



**European Sociological Association
Research Network 37 (Urban Sociology)
IV Midterm Conference**

***Urban Theory and Urban Praxis:
Past, Present and Possible Futures***

Bologna, 27th-29th of January 2021 (Online conference)

Organized by:

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Jan Üblacker (EBZ Business School - Bochum)

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The conference will be hosted by the University of Bologna and held online using a Zoom platform provided by ESA.

Conference Presentation

Exactly one hundred years ago, in 1920, the world was finally resurfacing from a devastating global health crisis. Misleadingly, albeit too commonly known as the ‘1918 Spanish Flu’, this deadly influenza pandemic – arguably the most severe one in modern history – lasted over two years, infected an estimated 500 million people, approximately one-third of the world’s population at the time, and caused an estimated death of more than 50 million people. Roughly one century later, we find ourselves amidst another pandemic threat, one whose social consequences we are still to fully comprehend, and whose obvious discrepancies and all too alarming similarities to the global virulent outbreak of one century ago invites sociological questions about modernity, globalization, urbanization, and social change and persistence. Has the course of social change in the last century been such that all and any similarities between the two pandemic outbreaks are little more than flukes? Or are these similarities a manifestation of Karl Marx’s contention in the *Eighteenth Brumaire* (1852) that history is set to repeat itself “first as tragedy, then as farce”?

2020 also commemorates the 100th anniversary of the death of Max Weber. Unquestionably recognized as one of the forefathers of Western Sociology, Weber has inspired the imagination and scholarship of generations of social scientists, regardless of epistemological traditions, methodological boundaries, regions of study, or fields of interest. Urban sociologists are not an exception. In fact, 2021 – the year in which this conference will be held – marks the centennial anniversary of yet another landmark: the posthumous publication of Max Weber’s edit-ed volume on *The City*, a pivotal work for the (at the time) expanding field of Urban Sociology, where Weber tried to outline the foundations of his systematic theory of urbanism and urban development.

We take the occasion of these centennial landmarks to reflect about the past, present, and future of cities and urban societies, urban theories and urban practices, through and beyond the works of Weber. The last century has provided us with a wealth of theoretical perspectives on the city and its development, from the ecological theories of the Chicago School, through neo-Marxist and political economic approaches, to the more recent rise of post-structural, postmodern, and postcolonial urban studies. Cities have changed greatly in the last century, and so have our ways of theoretically conceptualizing, methodologically approaching, and pragmatically acting upon cities. And, as the present pandemic situation shows all too well, cities keep changing every day, and it will continue to do so in the future, creating a continuous demand for the recon-sideration and redefinition of urban theories and urban practices.

