The Transnationality of Cities

1. International Conference at the graduate program »Transnational Spaces«

3rd — 5th December 2009

Europa-Universität Viadrina
Große Scharnstrasse 59
D-15230 Frankfurt/Oder

Further information and registration for the conference:
www.kuwi.euv-frankfurt-o.de/de/lehrstuhl/vs/wisogeo
Cities are appropriate sites for an examination of the spatial dimension of transnationality. This is where global processes are concentrated, localized and become transformed and materialize in physical space. In most recent studies on transnationality categories of space are acknowledged in basic terms like 'bifocality' and 'here and there', they are generally examined focussing on social networks, but not with regard to the (material, social or discursive) constitution of space.

The conference focuses on the manifestation of transnationality in cities, on the physical transformation of spaces as arenas for transnational actors and transborder activities, on social spaces where social and economic networks intertwine or on narrative and discursive spaces created by cultural production or the media. The significance of migration, global economies as well as everyday practices for current urban transformation processes is emphasized. Urban space is not a setting for transnational practices but a constituent force of transnationality in all its guises.
How are urban spaces affected, transformed, connected by transnational processes and created anew?

How do transnational activities – actors, institutions, economic networks – relate to and manifest themselves in urban space?

In what ways do transnational flows of knowledge and political concepts, global power relations and the interconnectedness of political actors affect models of urban governance?

The questions posed at this “transdisciplinary” conference focus - both on a theoretical and on a methodological level - on the significance of transnational flows for the production of urban space. The panels include a variety of perspectives, focussing on flows of ideas, discourses and objects and their local manifestations.
Thursday, 3.12.2009
6.00pm – 8.30pm
Welcome European University Viadrina
Keynotes on Transnationalism
Prof. Dr. Stefan Krätke
European University Viadrina, Frankfurt/Oder
Welcome
Prof. Dipl.Ing. em. Hans Harms
London/Berlin
Cities of the South in the Context of Transnational Urbanism and International Development Policies
Prof. Dr. John Eade
Roehampton University, London
The Return of the Local? Transnationalism, Translocalism and Religion in the Global City
Reception
Poster presentation by the Ph.D. Students of the graduate program “Transnational Spaces”

Friday, 4.12.2009
9.30am – 1.00pm
Transnational Urban Spaces — Cultural Repertoires and Everyday Practices
Moderation: Dr. Kathrin Wildner
European University Viadrina, Frankfurt/Oder
Dr. Martijn Oosterbaan
Utrecht University
Transnational Brazilian Evangelism and Media
Dr. Kerstin Pinther
Goethe University of Frankfurt/Main
Migration, Architecture and Transnational Spaces
Prof. Dr. Faranak Miraftab
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
Emergent Transnational Spaces: Meat, Sweat and Global (re)Production in the Heartland
Dr. Clara Irazábal
Columbia University, New York
Transnational Planning: Reconfiguring Spaces and Institutions
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Friday, 4.12.2009
2.30pm – 6.00pm
Urban Governance Models
Moderation: Dr. Stephan Lanz
European University Viadrina, Frankfurt/Oder
Prof. Dr. Katharyne Mitchell
University of Washington, Seattle
From Moody’s to Compstat: Why Neoliberal Urban Governance Lives On
Dr. Richard Pithouse
Durban, South Africa
Let’s Keep it Real (The Anti-Politics of Most Attempts at Global Solidarity)
Prof. Dr. Roger Keil
York University, Toronto
Transnational Urban Political Ecology: Health, Environment and Infrastructure in the Unbounded City
Prof. Dr. Marcelo Lopes de Souza
University of Rio de Janeiro
Challenging Oppression and Control in a Globalised World: Insurgent Spatial Practices, Militant Particularism and Multiscalarity

Evening Program
Crossing the Bridge — Transnational Walk in Frankfurt/Oder (Germany) and Slubice (Poland)

