

An aerial photograph of a city street, likely in Munich, showing tram tracks, buildings, and trees. The image is used as a background for the conference poster.

Urban Ethics:  
Conflicts Over the ‚Good‘ and Proper Life  
in Cities

Concluding Conference of the  
Urban Ethics Research Group’s First Phase  
17.01.-19.01.2018  
Carl-Friedrich-von-Siemens-Stiftung | München

# URBAN ETHICS

## URBAN ETHICS

### Conflicts over the ‚good‘ and proper life in cities

“How should one live in the city?” Questions like this are being debated, practically negotiated and fought over all over the world. What is a “good” life under urban conditions? Who gets to live it? How can people get there? Can a connection between the “good” and the “just” be formed? What does ‘urban’ refer to in such contexts? And how can ideals and strivings like these being brought into alignment with the ‘material’ interests and imperatives of different groups?

Such questions are questions of urban ethics. Urban ethics are a layer of the social process and urban life that has become increasingly important in recent times and in different parts of the world. It has also drawn more and more academic attention. The conference will address this “ethical turn” in urban life and politics and its history in its plurality, from the perspective of ethnographic and archive-based empirical research and sociocultural theory. Rather than seeking answers to these questions in a normative register, the conference asks what happens when urban conflicts and urban futures are being performed, framed and negotiated as conflicts over the ‘good’ and proper life in cities, that is, as urban ethics, and it seeks to better understand the conditions under which these questions emerge and urban-ethical projects are being formed and fought over.

What, then, are the forms, the implications and the effects of an “ethical turn” in urban life and politics, and of urban-ethical practices? What are the contextual meanings and the effects of “ethical” urban projects – concerning, among other things, housing, environmental matters, urban aesthetics, everyday interactions, citizenship and political representation? Who initiates and leads them, who is being represented in what ways, and what forms of subjectivity and collectivity are being produced? In what ways do urban ethics draw on tacit ‘moral economies’ of urban life? In what ways do they merge with technologies of urban governance that address citizens/subjects as self-reliant, self-guiding ‘ethical’ subjects? In what sense are they thus part of neoliberal paradigms, and in what sense are they not? In what ways do sets of practices that are seen as “ethical” circulate transnationally, and how are they re-contextualized and shaped into assemblages that are simultaneously local and transnational? And how can current conjunctures be historicized by comparing recent cases to older ones where similar questions were being raised?

The conference features internationally renowned researchers as panelists and key note speakers. It will present results of an interdisciplinary working group on urban ethics combining Architecture and Urban Design, Anthropology, European Ethnology, Geography, Eastern European History, Japanese Studies, Turkish Studies, based at the universities of Munich, Göttingen, and Regensburg, which has been funded by the German Research Council (DFG) for two and a half years and will begin a second research phase in April 2018.

#### Contributors from outside the research group:

Stephanie Assmann (Sapporo) | Martin Baumeister (Rome) | Isabelle Doucet (Manchester) | Alexa Färber (Hamburg) | Susanne Heeg (Frankfurt) | Kerstin Jacobsson (Stockholm) | Nora Lafi (Berlin) | Henrietta Moore (London) | Andrea Mühlebach (Toronto) | Ida Susser (New York)

For more information on the research group and its members see: <http://www.en.urbane-ethiken.uni-muenchen.de/index.html>

#### Conference venue:

Carl-Friedrich-von-Siemens-Stiftung  
Südliches Schloßrondell 23 | 80638 München

## CONFERENCE PROGRAM

### First day - 17/01/2018

12:30-13:15 Opening Lecture by Moritz Ege & Johannes Moser

13:30-17:00 Panel 1: Periodizing Ethical Conjunctures in Urban History

- Martin Baumeister (Rome): „Porous Modernity“ or „Failed Cities“? Urbanity and Informality in Mediterranean Cities after 1950.
- Daniel Habit: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly: A Case-study of Bucharest’s Urban Core
- Nora Lafi (Berlin): Urbanity as an Ethic: Islamic Roots, Imperial Constructions and the Challenges of Modernity and Colonialism in late-Ottoman Tunis and Aleppo
- Julia Strutz & Christoph Neumann: The Landwalls of Istanbul: A Spatial Periphery and Conjunctures of Ethical Charging

17:30-19:00 Keynote I: Henrietta Moore (London)

### Second day - 18/01/2018

09:30-13:00 Panel 2: Collaborative Ways of Searching for the Good Life

- Stephanie Assmann (Sapporo): Life Politics and Community Engagement in Rural Japan: Culinary Education and Entrepreneurism
- Michael Grieser: Transition Town Movement as a New Urban Lifeform in Tôkyô.
- Alexa Färber (Hamburg): Setting the Scenes for Collaboration: Thinking with the City As Promissory Assemblage
- Laura Gozzer: Engagement - City - Self. Notes on Ethical Subjectivations in the Founding Processes of Housing Cooperatives in Munich.

14:30-18:00 Panel 3: Between Ethics and Politics: Mobilization, Antagonism and Consensus in Urban Social Movements

- Ida Susser (New York): Social Movements and Borders: Hierarchy and Solidarity in the Urban Commons
- Jeannine-Madeleine Fischer: „Governing through Consensus: Environmental Care in Auckland“.
- Kerstin Jacobsson (Stockholm): Antagonism and Solidarity in Housing Movements in Bucharest and Budapest: A Field of Contention Approach
- Olga Reznikova: “We Won’t Have Any Political Demands. Never! This is Our Power”: Park Protectors in Moscow Between Politicization and the Search for Consensus.

### Third day - 19/01/2018

09:30-10:30 Keynote II: Andrea Mühlebach (Toronto):

Price, Insurgency, Sovereignty: The Struggle for Public Water in Europe

11:00-15:00 Panel 4: Built Form, Social Design and Emphatic Urbanism

- Isabelle Doucet (Manchester): Architecture and the Urban Struggle: Resist, Encounter, Care.
- Max Ott: Shaping Urban Ethics: The ‚Making-of‘ Architecture as a Process of Social Creativity in Berlin
- Susanne Heeg (Frankfurt): Dis/Similarities of Built Environment in Big Cities.
- Michaela Busenkell: Ethical Contestation in Architecture for a Creative Singapore.

15:00-16:00 Final Discussion Round

DFG



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