CONFERENCE PROGRAM DAY BY DAY

WEDNESDAY 01.27.2021	8
KEYNOTE SPEECH:	8
GIAMPAOLO NUVOLATI (UNIVERSITY OF MILANO-BICOCCA)	8
<i>DOES THE CITY STILL EXIST? IS URBAN SOCIOLOGY ALIVE?</i>	8
<i>PROVOCATIONS REGARDING OUR DISCIPLINE</i>	8
2 - BETWEEN OLD URBAN INEQUALITIES AND NEW URBAN OPPORTUNITIES (PANEL 1)	9
NEW TOURIST REGIONAL STRATEGIES IN THE COVID-19 TIME. THE APULIA CASE STUDY	9
BEYOND THE GENTRIFIER STEREOTYPES:	9
AN APPROACH ON LIFESTYLES OF THOSE WHO CHOOSE TO LIVE IN THE CITY CENTER	9
VAGABONDAGE AND THE RIGHT TO THE CITY	10
CARE-NETWORKS, RESISTANCE AND SELF-ORGANIZATION: TRANS SEX WORKERS' STRUGGLE IN URBAN TURKEY	10
4 - FROM NEIGHBORHOOD TO COMMUNITY, OR FROM COMMUNITY TO NEIGHBORHOOD?	11
(PANEL "URBAN ETHNOGRAPHIES")	11
VISUALIZING BELONGING IN URBAN SPACES:	11
CITIZEN REMAPPING OF A MULTICULTURAL NEIGHBORHOOD	11
THE ROLE OF THE QUALITY OF URBAN ENVIRONMENT IN THE PROPENSITY FOR COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION: THE CASE OF THREE NEIGHBORHOODS IN MILAN, ITALY	11
HOMOSEXUAL NEIGHBORHOODS: PLACES OF INCLUSIVENESS, INTEGRATION AND TOURIST APPEAL	12
5 - IN/EXCLUSION AT THE FESTIVAL CITY	12
EXCLUSIONARY IMPLICATIONS OF CIVIC EVENTS WITH INCLUSIVE GOALS.	12
CULTURAL POWER AND ASSOCIATIVE STYLES	12
FESTIVALS OF LIGHT, BETWEEN CREATIVITY AND CITY BRANDING	13
ECHOES OF EQUALITY. NEGOTIATIONS OF AUDIENCE DYNAMICS IN EQUALITY-THEMED EVENTS IN HULL UK CITY OF CULTURE 2017	13
8 - NEW PATHWAYS OF ECOLOGICAL GENTRIFICATION IN EUROPE?	14
MANTOVA HUB: A POTENTIAL CASE OF BLUE GENTRIFICATION?	14
URBAN DYNAMICS, LAND USE CHANGE AND ECOLOGICAL GENTRIFICATION: A DUTCH CASE STUDY	15
URBAN DENSIFICATION AND DISPLACEMENT PRESSURE:	15
NEW PERSPECTIVES ON ECOLOGICAL GENTRIFICATION	15
SEEDS OF ECO-GENTRIFICATION IN THE MIDDLE SIZE RIVERTOWNS OF PO VALLEY	16
THURSDAY 01.28.2021	16
9 - THE TOURIST CITY: OPPORTUNITIES, CHALLENGES AND CONFLICTS	16
TOURIST PLATFORMIZATION: A LOOK TO THE CASE OF MILAN	17
TOURISM IN A PERIPHERAL TERRITORY IN THE METROPOLITAN AREA OF LISBON	17
RESIDING IN THE HEART OF TOURISM.	18
POST-GENTRIFICATION ATTEMPTS TO PRESERVE HERITAGE AND LIFE IN THE OLD TOWN OF TALLINN	18
TEMPORARY HOUSING AND PERSISTENT PROBLEMS: URBAN ATTRACTIVE IN A POST PANDEMIC ERA	19
MICRO-GEOGRAPHIES OF CRIME AND FEAR IN BARCELONA:	19
SEEKING A RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN URBAN MOBILITIES AND PEOPLE INSECURITIES	19
4 - FROM NEIGHBORHOOD TO COMMUNITY, OR FROM COMMUNITY TO NEIGHBORHOOD?	20

