing on comparative analysis of international examples, it examines the nature and influence of neo-nationalism and globalising urbanism on migration, land, housing, bordering and development policies, and on the changing patterns of right to the city. The analysis particularly focuses on the rise of displacement, and the expanding condition of displaceability, as hallmarks of the new urban order of 'separate and unequal'.