Saturday, 5.12.2009
9.30am – 12.30am
Localizing Global Value Chains in Global / Globalizing Cities
Moderation: Prof. Dr. Stefan Krätke
European University Viadrina, Frankfurt/Oder
Michael Hoyler
Loughborough University, Leicestershire
Spaces and Networks of Musical Creativity and Music Production in the City
Dr. Sandra Alarcón
Universidad Iberoamericana, Mexico City
Tianguis Global – Transnational Connections between Mexico City and Los Angeles
Prof. Dr. Christof Parnreiter
University of Hamburg
Global City Formation, Real Estate Economy and the Transnationalization of Urban Spaces

1.00pm – 3.00pm
Final Discussion: The Transnationality of Cities
Moderated overarching discussion with representatives from all panels and as special guests
Prof. Dr. Margit Mayer
Free University of Berlin
and
Prof. Dr. Schiffauer
European University Viadrina, Frankfurt/Oder
The Transnationality of Cities

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One of the focal points of diaspora and migration research is the study of the construction of social networks and of ascriptions of identity, characterized by multiple layers of social and economic relationships that transcend geographic, cultural and political boundaries. Transnational spaces and practices point to an inherent mobility, a simultaneity of locations, a large variety of repertoires and identities maintained and devised to make local and (at the same time) transborder activities possible. In cities, cultural repertoires and everyday practices manifest themselves in physical spaces created by social networks, by urban planning projects and (informal) architectures, but also mediated in images or narratives.

This panel deals with questions of links between transnational networks and local (sub)cultural phenomena and the constitution of urban spaces. In particular, we intend to take a closer look on migrant communities’ cultural (e.g. religious and artistic) modes of action, on cultural repertoires expressed in urban planning processes and their increasingly important role in debates about the production of (new) urban spaces.

On the one hand, a number of increasingly influential political concepts regard cities as competitive commercial enterprises and attempt to structure them accordingly. This seems to have led to the emergence of structurally similar modes of urban governance both in cities of the ‘North’ and the ‘South’. Cooperative urban governance models put an increasing emphasis on the growth of the creative/culture industry and tourism, creating globally similar marketing strategies, large-scale events and types of space that adhere to the parameters of ‘musealization’ and event-oriented commercialization. Sociopolitical programs designed as intervention instruments for marginalized neighbourhoods seem to be based more and more on globally applied best practice concepts as well. On the other hand social organizations and movements opposed to these political concepts increasingly operate on a transnational scale as well.

This conference panel is dedicated to urban politics. Its objective is the investigation of transnational political institutions and networks, movements and flows of knowledge with regard to the city. We will examine the connections between transnational structures, urban power configurations and urban politics. The panel will examine the questions of how these forms of governance come into being, how they become globally dominating blueprints, what impact they have on space in individual cities and which transnational actors and power structures shape them.
Another issue this conference focuses on are transnational economic networks, which call into question a conception of space that uses territorial nation states as its reference point. Global city research, although it does investigate globally linked city regions as anchor points of economic globalization processes, focuses on global service companies and hence neglects the role of the industrial sector that also organizes global production networks and value chains.

Consequently, this panel will discuss the concept of global value chains, which, taking its cue from Wallerstein’s world system theory (2004), interprets globalized production as a series of cross-border transactions between company units. Our main focus will be the analysis of global value chains with regard to the uneven geographic distribution of their locations and the power imbalances among actors, as well as the examination of local nodes as territorial manifestations of transnational production chains. In what ways are metropolitan regions connected to the nodes of global value chains (both in the ‘North’ and the ‘South’) and interlinked among each other? And in what ways is it possible to analyze the role of goods and commodities within transnational economic networks specifically with regard to the embedding of commodity circulation and global material culture into everyday local contexts?
Hans Harms  
London/Berlin

Cities of the South in the Context of Transnational Urbanism and International Development Policies

“Transnational urbanism” is seen as a practice of transferring European and American urban planning and architecture to the cities of the South. With this perspective effects on urban form, local space and local living conditions (especially housing) will be presented in three different phases of North-South relations: colonialism, independence and nation-building, globalization. International planning and development policies of the last 30 years are locally mediated differently by variations in local cultural traditions and conditions and by related everyday practices of the majority of the population. Important aspects are informal processes and actors (informal settlements, informal economies) and their varying results in the physical structure of cities in the South. In spite of great differences between cities in advanced industrial countries and cities in the South some observers argue for a trend of convergence in important characteristics of appearance. I will argue that the overall differences are increasing and show on examples of selected cities what kind of urban development and built environment in the last 30 years under the global influence of international “development policies” and “structural adjustment policies” have actually occurred.