(PANEL “IN SEARCH FOR THE COMMUNITY: LOCAL STRUGGLES IN THE GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE”)	20
MOBILIZATION AND POLITICIZATION OF INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS IN THE FACE OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS:	
THE PROTEST MOVEMENTS OF RESIDENTS OF AL-WARRAQ ISLAND NEIGHBORHOOD IN CAIRO (1998 - 2018)	20
SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF AND TRANSNATIONAL IDENTITIES IN COMMUNITY BUILDING PROCESSES:	
A CASE STUDY OF TURKISH MUSLIM WOMEN IN BERLIN NEIGHBORHOODS	21
RECLAIMING THE CITIES IN THE WESTERN BALKANS:	21
FROM RIGHT TO THE CITY GROUPS TO MUNICIPALIST PLATFORMS	21
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NEIGHBOURHOOD AND COMMUNITY FORMATION:	22
THE CASE OF A FORMER INFORMAL SETTLEMENT IN MEXICO CITY	22
1 – ARTISTIC INTERVENTIONS IN URBAN SPACE	23
«POLITICAL PORNOGRAPHY» OR EMANCIPATORY POPULISM? THE CENTER FOR POLITICAL BEAUTY	23
(ZENTRUM FÜR POLITISCHE SCHÖNHEIT) AND ITS MULTI-LAYERED CHOREOGRAPHY OF THE PUBLIC SPHERE	23
HOW MUCH DO CITIES WANT TO CONTROL THEIR PUBLIC SPACES? A LOOK INTO MURAL REGULATION	23
THE CAPACITY OF STREET ART OF SPREAD OUT THE MESSAGE OF THE PREVENTION ON THE COVID-19	24
HOW TO SURVIVE THE DAY? PUBLIC SCHNITZEL, BUS TRAFFIC AND OTHER ESCAPE ATTEMPTS	25
12 – URBAN REGENERATION: POLICIES AND EFFECTS (PANEL 1)	25
THE REGENERATION OF INDUSTRIAL NEIGHBOURHOODS TOWARDS	26
THE CREATION OF NEW PROFIT-ORIENTED AREAS OF CENTRALITY.	26
A COMPARISON BETWEEN BARCELONA'S POBLENOU AND BOLOGNA'S BOLOGNINA	26
REGENERATING THE POST-INDUSTRIAL CITY BY FOSTERING INNOVATION?	26
THE CASE OF THE POLO UNIVERSITARIO NAPOLI EST IN SAN GIOVANNI A TEDUCCIO	26
HOUSING PROPERTY AND NEIGHBORHOOD INTERACTION UNDER URBAN RENEWAL: THE OUTCOMES IN URBAN CHINA	27
REGENERATION AND/OR GENTRIFICATION: THE CASE OF AURORA NEIGHBORHOOD IN TURIN	27
4 - FROM NEIGHBORHOOD TO COMMUNITY, OR FROM COMMUNITY TO NEIGHBORHOOD?	28
(PANEL “NEIGHBORHOODS, COMMUNITIES, NEOLIBERAL URBANIZATION AND BEYOND”)	28
RE-DOING CARE PRACTICES THROUGH MATERIALITIES.	28
SOME EXAMPLES FROM POLAND’S BIG CITIES NEIGHBOURHOODS	28
TRAJECTORIES IN MIDDLE CLASS SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOODS IN THE LISBON METROPOLITAN AREA	29
COMMUNITY AND REPRESSION IN NEW BUILT NEIGHBOURHOODS:	29
RE-DISCUSSING SOCIAL CONTROL IN ENGAGED NEIGHBOURHOOD COMMUNITIES	29
PLEASURES AND PAINS OF URBAN RESTRUCTURING:	30
HOUSING PRACTICES AND SYMBOLIC VIOLENCE IN CENTRAL VILNIUS	30
13 – HOUSING INFORMALITY IN THE GLOBAL NORTH: A SOCIO-HISTORICAL APPROACH	30
INFORMAL HOUSING FOR INFORMAL WORKERS IN WEALTHY GENEVA	30
THE REGULARIZATION OF THE “BORGATE” OF ROME AT THE INTERSECTION BETWEEN MODERNITY AND TRADITION	31
UNPLANNED HOMES: “ZEMĽÁNKA” AS A SPECIFIC OBJECT OF SOVIET HOUSING INFORMALITY	32
FROM HOUSING CRISIS TO HOUSING JUSTICE	32
12 – URBAN REGENERATION: POLICIES AND EFFECTS (PANEL 2)	33
CITY AS A COMMODITY OR A RIGHT:	33
THE DILEMMA OF URBAN REGENERATION IN BEIJING’S HISTORIC AREA	33
URBAN INEQUALITIES OF A ‘SMART’ INDIA:	33
AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF CLASS, GENDERED AND SPATIAL POLITICS IN URBAN INDIA	33
MAKING SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY ‘DOABLE’ IN URBAN PLANNING: EXPLORING THE LEGITIMACY OF KNOWLEDGE	
INTEGRATION WHEN DEALING WITH GOAL CONFLICTS IN THE RIVERCITY GOTHENBURG	34
15 – REWRITING BELONGING AND IDENTITY THROUGH URBAN SPACES: EVERYDAY CITY IN TURBULENT TIMES	
(PANEL “CO-EXISTENCE AND COMPETING IDENTITIES IN THE CITY-SPACE”)	34
REIMAGING THE URBAN FUTURE IN TARANTO, ITALY: HOW CREATIVE WORK CONTRIBUTES TO THE URBAN IDENTITY	35

