CRITICAL URBAN POLICY STUDIES: THEORETICAL ISSUES AND EMPIRICAL EXPLORATIONS

Summer 2020 Seminar topic:
THE POLITICS OF URBAN EXPERIMENTAL TRANSFORMATION: URBAN SPACE AS A ‘LIVING LAB’

ONLINE SEMINAR VERSION

Tuesday, 15:00-18:00 h, online (formerly Room EB 224)

Online seminar rules

General instructions

The seminar will be held as a synchronic course, with online connection by participants in order to conduct specific activities (see course calendar and description of activities, below).

The following online tools will be used:
- ISIS course ‘Critical Urban Policy Studies’ as a platform for general communication;
- video-meeting tool Webex Meeting for plenary discussions and group presentations;
- PowerPoint presentations with audio commentary (made available on ISIS course) for seminar inputs.

The rules of use for these tools is explained in the following:

ISIS course ‘Critical Urban Policy Studies’:
Registration by all participants is required before April 20.
The ISIS course will serve for general communication, for instructions, for making materials available (literature and PowerPoints), for forums, and for accessing the video conference tool ‘meet@ISIS’ (embedded in the ISIS course).
In general, participants are asked to be logged into the ISIS course and to have their email account available at the beginning of each seminar meeting. Further requirements are dependent on specific activities (see course calendar, below).

Webex Meeting:
This video conference tool will be used for plenary discussions and group presentations. The tool can be accessed using personal Tubit accounts.
Before each seminar meeting, participants are asked to connect to the seminar. Please be prepared to connect at the full hour (15.00) in order to be able to start the seminar at quarter past the hour (15.15). Occasionally, a later connecting time can be provided. Instructions for connecting are per email sent via ISIS.
Please check you access to Webex Meeting before the start of the seminar.
Please have your Internet and email connection ready at each seminar meeting.

When using Webex Meeting:
- please switch your microphone off in order to avoid background noise;
- switching your camera on is recommended (and mandatory when speaking);
- as a general rule, in order to avoid confusion, speaking is only allowed upon invitation by the moderator. The hand-raising screen symbol (below left) can be used to ask for right to speak. Please choose a quite environment.
**PowerPoint presentations:**
these will be made available through the ISIS course before the seminar meetings and will remain in
the archive for the duration of the seminar. The presentations will be devoted mainly to inputs and/or
students’ presentations.

Note:
PowerPoint presentations are for seminar purpose only - please do not disseminate outside the
seminar.

More instructions for the use of online tools for assignments are found below.

**Calendar**

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| 21.04 | 1. First online meeting:  
*Introduction to the seminar*  
Plenary discussion |
| 28.04 | 2. Plenary meeting:  
Assignment 1: presentations |
| 05.05 | 3. Plenary meeting:  
Assignment 2: presentations |
| 12.05 | 4. (t.b.d.) |
| 19.05 | 5. (t.b.d.) |
| 26.05 | 6. Plenary meeting:  
Assignment 3: presentations |
| 02.06 | 7. (t.b.d.) |
| 09.06 | 8. (t.b.d.) |
| 16.06 | 9. Plenary meeting:  
Assignment 4: discussion |
| 23.06 | 10. (t.b.d.) |
| 30.06 | 11. (t.b.d.) |
| 07.07 | 12. Plenary meeting:  
Assignment 4: presentations, 1 |
| 14.07 | 13. Plenary meeting:  
Assignment 4: presentations, 2 |
| 21.07 | 14. (t.b.d.) |

**Literature**

Note:
Literature search and literature essays are part of the assignments required for this seminar. Related
texts are shared as a common seminar output and uploaded by students on the ISIS course as part of
their assignment.

Discussion texts may be proposed and made available on an ad-hoc basis.
General course information

On the Module ‘Critical Urban Policy Studies’


The Project Seminar ‘Critical Urban Policy Studies’ is devoted to elaborating frameworks for understanding and to applying them to the design and conduct of research, to be performed in groups. Each semester, the Project Seminar focuses on selected issues of contemporary relevance for urban policy and planning, and puts these at the centre of in-depth theoretical and empirical analysis. This is specified by an additional seminar title identifying the topic selected for each semester.

In connection with Specialisation Area V ‘Urban and Regional Research’, the Module complements the contents of related core-seminar and offers an opportunity to make experience with their application in connection with contemporary issues of critical urban research.

The Module is conceived as a project seminar and is aimed at the conduct of in-depth research. As such, it will appeal in particular to students who want to develop an expertise in research and/or intend to engage in a long-term research activity, e.g. in preparation of a master thesis or of an application for a doctorate.

Assessment and grading are based on portfolio examination, according to module description. Form and contents thereof are described in more detail in a document made available online before the beginning of the seminar, and are defined in agreement with the teacher at the beginning of the seminar. An additional individual consultation is possible if needed under discretion of the teacher.

For participants of Specialisation V, the rules of Module M9.2 apply.

Active participation to the seminar activities is required.

The language of the course is English; scripts as well as most of the suggested literature are also in English.

Topic of the seminar

This year’s seminar seminar is devoted to exploring the current policy trend towards new experimental practices and formats for urban transformation.

This trend is connected with significant theoretical developments which are strongly characterized by approaching issues of urban transformation as ‘theory in practice’. They combine therefore theoretical advancements with a commitment to experimentation and ‘action research’ in concrete urban contexts and in relation to emerging urban issues.

In general terms, these approaches can be seen as combining the following:

a. a focus on urban policy issues identified as potentially ‘transitional’ (e.g. ‘sustainability’);

b. a critical attitude towards ‘normal’ urban policy and planning practices in dealing with such issues;

c. a normative orientation towards promoting sustainable transformation through situated experimental practices;

d. an interest for policy learning and transfer.