John Eade  
Roehampton University, UK

The Return of the Local? Transnationalism, Translocalism and Religion in the Global City

While research on transnationalism and translocality has illustrated the advantages of multi-sited studies and the limitations of methodological nationalism, people’s attachments to localities linked to the (re-imagined) nation have remained strong. Indeed, global flows of people, images and information have encouraged the process of reimagining the local and the nation in ways which seek to indigenise and/or exclude the newcomer. This paper will explore this process through a discussion of place and place-making in particular localities within London where religion plays a key role. In researching the ‘global city’ we need to look beyond the secular to the ‘post-secular’ city as local spaces are physically and ideologically reconstructed in response to global flows, transnational networks and the reconstitution of national majorities.
Transnational Brazilian Evangelism and Media

This presentation is part of an ongoing research, which explores the current conjunction of two processes from the perspective of the adherents of Brazilian evangelical churches in Amsterdam, Rio de Janeiro and Barcelona. The first process is characterized by the (re)terroritorialization of (supra-national) religious movements in cities in the global North and South. The second process is characterized by the transnationalization of city life, caused by global flows of people, capital and information and the formation of communities based on a shared national imagination or background.

One of the questions that I wish to explore through the lens of Brazilian evangelical movements in these three cities is which differences and overlaps exist between the ideas of community and territory based on religious thought, practice and ideas of community and territory based on nationality. While it could be argued that overlaps and conflicts between these grammars are as old as the existence of the nation-state, current processes of de-nationalization (Sassen 2003) and the wide-scale availability of communication media have a particular effect on their relation. Especially the rise and availability of the World Wide Web has its implications on ideas and practices of Brazilian evangelicals in Brazil and the diaspora. Research among Brazilian evangelical migrants shows that people use Brazilian evangelical websites and popular social network sites to sustain face-to-face encounters in the city, produce and maintain a sense of belonging in urban places and reproduce a symbolic space in/on which to project a global Christian community.

Migration, Architecture and Transnational Spaces

For a long time architecture and transnational migration have been considered as nearly antithetical domains. And even now it is mainly in the field of cultural production – as for example in Clara Law’s film Floating Life or in Francesco Jodice’s video work The Morocco Affair – that the interplay of transnational migration and architecture is recognised and critically reflected. However, within the domain of architectural theory, Stephen Cairns’ “association experiments” offer an alternative approach to architecture and migrancy. He considers four pairings: 1. architecture-for-migrants, 2. architects-as-migrants, 3. architecture’s migrancy (following Anthony King’s pioneering studies) and 4. architecture-by-migrants.

The focus of my paper refers to the last mentioned category: In many African cities so-called transnational houses (Ghana) or Toubab architectures (Toubab means European, Senegal) are not only changing the (sub)urban landscapes in a physical, material sense, but also the notions of urbanity. Relying on research in Accra and Dakar as well as by taking into account the artistic productions on the architecture / migrancy pairing, I intend to present possible ways in thinking and researching contemporary (self-organised) architectures and evolving transnational spaces in African cities.
Emergent Transnational Spaces: Meat, Sweat and Global (re)Production in the Heartland

The study asks if locality and the varied resources, networks and racialized histories of local actors situated in a specific space make a difference in the experience of immigrants and their transnational practices often theorized in large metropolitan centers and global cities. This question is explored through a grounded global ethnography of a previously all-white small Illinois town where meat industry recruits labor force trans-nationally among Latin Americans and West Africans. The paper reports on the experience of this rapidly diversifying town whereby formal politics and liberal democratic channels of citizens’ participation in governance remain exclusionary; yet the diverse immigrant populations through their informal every day spatial struggles achieve remarkable inclusion in public institutions and public spaces.