SEISMOGRAPH OF COEXISTENCE: ON THE IMPORTANCE OF GREETING IN HETEROGENEOUS NEIGHBORHOODS	35
MY CITY IS NOT ANYMORE MY CITY: THE ROLE OF NOSTALGIA IN CITY CONFLICTS AND URBAN IDENTITIES	36
BOOKS AND COVERS: CONTENDING IDENTITIES AND SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN URBAN LOCAL LIBRARIES	36
2 - BETWEEN OLD URBAN INEQUALITIES AND NEW URBAN OPPORTUNITIES (PANEL 2)	37
OPEN CITY: A POST SOCIALIST CITY TBILISI	37
FEARING DIFFERENCE:	38
THE IMPACT OF ETHNIC COMPOSITION ON SAFETY PERCEPTION IN THE MILANESE URBAN CONTEXT	38
A SMALL PLACE FOR MY OWN: SEARCHING QUALITIES OF HOME IN INFORMAL HOUSING	38
SPATIAL PERSPECTIVES ON TRANSNATIONALISM. RESULTS FROM A RESEARCH PROJECT IN PLOVDIV-STOLIPINOVO	39
15 – REWRITING BELONGING AND IDENTITY THROUGH URBAN SPACES: EVERYDAY CITY IN TURBULENT TIMES (PANEL “THE URBAN STREET AND STREET CULTURE”)	39
POSTSOCIALISM, CULTURAL MEMORY AND URBAN PUBLIC SPACE:	40
AN IDEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE ON STREET NAMES	40
WALKING AND WANDERING: STREETS AS POLITICAL SPACE OF DESIRE	40
POST-SOCIALIST CHANGES OF URBAN NOMENCLATURE:	41
A QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF STREET RENAMING IN THREE ROMANIAN CITIES	41
FROM HARD WORK TO SPRITZ RITUALS, IN HOGAN SHOES: DESIGNING THE SOCIO-SPATIAL PROFILE OF THE ENTREPRENEURIAL CLASS OF THE NORTHEAST ITALIAN REGION’S WIDESPREAD CITY (CITTÀ DIFFUSA) THROUGH NON-CONVENTIONAL NARRATIONS	41
2 - BETWEEN OLD URBAN INEQUALITIES AND NEW URBAN OPPORTUNITIES (PANEL 3)	42
REFUGEE FLOWS AND INSTITUTIONAL CHANGES:	42
BETWEEN LOCAL POLICIES, URBAN PRACTICES AND SPATIAL SEGREGATION IN GREEK CITIES	42
PERSPECTIVES ON THE PREVENTION OF RADICALIZATION. EMPIRICAL RESULTS FROM GERMANY	43
RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL STANDARDS IN A MIDDLE-CLASS NEIGHBORHOOD IN BELO HORIZONTE, BRAZIL	43
HOW HAVE NEIGHBOURS’ RELATIONSHIPS AND THE USE OF SHARED SPACE PLAYED OUT DURING THE COVID-19 EMERGENCY? AN EXPLORATION OF THE SOLIDARITY INITIATIVES IN THE MILAN-BASED SOCIAL HOUSING PROJECT OSPITALITÀ SOLIDALE	44
PORT CITIES, CULTURAL CITIES? THE SYMBOLIC IMPACTS OF CULTURE-LED URBAN REGENERATION ON PORT-CITY RELATIONSHIPS ACROSS EUROPE	44
17 - RESIDENTIAL SEGREGATION AND THE STUDY OF SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF TOWNS AND METROPOLISES. EMPIRICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL ADVANCES IN URBAN SOCIOLOGY (PANEL 1)	45
SEGREGATION AND SOCIO-SPATIAL STRUCTURE IN BRAZILIAN METROPOLITAN REGIONS	45
DYNAMICS OF NEIGHBORHOOD SEGREGATION AND LAND VALUES IN URBAN AREAS	46
HOW REPRESENTATIONS ABOUT URBAN SPATIAL SEGREGATION AND SCHOOL SEGREGATION MUTUALLY REINFORCE EACH OTHER	46
PERIPHERAL DIFFUSION AND CONCENTRATIONS:	47
THE RESIDENTIAL DYNAMICS OF FOREIGN POPULATION IN BOLOGNA AND MILAN	47
19. URBAN PRACTICES AND URBAN INSTITUTIONS: THOUGHTS ON SEGREGATION AND THE SPATIALITY OF EVERYDAY RESOURCE ORGANIZATION, SOCIAL NETWORKS AND SOCIAL CAPITAL	48
QUALITY OF LIFE OF INTRA - EU MIGRANT FAMILIES IN VIENNA: CHILDREN, SPACES AND SOCIAL TIES	48
INFORMAL TACTICS, GENDERED SPACES AND MODES OF SUBVERSION:	49
WOMEN NAVIGATING ISTANBUL’S PUBLIC SPACE	49
THE ROLE OF INFORMAL SOCIAL CAPITAL IN SHRINKING CITIES:	49
CONCEPTUAL AND EMPIRICAL CHALLENGES	49
THE EFFECTS OF INDIVIDUALS’ NEIGHBOURHOOD HISTORIES ON EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT	50
KEYNOTE SPEECH: TERRY CLARK, SCENES TRANSFORM CITIES	51
ESA RN37 BUSINESS MEETING	51
FRIDAY 01.29.2021	51

