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International Conference

26-27 September 2019

IRS | Flakenstraße 29-31 | Erkner
TU Berlin | Ernst-Reuter Platz 1 | Berlin

Visual Communication in Urban Design and Planning

The Impact of Mediatisation(s)
on the Construction of the Urban



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Since the 1990s, the concepts and practices of planners have massively changed. At almost the same time, the development of digital information technologies has contributed to a shift in planning action and planning communication, which also modifies the ways of engaging publics. The relevance of participatory and cooperative (re)thinking, (re)planning and (re)shaping of urban spaces has become increasingly common but contested. Forming imaginations of urban futures within urban planning and participation, especially digitally produced visualisations like plans, maps, CAD drawings and visual designs of neighbourhoods, buildings or urban environments play a decisive role in such processes (e.g. Corner 1999).

Visualisations are often regarded as instruments to promote participation by creating publicity, transparency and evidence, still it is debated whether they reduce or increase the 'risk' of citizen protests. However, these assumptions are largely unexamined. Little is known about the past and actual use and the effects that specific modes analogue and digitised visualisation has on the actual urban planning and development processes. The conference reflects on how previous major transitions in visualisation and participation during the 20th century have been perceived and discussed and what lessons can be learnt for the current transition of planning in the digital age.

Planning and urban design research focuses predominantly on professionally created representations by architects and planners who have employed digital information and communication technologies alongside analogue media for the last forty years. But the implementation of new (digitised) participatory instruments also enables citizens to visualise (mostly under guidance of planners) in order to make own ideas, knowledge and meanings visible and useable for urban planning processes. And finally, urban movements, civil society organisations and other political actors also use visual representations to push own interests and goals and to affect public spheres.

These politics of visualisation can only be scrutinised employing a critical perspective towards the implicit visual cultures of the planning and design professions, for example when the immanent meaning of visualisations, i.e. its emblematic character and the use of symbols also touches questions of power. It is linked to the assumption that in different disciplines and professions certain specialist cultures have developed in accordance with their own pictorial language (Lynch 1960) and with specific 'practices of seeing'. On the one hand these practices have become habitualised and institutionalised, but on the other hand require interpretation and legitimation in interaction with actors from different social worlds. Additionally, it is of relevance for which mode of perception visualisations are produced and how they are perceived, e.g. in magazines, in exhibitions, at a workshop discussion or on social me-



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dia platforms. And finally, it should also be considered that urban planning in general (e.g. Healy 2013) and visual practices in urban planning have to be discussed as situated practices in different geographic and cultural contexts (e.g. Global South/Global North). Visualisations should therefore be reflected against the background of their analogue, digital, socio-cultural and global-local embeddedness.

These observations are linked to the assumption of a visual constitution of social worlds and societies. Visual communication not only permeates professional contexts of planners and their specialised (working) practices, but also our everyday lives. In the course of mediatisation processes (Hepp et Al. 2015) one could even say that not only digital but also new visual technologies and techniques of visualisation have given an enormous boost to the material meaning of signs and iconic symbols in communication (e.g. Baur et al. 2014). These changes have become a scientific object with different directions of impact in the course of the Iconic or Visual Turn, which affects many disciplines such as sociology (e.g. Harper 2012, Schnettler 2013, Rose 2016), anthropology (Banks & Morphy 1999), geography (Schlottmann & Miggelbrink 2009), history (Paul 2006) or media and communication science.

The conference takes up these different developments in urban planning and discusses these topics from an interdisciplinary perspective. Within the broad framework of historical transitions and contemporary approaches four sessions will address the impact of visualisations and mediated communication concerning (1) the change of the planner's role, (2) the relation of experts and the public sphere, (3) the practices of (digital) participation and finally (4) the general planning of urban futures. The contributions should deal with these questions empirically and/or methodologically and theoretically.