The paper articulates the notions of insurgency through “non-collective action” and “art of presence” (Bayat 2010) as means by which new immigrants relying on their local and trans-local resources have been able to renegotiate the inter-racial social and spatial relations in a highly contested and constrained context whereby a global corporation is the sole local employer.

The paper recovers the narratives of the subaltern in rural communities, often presented as spaces of despair and hopelessness where new immigrants are passively victimized by redneck back waters of the global cities. This perspective offers important insights for inclusive planning scholarship and practice.
Clara Irazábal
Columbia University, New York, USA

Transnational Planning: Reconfiguring Spaces and Institutions

Planning in our interrelated world often transcends the boundaries of particular localities within nation states. Transnational planning is planning that occurs through societal relations spanning pluri-locally, between and above the traditional container spaces of national societies without a clear ‘headquarters’ or ‘motherland.’ Applied to planning, transnationality is a metaphor that goes beyond geographical and spatial connotations to encompass the multicultural dimensionality of the political practices of place-making. This presentation reflects on the growing phenomenon of transnational planning, exploring the production and transformation of new and conventional types of spaces, institutions, and planning engagements in a transnational arena. It includes the exploration of different agents that are engaged in transnational planning, including international organizations (such as the World Bank, the United Nations, USAID, transnational corporations, etc.), national and local public and private agencies, transnational NGOs, and transnational community organizations (such as Hometown Associations, the World Social Forum, etc.). They engage in different subfields of transnational planning (related, for instance, to border planning, environmental planning, labor management, infrastructure building, institution building, gender equity, housing, transportation, health, cross-sectoral governance, participation, community empowerment, etc.) with varying institutional and socio-spatial effectiveness. Simultaneously, subjected populations resist, adapt, or coproduce the planning deployed upon their communities and, in the process, transnational subjects are (re)shaped.

Katharyne Mitchell
University of Washington, Seattle, USA

From Moody’s to Compstat: Why Neoliberal Urban Governance Lives On

Numerous studies have documented a general trend towards neoliberal rhetoric and practices in urban governance structures worldwide. But how exactly do these processes become so entrenched that they continue, even after political shifts transform the governing leadership of cities? In this paper the author examines the critical role of global bond ratings agencies and policing practices in the perpetuation of neoliberal governmentality through time. In a number of cities around the globe the presence of these transnational institutions has influenced urban governance in multiple ways, both material and symbolic. The author investigates some of these impacts through a comparative look at New York City, Mexico City and London over the past three decades.
Richard Pitthouse,  
Durban, South Africa

*Let’s Keep it Real (The Anti-Politics of Most Attempts at Global Solidarity)*

There is a significant degree to which the politics of cities is, at least in part, a question of local power relations. The fact that many local actors seek to legitimate their agendas via international discourses should not blind us to this reality. The reality of local power relations is often missed by technocratic approaches to the urban crisis, be they from the mainstream or the left. When they assume that there is a smooth developmental space via which policy is translated into practice they are blind to the fact that local elites, political and economic, often seek to seize control over development in order to advance their own interests. This paper will draw on the South African experience to argue that attempts to generate international solidarity which scale up too quickly will be unable to engender the development of meaningful counter power against local elites.

Roger Keil  
York University Toronto, Canada

*Transnational Urban Political Ecology: Health, Environment and Infrastructure in the Unbounded City*

Transnational urbanism has to be viewed against a background of a double constitution and destruction of the urban. It has been argued that the city has been destroyed both from the inside and from the outside. The internal destruction refers to the classical pessimism in urban theory that cities are bad places, that they are dis-orderly, unruly and chaotic. Deservedly or not, Mike Davis’ work is often cited in this context. The external destruction speaks to yet another stereotype deployed in the history of urban thinking: the inevitable dissolution of the city into the countryside, the urban into the social, and the local into the global. Much of this has been reinforced by the notion of a networked (urban) world, which has highlighted new risks and vulnerabilities. This paper uses an urban political ecology framework to examine urban governance in an age of the unbounded city. Health, environment and infrastructure will be used as prisms through which the new problematiques of transnationalized urban vulnerability will be illustrated.
Marcelo Lopes de Souza  
Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brasil

Challenging Oppression and Control in a Globalised World: 
Insurgent Spatial Practices, ‘Militant Particularism,’ and Multiscalarity

The concept of spatial practice is a very important one for the purpose of thinking the spatial dimension of power. According to neo-Marxist Henri Lefebvre “(…) la pratique spatiale consiste en une projection ‘sur le terrain’ de tous ces aspects, éléments et moments de la pratique sociale (…)”. Lefebvre’s reflections about the production of space and the role of space under contemporary capitalism have been widely influential among social scientists, including geographers.