17 - RESIDENTIAL SEGREGATION AND THE STUDY OF SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF TOWNS AND METROPOLISES. EMPIRICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL ADVANCES IN URBAN SOCIOLOGY (PANEL 2)	51
MEASURING URBAN SEGREGATION THROUGH HOUSING MARKETS	52
DISPARITIES IN LIVING CONDITIONS BETWEEN CITY CENTERS AND SHRINKING SUBURBS:	52
A CASE STUDY OF SUPER-AGING AND POST-GROWTH JAPAN	52
GENERATIONAL DIVIDES IN HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES AND INCREASING RESIDENTIAL AGE SEGREGATION: EVIDENCE FROM THE UK	53
IT NEVER RAINS BUT IT POURS. RE-EMERGING SOCIAL INEQUALITIES IN CITY CENTRES: THE CASE OF BARCELONA	54
18 - WELCOMING SPACES? OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR NEWCOMERS (ROUNDTABLE)	54
3 - THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES FOR THE URBAN SOCIOLOGY (PANEL 1)	55
SOCIOGRAPHIES IN CONTEMPORARY URBAN SPACE	55
TOWARDS A GEOGRAPHY OF THE EPHEMERAL:	56
ETHNOGRAPHY OF AN OCCUPIED SPACE IN MILAN, ITALY	56
DESIRE PATHS: A WAY OF WALKING	57
IN SEARCH FOR THE "REAL":	57
DEVELOPING A CONCEPT OF AUTHENTICITY FOR RESEARCHING THE CITIES INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE	57
21. SOCIAL INNOVATION IN THE CITIES: POLITICS, POLICIES AND ACTORS (PANEL 1)	58
THE CULTURE OF CORPORATE SOCIAL INNOVATION	58
COMMUNITY-BASED ENTERPRISES IN URBAN AREAS:	58
NEW MODELS OF REGENERATION AND SOCIAL INNOVATION	58
SOCIAL INNOVATION BETWEEN MICRO-MECHANISMS OF REGULATION AND SPATIAL ISSUES:	59
A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON COMMUNITIES OF RENEWABLE ENERGY IN NEW AQUITAINE (FRANCE)	59
TOWARDS DIFFERENT FORMS OF SOCIAL URBANISM:	60
SOCIAL INNOVATION AND INFORMAL URBAN PRACTICES IN ROME	60
3 - THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES FOR THE URBAN SOCIOLOGY (PANEL 2)	60
OBSERVING THE PRACTICE OF LITTERING IN THE CITY: THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS	61
DISCUSSING THE RELATION BETWEEN THE AUTHORITY, SPACE	61
AND EVERYDAY LIFE THROUGH HETEROTOPIA SPACES: THE CASE OF ISTANBUL	61
NEIGHBORHOOD STUDIES IN BELO HORIZONTE, BRAZIL:	62
A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF ACADEMIC PUBLICATIONS IN THE LAST 30 YEARS	62
EXPLORING SOCIAL COHESION IN THE DIGITAL SPHERE:	62
EVIDENCE FROM A MIXED-METHODS MULTI-SITED STUDY IN GERMAN RURAL AREAS	62
21. SOCIAL INNOVATION IN THE CITIES: POLITICS, POLICIES AND ACTORS (PANEL 2)	63
UNDER THE VEIL OF URBAN SOCIAL INNOVATION:	63
COMMODIFICATION OF SOCIAL LIFE AND PRIVATIZATION OF THE PUBLIC CITY	63
COLLABORATIVE HOUSING AS SOCIAL INNOVATION IN BARCELONA AND CATALONIA:	64
A SOCIAL CAPITAL ANALYSIS OF CITIZEN-GOVERNMENT ALLIANCES AND NETWORKS	64
SOCIAL EFFECTS, PROBLEMS AND OBSTACLES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SMART CITY TECHNOLOGIES:	
PERCEPTION OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES, IT BUSINESSMEN, URBAN RESEARCHERS AND CITIZENS OF NOVOSIBIRSK, RUSSIA	64
AN AMBIGUOUS SOCIAL INNOVATION. FOUNDATIONS AND WELFARE PROGRAMS IN URBAN CONTEXTS	65
22. RESPONSIBLE CITIES: IMAGINARIES, PRACTICES AND POLICIES IN A CHALLENGING ERA	65
COVID 19 IN MADRID (SPAIN): IMAGINARIES, PRACTICES, AND POLICIES	66
LOCAL COMMUNITIES RE-IMAGINING JUST CITIES:	66
INSIGHTS FROM THE FAIRTRADE TOWNS MOVEMENT IN THE UK	66
POLICY WORK PRACTICES AND IMAGINARIES TOWARDS THE DECARBONISED CITY OF THE FUTURE: .	67
THE CASE OF VALENCIA	67
POTENTIAL OF CO-PRODUCED URBAN NARRATIVES	67