Sessions

Session 1

Visual Communication and Planning Cultures

Planners, architects and urban designers have always worked with different forms of analogue and, since the mid-1990ies digital, visual practices as drawing, mapping, model-building or sketching. The changes in past and present ways of production of visualisations and the (collaborative) practices of designing and visualising in the offices of architects and urban planners will be examined this session. It will be asked: How have digital technologies changed the way planners, designers, and other visual planning professionals work in their offices and practice their profession? Did the introduction of digital tools change the way planners and designers work and if yes, how can this be measured? And which role do new forms of digitally generated visualisations such as interfaces, renderings, diagrams and charts play in the communication process and how do they impact the role of the planner or



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designer? How have visual practices changed in times of transition towards new forms of design and presentation in the course of the 20th century? Which conclusions on the character and challenges of such transitions can be drawn from historical cases for present processes? How do these cultures differ in relation to different local-global contexts?

Session 2

Visual Communication and the Public Sphere

Recent debates on social and affordable housing or large-scale infrastructure projects have shown that urban development and planning are increasingly becoming of public interest. The session discusses the influence of visual representations on the production of public perception and the communication between 'traditional' expert groups, such as planners, designers, politicians, urban administration, economist, and developers and a broader public. Which strategies of visual communication of planners and other actors can we observe in public discourses on urban planning in past and present? Which composition of analogue and digital visualisations do we find? Which actors generate public discourses and how are public discussions influenced by different types of media use, whereby not only actors from politics and mass media come into view, but also civil society (initiatives, social movements, etc.)? Spheres of (political) power in the context of municipal, urban or state planning as well as questions of the (critical) confrontation of public spheres with visualisations and their communicatively generated invisibilities/visibilities are touched.

Session 3

Visual Communication and (Digital) Participation

As an instrument and tool of representation, visualisations play a central role in participatory processes. We focus on the production, appropriation and use of visualisations, which are not only professionally made by planners but also by laypeople and/or civil society groups. Thus, the communicative practices of imagining urban spaces and the construction of meaning and knowledge through visualisations come into view. In this session, we discuss how far visualisations (have) affect(ed) participation processes and contribute to decision-making. At the interface of political and urban planning, professional design and public engagement, the question arises for both online and offline formats of participation, how different perspectives and forms of knowledge are negotiated by the use of visualisations? What role do visualisations play on digital participation platforms and what influence do they have on public debates and the constitution of public spheres? Which patterns, regimes and interferences between visualisation and participation can we observe in the course of the 20th century? Which inclusions and exclusions of groups of actors resulted from different forms of visualisation and participation in past and present?



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Session 4

Roundtable:

What Does Digitisation Really Change for the Planning of Urban Futures?

It seems a common place that the use of digital technologies in urban planning and design facilitates an efficient, faster, cooperative, creative and iterative (feedback-loops) realisation of planning processes. Digital tools for real-time planning, advanced design software for complex visualisations but also new forms of communication like mobile apps or digital infrastructures as e-participation platforms provide an imagination of contemporary and future opportunities for urban planning. Still, the state of empirical research lacks to provide clear assessment of the impact of digitisation on participation. To summarise and to discuss the further results of the previous sessions, we finally ask how digitisation and the mediatisation really change the ways in which planners, designers and the public think, imagine, visualise, and design and discuss (socio-)spatial cityscapes and urban futures?

The conference is organised in the context of the research project "Mediatisation processes in urban planning and changes in the public sphere." (MedPlan 2017-2020), funded by the Leibniz Association and in cooperation with the Collaborative Research Centre "Re-figuration of Spaces" (TU Berlin), funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG).

Literature

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- Baur, N., Hering, L., Raschk, A. L., Thierbach, C. (2014): *Theory and Methods in Spatial Analysis. Towards Integrating Qualitative, Quantitative and Cartographic Approaches in the Social Sciences and Humanities*. In: *HSR* 39 (2), pp. 7-50.
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- Schlottmann, A. & Miggelbrink, J. (2009) *Visual Geographies – an editorial*, in: *Social Geography* 4, pp. 1-11.