After discussing the philosophical contributions to the elucidation of the meaning and role of power, (Foucault, Castoriadis, Arendt) and the connections between power and space (Foucault, de Certeau, Lefebvre) , I am going to offer a typology of insurgent spatial practices and discuss the limits, contradictions and obstacles of these practices. The paper aims to demonstrate the usefulness of the typology and a critical discussion for several reasons; first, in order to facilitate comparisons between different experiences in different regions, countries, and continents; second, because it enables the construction of a picture of the responses to heteronomous power — and the alternatives to conformism —, which as such can be a kind of ‘source of inspiration’ to movements in the future; third, because it is potentially a contribution to the (self-)reflection about the possibilities, weaknesses, limits, contradictions and legitimacy of these upsurges, rebellions, and (very often also) ‘silent’ forms of resistance in the framework of globalisation; last but not least, because the spatial dimension has been largely neglected or underestimated by most researchers devoted to the study of social movements.

Michael Hoyler  
Loughborough University, UK

Spaces and Networks of Musical Creativity and Music Production in the City

Urban geography, both material and imagined, is a crucial mediating factor in the production and consumption of music. Cities provide the concrete places, which offer spaces for musical creativity but also sustain wider networks that foster and support musical creativity. These networks are fluid, with musical knowledge moving within and between cities through the mobility of skilled creatives and new technologies. The paper argues for a need to situate creativity firmly in its material and embodied contexts of production. The empirical focus will be an analysis of the global urban networks of digital music production for UK and US markets, interpreting recorded music albums as temporary market-based projects that bring together teams of skilled creative individuals in recording studios across the globe.
Informality in Global Capitalism: A Methodology for Understanding Complex Articulation of Cities to the Globalized Markets.

The view I present is based on a research of informal activities in Mexico City. One of the expressions of these informal activities is the Street Vending, socially accepted by people and tolerated by the State. Such activity involves global producers and merchandise, especially from the Asian manufacturers such as China. These cheap products are sold in the streets (e.g. Mexico City) at very low price to satisfy local consumers needs. The focus is put on the last expression of global commerce, such as Informal Street Vending, in order to reconstruct the long and complex chain of producers, distributors and consumers that are articulated in the global trends of modern capitalism. To do research on the articulation of informal activities in global markets the methodology of “Multisited Ethnography” (Marcus, 1995), provides an appropriate perspective and research tool. Transnational actors and transborder activities are discussed through empirical data and theoretical approaches that anthropology of globalization is exploring. The connection between transnational practices and urban spaces can be seen through the commercial network traced in the transnational space of economic exchange. Cities and localities of so-called underdeveloped countries such as Mexico, receive the impact of this new forms of organization of production and distribution in a particular way, which I have called the Informal Globalization of Capitalism (“La Globalización Informalizada”).

Global City Formation, Real Estate Economy, and the Transnationalization of Urban Spaces

Global city formation is a key driving force in the transformation of urban landscapes, because both foreign companies and advanced producer sector firms increase the demand for prime office space. In the context of a) the deregulation of financial as well as of real estate markets and b) an excess of liquidity, this growing demand leads not only to a building boom in the high end spectrum of the market, but also to globalization of specific segments of urban real estate markets. Taking Mexico City as a case study, this paper claims that the construction of a new CBD, which is built to meet the demand of global players, is marked by processes of de- and transnationalization: Key actors (such as investors, developers, architects and users) increasingly operate on a global scale, while the organizational logics, which are structuring the real estate market, are becoming step by step detached from the national context and the particular urban fabric.
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