The seminar starts with a critical examination of three areas of theorizing and of related key concepts, with a focus on their applications to urban policy. Besides a general focus on trans-disciplinarity, the main areas of theorizing and related key concepts of the seminar are:

- transition governance;
- social innovation;
- co-production.
Based on a critical analysis and discussion of contributions from the literature, the seminar then moves on to an exploration of practices and formats for their experimental application in urban contexts. A key focus is on so-called ‘Urban Living Labs’ (ULLs). Survey and/or case-study based analysis of current practices offers opportunities to learn from experiments with ULLs as well as to raise critical questions such as (among others):
- which urban policy areas and issues are emerging as objects of experimental practice;
- in how far can these be defined as ‘transitional’ and potentially ‘innovative’;
- what (if any) is the theoretical consensus on the features and requirements of related experimental practices;
- under what conditions are requirements from theory met in the design and conduct of experimental practices;
- under what conditions are goals such as sustainability, learning, transfer met in experimental practices;
- how far do experimental practices become part of institutionally promoted and/or supported policies;
- how effectively and innovatively do experimental practices deal with ‘classic’ policy challenges such as (among others) inclusion, participation, recognition, equity, conflict.

Activities

The seminar is conceived as a project seminar, meaning that it is topic-based and research-oriented. Students are required to give an active research contribution to exploring the topic.

The activities of the seminar depend on the modes of online communication foreseen for each meeting (for reference, see course calendar):
- input meetings followed by online plenary discussion;
- online plenary meetings devoted to discussions and presentations;
- online forums.

Specific tasks may be provided on ad-hoc basis for plenary discussions and online forums.

In addition, students are required to perform activities based on a catalogue of assignments (relevant for final assessment):

Assignments - and related deadlines:

Assignments are aimed at producing an integrated outcome of the seminar through the coordinated contribution of students (individual and groups). The findings of each assignment are presented by students during plenary meetings.

The general epistemological attitude required in performing the assignments is: exploratory – analytical > critical, meaning: exploring the field of the topic, dealing analytically with its features and components, in order to achieve a capacity for (integrated) critical judgment.

Assignment 1 and 2, each of them chosen and performed by groups of students, based on the choice of one of the three key concepts identified above. Assignments 3 and 4 are performed by either individual or groups.

Further details concerning tasks and organization are discussed and agreed upon during the seminar.

Assignment 1, for discussion on 28.04:
- literature search:
  in a first step, students (individual and groups) perform a literature search on the theory / concept chosen, (not exclusively, but mainly) in relation to its urban policy applications; this results in a commented listing of major reference texts (as a rule-of-thumb: min. 10), identifying the main features and contents of the texts.
  To be expressed in writing and uploaded (as PDF) on the ISIS course before 27.04, 14.00 h.

Assignment 2, for discussion on 05.05:
- literature essay:
in a second step, students (individual and groups) make a selection of most relevant texts (as a rule-of-thumb: min. 5) for identifying and discussing the theory / concept chosen, and write an essay devoted to discussing the main aspects of the theory / concept (including key assumptions, commonalities and/or differences).
To be expressed in writing and uploaded (as PDF) on the ISIS course before 04.05, 14.00 h.

**Assignment 3, for discussion on 26.05:**
- ULLs:
  - based on the findings of Assignments 1 and 2, students move on towards exploring the concept and practice of ULLs, through the literature as well as through case-study analysis; this includes:
    -- analyzing definitions and models;
    -- identifying fields and types of application and their variations;
    -- identifying exemplary case-studies.
  - The findings form the basis for Assignment 4.
  - To be expressed in writing and uploaded (as PDF) on the ISIS course before before 25.05, 14.00 h.

**Assignment 4, for discussion on 16.06 and for presentation on date to be defined (30.06-14.07):**
- building on the findings of previous assignments, and in particular of Assignment 3, students perform an analysis of ULLs based on a single or multiple in-depth analysis or on a case-study based survey analysis. Further details of this assignment are discussed in the seminar after completion of Assignments 1-3. Working in groups is strongly recommended.
  - To be proposed in form of a written exposée (s. template, approx. 1000 words) containing a description of the analysis envisioned and the list of group participants, and uploaded (as PDF) on the ISIS course on the appropriate date, before 15.06, 14.00 h.
  - To be finally presented at an online meeting (date to be defined), using a PowerPoint presentation in “screen-sharing” mode. PowerPoint (as PDF) to be uploaded on the ISIS course on the appropriate date, before 14.00 h of day before scheduled presentation.

Further activities and assignments may be defined on an ad-hoc basis during the seminar.

Language: English.

The examination elements of the seminar can be completed in German language upon individual and justified request.

**Additional learning resources**

All seminar resources including this syllabus, (selected) literature sources and comments/communications are made available on a dedicated ISIS course for the duration of the semester (password-protected).

**Grading and evaluation**

Students are required to actively participate in the activities of the seminar.

Individual students’ assessment is based on active participation in discussions and colloquia during the seminar as well as on the presentation of an essay / written report at the end of the seminar; both examination elements are required for passing the seminar.

Assessment is in the form of a portfolio-examination.

Examination elements of final assessment are:
- presentations / active participation in seminar meetings (groups / individual) weighting: 50%
- essay / written report (groups) weighting: 50%

The examination elements of the seminar can be completed in German language upon individual and justified request.

The seminar is part of Module M4 Planning Theory A (6 ECTS).
For detailed evaluation and grading rules, please refer to description of Module M4 Planning Theory A.
Consultations hour

Consultation hour (normally: Tuesday, 9:00-10:00 h, ISR, Room B 219) is suspended during university lockdown. Participants are welcome to make an appointment for an online consultation (email or meet@ISIS video chat) concerning this seminar on Monday afternoons.