

Call for Papers

Governing Urban Natures Infrastructure, Citizenship and Municipal Ecologies

Aarhus University, Denmark
December 4-5, 2019

A collaborative conference at the Aarhus University, Faculty of Arts

Co-organized by:

Ecological Globalizations Research Group <https://projects.au.dk/ecoglobal/>

Urban Orders Research Center <http://uro.au.dk>

Center for Environmental Humanities <http://ceh.au.dk/>

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Additional conference organizers:

Michael Vine, Postdoctoral Researcher, Ecological Globalizations project

Mikkel Høghøj, Postdoctoral Researcher, Entangled Fluid Cities Project

Confirmed keynote speakers:

Dorothee Brantz

Director of the Center for Metropolitan Studies, Technische Universität Berlin

Anne Rademacher

Associate Professor of Environmental Studies and Anthropology, New York University

In recent years, scholars have increasingly begun to focus on the material politics of urban citizenship, infrastructural service provision, and the formation and transformation of cities more broadly. Adopting a broadly Marxist approach to these questions, for example, many scholars have explored the metabolic processes that connect cities to the landscapes that surround them. Through infrastructural relations and the flow of energy and elements these facilitate, the geographies and ecologies of urban hinterlands have become deeply imbricated with the physical and social tissue of urban sites. The scales of these imbrications vary across both time and space, from local to global, and from acute, disastrous seconds to the geological time of deep history. In the multiple processes of this entanglement, the “urban” and “nature” become entwined to such a degree that the analytical point of dividing the two becomes debatable. The inextricable relationship between “the urban” and “nature” is also fundamentally a political issue, such that the deep entanglement of city and country not only produces its own emergent biotopes, ecologies, and socio-natural phenomenon—something akin to a “third nature”—but also generates new patterns of capital accumulation, political subjectivity, and collective claim-making.

If this approach seeks to dissolve the image of the city as a self-contained social and material entity, however, other scholars have explored the material practices of political boundary-marking that bring different scales and units of urban experience into being. Whether the city, the region, the nation, or the planet, the divergent scales and units through which urban problems are framed, solutions are imagined, and services are provided matter greatly for outcomes on the ground. So, too, do the intersection of human and more-than-human forms: migration corridors that intersect with roadways, the habitat geographies that differ from the nature zones laid out by planners, and the watershed topographies that direct flows across boundaries of property and administration. The interplay of these scales and units generates both challenges and opportunities for urban governance, gives concrete shape to city life, and constitutes an important point of leverage for contemporary social and political projects. To this end, the conference seeks to deepen attention to questions such as:

- How have urban-nature relations been utilized as a tool of governance for national and local authorities?
- How have practices of urban nature-making shaped political rationalities?
- How have the rise of new political ideologies influenced the construction of urban natures and ecologies?
- How has the production of “welfare” relied upon the construction of particular urban natures?
- How do urban-nature relations promote certain forms of political subjectivity?

Furthermore, the conference aims to rethink “the municipal” as both an empirical and an analytical category. From water and heat to housing and education, the provision of municipal services and facilities are among the most concrete sites of citizen-state relations. In this time of increasingly unstable national and international relations, the municipality is taking on an especially urgent role as a space of social and ecological problem-solving. But while the municipal is an acknowledged actor in conversations about planning, zoning, and gentrification, it is less often treated as an analytical concept in its own right. We thus aim to explore questions such as:

- What exactly is the municipality, both historically and in the present?
- What has constituted its key logics, dynamics, contours, and limits?
- What are its affordances as a site of statecraft and sociocultural struggle?
- How do municipal landscapes and infrastructures function as spaces for the multiplication or amelioration of ecological and political possibility?
- How might scholars take seriously forms of urban analysis that emphasize the metabolic interrelation of the city and its hinterlands, while also taking seriously the municipal as an empirical and analytical category?

Overall, this conference welcomes diverse contributions that explore the intersections, exchanges, and dependencies between urban-nature relations, the material politics of scale, and municipal governance. We warmly invite scholars of all career stages to submit abstracts that explore these themes in various historical and geographical contexts, as well as through different theoretical and methodological approaches.

Logistics

The seminar will be held at Aarhus University from *4-5 December 2019* as a cooperative effort among the Ecological Globalizations Research Group, Urban Orders Research Center, and the Center for Environmental Humanities, all based at Aarhus University.

Participation in the seminar is free and includes lunch on both days.

Those traveling from overseas should note that Billund Airport (1.5 hour bus ride from Aarhus) is often a less expensive and more convenient option than Aarhus Airport.

Paper proposals and submission details

Paper proposals must include a title, an abstract (max 1,500 characters or 300 words excluding references), a short bio (max 500 characters or 100 words) of the presenter including institutional affiliation, if applicable, as well as the contact details of the presenter.

Scholars and researchers from universities, research centres, museums, archives and other institutions and organizations, as well as independent scholars and researchers are encouraged to submit proposals. Students at the post-graduate level (MA or above) are also encouraged to submit proposals.

Proposals must be submitted to the AU Centre for Environmental Humanities via email at ceh@cas.au.dk

Deadline for submission of paper proposals/abstracts: September 8, 2019

Notification of acceptance: October 1, 2019

Registration will be via a conference website, which will be available beginning in late August.

Deadline for registration: November 15, 2019

For updated information, check the AU Centre for Environmental Humanities website at: ceh.au.dk