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Programme

Day 1

Thursday | 26 September 2019

TU Berlin (SFB) Collaborative Research Centre "Re-Figuration of Spaces",
Technische Universität Berlin in the BH-N building | Ernst-Reuter Platz 1, 10587 Berlin |
2nd floor | room BH-N 230

09.30 Registration

10.00 Introduction

Gabriela Christmann, Jörg Stollmann & Christoph Bernhardt | Principal Investigators

10.30 Session 1

Visual Communication and the Planning Cultures

Carola Hein & Tino Mager | Delft University of Technology

Creating Desires – The Potentials of the Virtual Mediation of Future Planning

Vanessa Watson | University of Cape Town

Digital Visualisation and New Drivers of Urban Change in Africa

Hans-Christian von Herrmann | Technische Universität Berlin

The City As Programmable Environment: Nicolas Schöffer and the New Topologies
of Urban Design and Planning

Mennatullah Hendawy & Jörg Stollmann | Technische Universität Berlin

Fata Morgana: The Visual Culture(s) of Egypt's Urbanisation

12.30 Open Discussion

13.00 Lunch Break

14.30 Session 2

Visual Communication and the Public Sphere

Clemens Zimmermann | Saarland University

French Urban Planning in Saarland, 1945-1950: Political Contexts,
Cognitive Instruments, and Visual Strategies

Mohamed Salheen | Ain Shams University

Urban Realities, Public Perception and Self-Identification



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Programme

Day 1

Nathalie Bredella | Berlin University of the Arts
Interfacing Realities

Kathrin Meißner & Christoph Bernhardt | Leibniz Institute for Research on Society and Space
Communicating Urban Planning in 20th Century Berlin

16.30 Open Discussion

17.00 Coffee Break

18.00 Evening Lecture

Venue: bauhaus reuse | Ernst-Reuter-Platz

Laura Kurgan | Columbia University
Homophily: The Urban History of an Algorithm

20.00 Dinner



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Day 2

Friday | 27 September 2019

Leibniz Institute for Research on Society and Space (IRS) | Flakenstraße 29-31 | 15537 Erkner

- 09.30** **Morning Lecture**
Gillian Rose | St. John's College Oxford
 Visualising Bodies and Buildings in Digital Times: Looking At and With
- 10.45** Coffee Break
- 11.00** **Session 3**
Visual Communication and (Digital) Participation
Sebastian Weise, Alexander Wilson & Geoff Vigar | Newcastle University
 Visualisations for Knowledge Exchange in Planning
Kheir Al-Kodmany | University of Illinois at Chicago
 Visualising Big Data: Urban Design and Planning Applications
Joachim Åström | Örebro University
 Trust in Citizens: How Urban Planners View their Partners in Participatory Governance
Ajit Singh & Gabriela Christmann | Leibniz Institute for Research on Society and Space
 Citizen Participation in Mediatized Environments:
 Visualising Knowledge and Spaces in Urban Planning
- 13.00** Open Discussion
- 13.30** Lunch Break
- 14.30** **Session 4**
Roundtable: What Does Digitisation Really Change for the Planning of Urban Futures?
Nicolai Roskamm | University of Applied Science Erfurt
Simon Gunn | University of Leicester
Gillian Rose | St. John's College Oxford
Jörg Stollmann | Technische Universität Berlin
- 15.30** Wrap up and Closing



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Location

TU Berlin (SFB) Collaborative Research Centre "Re-Figuration of Spaces", Technische Universität Berlin in the BH-N building | Ernst-Reuter Platz 1, 10587 Berlin | 2nd floor | room BH-N 230
:: [Google Maps Link](#)

Leibniz Institute for Research on Society and Space (IRS) | Flakenstraße 29-31 | 15537 Erkner
:: [Google Maps Link](#)

Organisers

From the Leibniz research project "MedPlan"

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Christoph Bernhardt | IRS

Jörg Stollmann | TU Berlin

Ajit Singh | IRS

Kathrin Meißner | IRS

Mennatullah Hendawy | TU Berlin

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Registration

:: www.leibniz-irs.de/conference