DEVELOPING A MODERN WELFARE AND COOPERATION PARADIGM	68
24 - MIGRATIONS, URBAN TRANSFORMATIONS AND ICT SOLUTIONS	69
ROUNDTABLE WITH SESSION CHAIRS	70
KEYNOTE SPEECH: AYSE CAGLAR, <i>MIGRANTS WITHIN CITY-MAKING PROCESSES: LOOKING THROUGH THE LENS OF DISEMPOWERED CITIES</i>	70

practices can produce (minimum) qualities of home, it compares today's co-living with its historical functional equivalents of small and shared living: the single-room occupancy hotels, boarding houses or special hostels for singles and workers. We know that informal practices were and are used to realize housing qualities bottom-up (to adapt and maximize use value) within housing conditions where profit and control are maximized top-down formally and informally. Historical accounts generally problematize the precarious conditions of such poor and informal housing. But some studies also recognize therein qualities of home that users can not have anywhere else. Tracing such nuanced accounts of ambiguity, the paper presents a literature review of historical and contemporary small and shared living in Western Europe and the US. The review identifies which criteria researchers use to recognize minimum qualities of home, e.g. shelter, privacy, dignity, autonomy, standards, centrality. Accounting for the historical changes of the meanings of home (e.g. the shift from discipline to self-discipline), this review provides a conceptual mapping of historical housing forms and practices to offer clues for how and to what end we can inquire the changing boundaries of informal housing in today's small and shared living.

Katrin Rosenberger (FH Münster, katrin.rosenberger@fh-muenster.de)

Spatial perspectives on transnationalism. Results from a research project in Plovdiv-Stolipinovo

The entry of Bulgaria and Romania into the EU increased especially transnational pattern of migration. In Germany, for example, this has led to excessive demands in many communes because the migrating people only live and work within those communes for a certain period of time, in order to escape the prevailing poverty in their own country. Since we have no funded knowledge, as to why the people of these countries come to Germany and then leave again, we implemented a field research in Stolipinovo, Bulgaria. Stolipinovo is the largest segregated Roma community inside of the EU. The people in the neighborhood suffer from absolute poverty and discrimination by the majority Bulgarians and especially the bad image of their residence has a serious effect to the life of the Roma. In a bundle of studies, phenomena like poverty, violence, transnational family life and poverty were addressed. The contribution focus on the construction of transnational social spaces under the conditions of segregation and poverty. Results show that residents in Stolipinovo suffer from poverty in their own country and this affects their everyday life as well as the situation on the labor market. This spatial dimension of exclusion caused the decision of many people of the community to migrate to specific neighborhoods in other countries but coming back to Stolipinovo on an irregular basis. All in all, because of poverty and discrimination, transnational social spaces were formed and those do effect family life. In this perspective, the spatial dimension of transnationalism is analytically helpful to understand strategies to escape from poverty and discrimination but also weaken family relations and community bases solidarity.

