

Techno-Natures and Urban Transformations

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In recent years, different interdisciplinary movements have affected urban history, generating new scholarly discussions about the structure and formation of cities and urban life. From one perspective, the emergence of urban environmental history has given rise to new analytical understandings of cities as socio-natural hybrids. Simultaneously, perspectives from STS and the history of technology have promoted new analytical approaches to urban provision, infrastructures and sociotechnical entanglements. Through concepts such as “urban metabolism”, “socio-natural site” and “technosphere”, urban scholars now increasingly seek to identify the assemblages, knots and networks through which “the urban” is produced, locating politics, power and agency in the physical fabric of cities and drawing attention to the multiplicity of organisms, diseases, animals and other non-human actors that participate in shaping urban processes and life.

The purpose of this seminar is to connect these recent analytical advances to processes of urban transformations and thus address what Thomas Bender has termed “ethnography of causality”. In urban history, scholars have always engaged with questions concerning urban change and development. The material and technological fabric of cities change over time and so do the structures of urban governance, power and everyday life. Whereas scholars have in recent years increasingly attempted to grasp the complex socio-natural and technical assemblages of cities, studies dealing with questions of urban transformation and change within urban history have often remained concentrated on political actors or broader social and economic changes. In this seminar, we thus welcome papers that seek to foreground the role of urban natures, materialities and technologies in the shaping and transformation of cities and urban life in different historical periods, circumstances and geographical contexts. More broadly, the seminar will revolve around questions such as:

- How can we understand the networks and machinations engaged in urban metabolisms and re-employments of e.g. resources, money, bodies, antibodies and information that drive transformative urban processes?
- How can we write an urban history of e.g. the welfare society or everyday life through the lens of socio-natural hybrids?
- How can urban nature-entanglements provide new perspectives on the historical shifts between different political and ideological regimes?
- What new insights can such perspectives provide to our understanding of urban politics, power and agency?

We warmly invite scholars of all career stages to submit abstracts (200-300 words) that explore these themes or related perspectives to mette.bonnema@cas.au.dk before December 16 2021.