14.00
15.45

SESSIONS

15 – Rewriting belonging and identity through urban spaces: everyday city in turbulent times (Panel “The urban street and street culture”)

<https://zoom.us/j/93862463797?pwd=eFJiUjRzUE8rSTNNaVhIRIRZQnBaZz09>

Chairs

Ipek Demirsu (University of Padua, ipek.demirsudibiase@phd.unipd.it)

Fabio Bertoni (University of Cagliari, fabio.bertoni88@gmail.com)

Presentations

Jelena Božilović (University of Niš, jelena.bozilovic@filfak.ni.ac.rs)

Jelena Petkovic (University of Niš, jelena.petkovic@filfak.ni.ac.rs)

***Postsocialism, cultural memory and urban public space:
an ideological perspective on street names***

The subject matter of this paper is an analysis of an ideological perspective on the names of city streets. Its starting point is the fact that a change in official state ideology has multiple manifestations, some of which pertain to urban public spaces. By naming streets, squares, public institutions, erecting monuments, every government strives to legitimize its order and to provide a more solid foundation for its own ideologies. Following the dissolution of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRJ), a period of post-socialism ensued on the territories of the former republics and provinces, which for Serbia meant a process of revising the past with the aim of wiping the slate clean of memories of everything Yugoslav-related. In the context of the deconstruction of the previous supranational identity, it marked the beginning of the affirmation of individuals and events from Serbian history which refer to its medieval past, as well as periods in history prior to the creation of Yugoslavia. Accordingly, the wave of revisions spread engulfed the names of city streets as well, which were then given names of influential individuals from the aforementioned periods in history. It is interesting, however, that irrespective of such changes, in the names of streets of the City of Niš today we still find the dominant memory of the anti-fascist movement, the national liberation struggle (NOB), and the national heroes of the time. Street names in Serbia thus bear witness to the fact that opposing ideological currents created a specific cultural memory interwoven into the urban public space. Such a cultural memory is based on a ideological heterogeneity which emerged from a combination of a re-traditionalization process which glorifies Serbian national history on the one hand, and a strong anti-fascist cultural memory permeated by a supranational ideology of everything Yugoslav on the other. This thesis is supported by an analysis which in a methodological sense relies on official data on street names in city municipalities, obtained from the City Administration Office of the City of Niš.

Federica Castelli (Roma Tre University, federica.castelli@uniroma3.it)

Walking and wandering: streets as political space of desire

Streets don't simply take people from one place to another. A street is a laboratory, a process, and an intimate, relational, and political space. Street is a conflictual, playful, passionate space of desire. Every street has a secret life, and is part of the urban unconscious. But streets are also a technology and subjectivating dispositives. A definition of street is impossible. Just like we can witness the fact there's never "one" street (but many overlapping directions in the same street), we understand that streets have many senses, since they gather, host, and give life to multiple desires that change together with the specific experience everyone holds in its environment (that is emotional and political at the same time), and with the position subjects hold in respect of those lines of power that cross and define it. So a child, a shopkeeper, and an old lady will have different experiences of the same street. Many political and artistic practices have shown the

intense political role the street have in everyday life, and the bond between streets, politics, and bodies. The most evident are those collective moments creating passionate public spaces, such as protests (Butler, Castelli). But the very act of walking the street can be intended as political practice. In this sense, the paper will focus on some specific practices, such as situationist psychogeography, and some specific collective focusing on walking and wandering as creative political experiences (Stalker, the Wander Society). Against the map as the very figure of repressive authority, the street can be intended as a space for the unexpected, for contingency, and political relationships. Walking the streets can be an hacking practice. Streets can be TAZ (Temporary Autonomous Zones, following Bey's definition). This paper will take into account everyday experiences of the street from an embodied perspective, underling the affective and emotional role of streets against their reduction to maps, and against the neoliberal abstract space. It will take into account De Certeau's definition of walking as a practice of enunciation and re-signification of urban space, as well as a feminist embodied perspective that take into account the link between bodies, politics, and space. It will focus on everyday practices of redefinition (Lefebvre, De Certeau) against capitalistic enclosures, demarcations, dispossessions (Federici), and against laws of profit, efficiency, efficacy (Debord).

Mihai Stelian Rusu (Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, mihai.rusu@ulbsibiu.ro)

Post-socialist changes of urban nomenclature:

a quantitative analysis of street renaming in three Romanian cities

Critical scholars of place-name studies have compellingly demonstrated that significant transformations in a society's namescape follow suit major power shifts and regime changes. However, despite the wealth of particular case studies existing in the literature, scarce efforts have been made to examine street name changes in a comparative framework using statistical modeling techniques of multivariate analysis. This paper aims to overcome these shortcomings by developing a comparative approach to analyzing post-socialist street-naming transformations in three Romanian cities from Transylvania (Braşov, Cluj-Napoca, and Sibiu). Based on comprehensive data collected from multiple sources, the study builds a logistic regression model that allows identifying the contribution of each factor to post-socialist toponymic change. The findings pinpoint two classes of factors that influence streets renaming after the fall of state-socialism in Romania: street name characteristics (politicized designations directly associated with the socialist regime) and topographic features (geographical centrality and size). The paper concludes by highlighting the street names' intrinsic vulnerability as political devices of commemoration and makes the case that toponymic change is structured by topographic importance.

Olga Tzatzadaki (Iuav University of Venice, otzatzadaki@iuav.it)

From hard work to spritz rituals, in Hogan shoes: designing the socio-spatial profile of the entrepreneurial class of the Northeast Italian region's widespread city (città diffusa) through non-conventional narrations

The paper studies the embodied daily habits of the entrepreneurial class in the widespread suburban city (città diffusa) of the northeast Italian region, as such habits have been built up after the economic boom of the region, in the last decades. It's the particular social behaviors and everyday spatial practices of this class, which define a particular place-based identity, through which one desires to be identified in the minds of the local community. The radical economical changes in the territory introduced a self-constructed middle class, which follows certain patterns of everyday gestures, behaviors and lifestyle, also manifested through

consumption preferences. It is interesting to understand how body language and certain spatial practices represent a testimony of social status and well-being achieved, and how the body and lifestyles convey emotional messages (eg, shame/pride/fear) to the public (local society/social media), which receives and decodes them. Our goal is to describe this class's identity characteristics through the study of the body in relation to the space and to the local community, in order to interpret the social "product" of the economic boom in this territory. The research methodology proposed is a discussion between different narrative voices: literary and cinematographic narration (the so-called "non-conventional tools" of research) produced by local writers and cinematic directors and their interviews. Such tools, very rich and accurate in descriptions, can unveil information not obtainable by conventional tools of research, for the study of relationships between the individual, the space (private and public) and the everyday. This work has a threefold goal: to investigate the everyday practices of identity construction of the entrepreneurial-middle class in the territory under investigation, to highlight the importance of not-conventional tools in urban research and to understand the transformation of local identities as a "social product" of radical and sudden economical and spatial transformations.

2 - Between old urban inequalities and new urban opportunities (Panel 3)

<https://zoom.us/j/94842138274?pwd=ZUJDb2dyakhiVmVqcilmNjITUVRMZz09>

Chairs

Katrin Paadam (Tallinn University of Technology, katrin.paadam@taltech.ee)

Rui Carvalho (Brown University - Providence, rui_carvalho@brown.edu)

Presentations

Pinelopi Vergou (University of Thessaly, pvergou@uth.gr)

Refugee flows and institutional changes:

between local policies, urban practices and spatial segregation in Greek cities

Migration policies is a result of a complex interaction between political actors, especially in the local level; international and non-governmental organizations; local solidarity initiatives and mobilizations which help to overcome tensions and obstacles with the local population, especially when far-right groups increased. Many studies revealed the two way process of the integration and the importance of local residents in creating the conditions for the inclusion of refugees but also the transformation of local communities in various ways, through migration flows. In Greek cities, the social practices of natives played an important role in the implementation of the immigration policy for the newcomers, where refugees perceived as a threat to personal and community security. New forms of social mobilization and solidarity actions of citizens, collective bodies and community-based initiatives helped to overcome these tensions and obstacles of refugee integration. The paper explores to what extent social infrastructure (social and cultural capital resources) serves as precondition for refugee integration in Greek cities and to what extent does social infrastructure and social initiatives for refugee integration, affect urban transformation and institutional changes. The empirical material of this study is based on a qualitative research, through in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted among residents, refugees and key local actors in different cities in Greece. The study reveals the complexity of the social spatial diversity that refugees face but also the